

where she drifted or against what rock she perished, now his interest in her was so small? To think of the future—that earthly future which alone presented itself to his too mundane mind—was to think of a time in which he must cease to be. He could not easily transfer his hopes to those who were to succeed him; those who might perchance reap the fruit of his unwearying toil. He thought of all the miles—the stony London miles—that he had walked in pursuit of his trade often with tired feet. He thought of that stern system of deprivation he had imposed on himself, till he had schooled his appetite to habitual self-denial, brought the demon sense into subjection so complete that it was as if he had been created without the longings of other men. How many a time had he passed through the savoury steam of some popular dining-place, while hunger gnawed his entrails! On how many a bitter day he had refused himself the modest portion of strong drink which might have comforted him after his weary wanderings! He had denied himself all the things that other men deem necessities—had denied himself with money in his pocket—and had amassed his collection. To-day he was unusually disposed to gloomy thought, and began even to doubt whether the collection was worth the life of deprivation it had cost him. He had been gradually recovering health and strength for some time, but with convalescence came a curiously depressed state of mind. He was not strong enough to go about his business—to potter about as of old amidst the chaos of his various treasures, to resume the compilation of an elaborate descriptive catalogue, at which he had been slowly working since his removal to Cedar House. Nor could he think of re-inspecting his miscellaneous possessions without a pang, lest, in doing so, he should find even greater loss than he was now aware of. So, powerless to seek consolation from a return to business and activity, he sat by his fireside in the gloomy October weather, and brooded over the past.

Lucille tended him as of old, with the same unvarying patience and affection.

"It is such a happiness to see you looking so much better, dear grandfather," she said, as she stood beside him while he ate his noontide mutton-chop, a simple fare which seemed particularly savoury after that diet of broths and jellies to which he had been kept so long.

"Looking better am I?" muttered Mr. Sivewright testily. "Then I wonder what kind of a spectre I looked when I was worse—Ugolino in a black velvet skull-cap, I suppose. I tried to shave myself this morning, and the face I saw in the glass was ghostly enough in all conscience. However, Lucius says I'm better, and you say I'm better; so I suppose I am better."

"Lucius thinks we might all go to the country for a little while for change of air," said Lucille, "that is to say, you and I, and Lucius would be with us part of the time—just for a day or two—it's so difficult for him to leave his patients. He says change of air would do you so much good."

"Does he indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Sivewright, with an ironical air; "and pray who is to take care of my collection if I leave it? It has been robbed enough as it is."

"But, dear grandfather," remonstrated Lucille, "is not your health of more consequence than those things, however valuable they may be?"

"No, child; for to gather those things together I sacrificed all that other men call ease. Am I to lose the fruit of a lifetime? It is hard enough to be robbed of one portion of it. Let me keep what remains. I shall have no more rest till I am able to go through my catalogue, and see how much I have lost."

"Could not I do that?"

"No, Lucille; no one knows the things properly except myself. Wincher knew a good deal, for I was weak enough to trust him fully. He knew what I paid for everything, and the value I set upon it. He was the only man I ever trusted after my son deceived me; and you see my reward. He took advantage of my helplessness to betray me."

Lucille gave a little choking sigh. She felt that the time had come for her to speak. That poor faithful old servant must no longer appear despicable in the eyes of the master he had served so well. She must make her confession to her grandfather as she had made it to Lucius.

"I wish Lucius were here to speak for me," she thought; and then ashamed of this moral cowardice, she knelt down beside Homer Sivewright's chair, and took his hand in hers timidly, hardly knowing how to begin.

"I am not angry with you, child," he said gently, interpreting that timid clinging touch as a remonstrance. "You have been true and faithful. But women are like dogs in the fidelity of their attachments. One hardly counts them when one considers the baseness of mankind."

"O grandfather, I have not been quite faithful. I meant to do what was right—only—I obeyed my heart, and wavered from the strict line of duty. It was my fault that you were robbed."

"Your fault? Nonsense, child! That poor little head of yours isn't right yet, or you would not talk so."

"It is the truth, grandpapa," said Lucille, and then told her story—told how the wanderer had pleaded, and how, touched by his helplessness and seeming destitution, she had admitted him in secret to the shelter of his father's roof.

The old man listened with sublime patience. Another evidence of how vile a thing was this dead son, whom he had mourned with that

strange unreasoning tenderness which death will awaken in the coldest hearts.

"Say no more, child," he said gently, when Lucille had pleaded for pardon almost as if the wrong done by Ferdinand Sivewright had been wholly hers. "You were foolish and loving, and pitied him and trusted him, although I had often warned you that he was of all men most unworthy of pity or trust. Don't cry, Lucille; I'm not angry with you. Perhaps I might have been persuaded to believe in him myself if he had pleaded long enough. That tongue of his was subtle as the serpent's. And so it was my son who robbed me! He crept into my house in secret, and used his first opportunity to plunder. He is dead; let us forget him. The tenderest mercy God and man could show him would be oblivion."

And from this hour Homer Sivewright spoke of his son no more.

CHAPTER VIII.

AUNT GLENLYNE.

Once assured that there was no blot upon Lucille's parentage, Lucius had no longer any motive for withholding the result of his researches from her whom they most nearly concerned. He spent his evening at Cedar House, as usual, on the day of his interview with Mr. Pullman; and after tea, when Mr. Sivewright had retired, seized the opportunity to show Lucille the little packet of letters, and to relate his adventures at Rouen and in Paris. Lucille wept many tears as that story of the past was slowly unfolded to her—wept for the sorrows of the mother she vaguely remembered watching like a guardian angel beside her little bed.

"Dear mother! and to think that in your brief life there was so much sorrow!" she said mournfully.

Her father—as revealed to her by those letters, and by all that Lucius told her—seemed worldly and even cruel. He had suffered his young wife to fade and die in severance from all she loved. For the sake of what?—his uncle's fortune. He had acted a lie rather than forego that worldly gain. O foolish dream of a father's love! From first to last it had been only a delusion for Lucille. She uttered no word of reproach against the dead. But she separated her mother's letters from the others in the little packet, and asked if she might keep them.

"These and the miniature are the only memorials of the mother I lost so soon," she said. "They are very precious to me."

"Keep them, dearest, but do not cultivate sad memories. Your life has been too long clouded; but, please God, there shall be less shadow than sunshine henceforward."

He told Lucille of his idea of taking her to Brighton in a day or two, to see Miss Glenlyne.

"The lady with whom my mother came to England," she said. "Yes, I should very much like to see any one who knew my mother."

"We will go the day after to-morrow, then, dear, if grandpapa will give us permission. We can come back to town the same evening, and Janet can go with us to play propriety, if you like."

"I should like that very much," said Lucille.

Mr. Sivewright was consulted when Lucius paid his visit next morning; and, on being told the circumstances of the case fully, was tolerably complaisant. He was still "grandpapa"—nobody had any idea of deposing him from the sway and masterdom that went along with that title.

"I suppose you must take her," he said reluctantly, "though the house seems miserable without her. Such a quiet little thing as she is too! I couldn't have believed her absence would make so much difference. But if you're going to establish her claim to a fine fortune, I suppose I shall soon lose her. Miss Glenlyne will be ashamed of the old bric-a-brac dealer."

"Ashamed of you, grandpapa," cried Lucille, "when you've taken care of me all these years, and educated me, and paid for everything I've ever had!"

"Taken care!" repeated Mr. Sivewright with a sigh. "I believe the care has been on the other side. You've brightened my home, little girl, and crept into my heart unawares, though I tried my hardest to keep it shut against you."

Lucille rewarded this unusual burst of tenderness with a kiss, to which the cynic submitted with assumed reluctance.

They went to Brighton by an early train next day, accompanied by Janet, who had consented to stay for a few days in her brother's unlovely abode, before going back to Flossie. That idled damsel had been left to the care of the old nurse Sally, who guarded her as the apple of her eye.

It was pleasant weather for a hasty trip to Brighton. The rush and riot of excursion-trains had ended with the ending of summer. Lucius and his two companions left London—bridge terminus comfortably and quietly in a quick train with a carriage to themselves. The day was bright and sunny; the deepening tints of autumn beautified the peaceful landscape; the air blew fresh and strong across the downs as the train neared Brighton.

Janet sat in her corner of the carriage grave and somewhat silent, while the others talked in low confidential tones of the past and the future. Where love is firm hope is never absent, what shadow soever may obscure life's horizon. Lucius and Lucille, happy in each other's society forgot all the troubles and perplexities of the last few months. But Janet had not yet recovered from the shock of that meeting in the

hospital. She was still haunted by the last look of her husband's dying eyes.

They arrived at Brighton before noon, at too early an hour for a first visit to an elderly lady like Miss Glenlyne. So they walked up and down the Parade for an hour or so, looking at the sea and talking of all manner of things. Janet brightened a good deal during this walk, and seemed pleased to discuss her brother's future, though she studiously avoided any allusion to her own.

"You must not go and bury yourself at Stillington again, Janet; must she, Lucille?" Lucius said by and by. "The place is nice enough—much nicer than London, I daresay; but we want you to be near us."

"Shall I come back to London?" asked Janet. "I daresay I could get some teaching in town. The publishers would recommend me. Yes, it would be nice to be near you, Lucius, to play our old concertante duets again. It would seem like the dear old days when—" She could not finish the sentence. The thought of the father and mother whose death had perhaps been hastened by her folly was too bitter. Happily for her own peace Janet never knew how deep the wounds she had inflicted on those faithful hearts. She knew that they were lost to her—that she had not been by to ask a blessing from those dying lips. But the full measure of her guilt she knew not.

"Yes, Janet, you must settle in London. I shall move to the West-end very soon. I feel myself strong enough to create a practice, if I cannot afford to buy one. And then we can see each other constantly."

"I will come, then," answered Janet quietly. She seemed to have no thought of any other future than that which her own industry was to provide for her.

They left the sea soon after this, and took a light luncheon of tea and cakes at a confectioner's in the Western-road, prior to descending upon Selbrook-place, to find the abode of Miss Glenlyne. Janet was to sit upon the Parade, or walk about and amuse herself as she liked, while Lucius and Lucille were with Miss Glenlyne, and they were to meet afterwards at a certain seat by the lawn. It was just possible, of course, that there might be some disappointment—that Miss Glenlyne, elderly and invalided though she was, might be out, or that she might refuse to see them in spite of Mr. Pullman's letter.

"But I don't feel as if we were going to be disappointed," said Lucius; "I have a notion that we shall succeed."

They left Janet to her own devices, and went arm-in-arm to Selbrook-place. It was an eminently quiet place, consisting of two rows of modern houses, stuccoed, pseudo-classical, and commonplace, with an ornamental garden between them. The garden was narrow, and the shady side of Selbrook-place was very shady. No intrusive fly or vehemently driven cart could violate the aristocratic seclusion of Selbrook-place. The houses were accessible only in the rear. They turned their backs, as it were, upon the vulgar commerce of life, and in a manner ignored it. That garden, where few flowers flourished, was common to the occupants of Selbrook-place, but shut against the outer world. The inhabitants could descend from their French windows to that sacred parterre, but to the outer world those French windows were impenetrable.

Thus it came to pass that Selbrook-place was for the most part affected by elderly ladies, maiden or widowed, without encumbrance, by spinster sisters of doubtful age, by gouty old gentlemen who over-ate themselves and over-drunk themselves in the respectable seclusion of dining-rooms, unexposed to the vulgar gaze. There was much talk about eating and drinking, servants, and wills, in Selbrook-place. Every inhabitant of those six-and-twenty respectable houses knew all about his or her neighbours' intentions as to the ultimate disposal of their property. That property question was an inexhaustible subject of conversation. Every one in Selbrook-place seemed amply provided with the goods of this world, and those who lived in the profoundest solitude and spent least money were reputed the richest. Miss Glenlyne was one of these. She never gave a dinner or a cup of tea to neighbor or friend; she wore shabby garments, and went out in a hired bath-chair, attended by a confidential maid or companion, who was just a shade shabbier than herself. The gradation was almost imperceptible, for the maid wore out the mistress's clothes—clothes that had not been new within the memory of any one in Selbrook-place. Miss Glenlyne had brought a voluminous wardrobe to Brighton twenty years ago, and appeared to have been gradually wearing out that handsome supply of garments, so little concession did she make to the mutations of taste.

A maid-servant opened the door—a maid-servant attired with scrupulous neatness in the lavender cotton gown and frilled muslin cap which have become traditional. To this maid Lucius gave Mr. Pullman's letter and his own card, saying that he would wait to know if Miss Glenlyne would be so good as to see him.

The maid looked embarrassed, evidently thoughtful of the spoons, which doubtless lurked somewhere in the dim religious light of a small pantry, at the end of the passage. After a moment's hesitation she rang a call-bell, and kept her eye on Lucius and Lucille until the summons was answered.

It was answered quickly by an elderly person in a black silk gown, in which time had developed a mellow green tinge and to which friction had given a fine gloss. This person, who

wore a bugled black lace cap, rather on one side, was Miss Spilling, once Miss Glenlyne's maid, now elevated to a middle station, half servant, half companion—servant to be ordered about, companion to sympathise.

"I have a letter of introduction to Miss Glenlyne, from Mr. Pullman of Lincoln's inn," said Lucius.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Spilling; "Mr. Pullman ought to know that Miss Glenlyne objects to receive any one, above all a stranger. She is a great invalid. Mr. Pullman ought to know better than to give letters of introduction without Miss Glenlyne's permission."

"The matter is one of importance," said Lucius, "or I should not have troubled Miss Glenlyne."

Miss Spilling surveyed him doubtfully from head to foot. He wore good clothes certainly, and looked like a gentleman. But then appearances are deceptive. He might be a genteel beggar after all. There are so many vicarious beggars, people who beg for other people, for new churches, and missions, and schools; people who seem to beg for the sake of begging. And Miss Glenlyne, though she subscribed handsomely to a certain number of orthodox old-established charities, hated to be pestered on behalf of novel schemes for the benefit of her fellow creatures.

"If it's anything connected with ritualism," said Miss Spilling, "it isn't the least use for me to take your letter up to Miss Glenlyne. Her principles are strictly evangelical."

"My business has nothing to do with ritualism. Pray let Miss Glenlyne read the letter."

Miss Spilling sighed doubtfully, looked at the maid as much as to say, "Keep your eye on these people," and went up-stairs with the letter, leaving Lucius and Lucille standing in the hall.

She returned in about ten minutes with a surprised air, and requested them to walk up to the drawing-room.

They followed her to the first floor, where she ushered them into a room crowded with much unnecessary furniture, darkened by voluminous curtains, and heated like the palm-house in Kew Gardens. Lucius felt a sense of oppression directly he entered the apartment. The windows were all shut, a bright fire burned in a shining steel grate, which reflected its glow, and a curious Indian perfume filled the room. In a capacious chair by the fire reclined a little old lady, wrapped in an Indian shawl of dingy hues, a little old lady whose elaborate blonde cap was almost as big as all the rest of her person. Her slender hands, on whose waxen skin the blue veins stood out prominently, were embellished with valuable old diamond rings in silver setting, and an ancient diamond brooch in the shape of a feather clasped the shawl across her shrunken shoulders.

This old lady was Miss Glenlyne. She raised her eye-glass with tremulous fingers, and surveyed her visitors with a somewhat parrot-like scrutiny. The contour of her aristocratic features was altogether of the parrot order.

"Come here," she said, addressing Lucille, with kindly command,—"come here, and sit by my side; and you, sir, pray what is the meaning of this curious story which Mr. Pullman tells me? Spilling, you can go, my dear."

Miss Spilling had lingered, anxious to know all about these strangers. Every day made Miss Spilling more and more solicitous upon the all-important question of Miss Glenlyne's will. She had reason to suppose that her interests were cared for in that document. But advancing age did not increase Miss Glenlyne's wisdom. Some base intruder, arriving late upon the scene, might undo the slow work of years, and thrust himself between Miss Glenlyne's legitimate heirs and their heritage. Just as a horse which has been kept well in hand in the early part of the race comes in with a rush as winner at the finish. In the presence of these unknown intruders Miss Spilling scented danger.

She ignored her mistress's behest, and came over to the easy-chair, moved a little table near it, picked up a fallen newspaper, and hovered over Miss Glenlyne with tenderest solicitude.

"It's just upon the time for your chicken broth," she said.

"My chicken broth can wait until I require it," replied Miss Glenlyne curtly. "You can go, my dear; I want a little private talk with this lady and gentleman."

Miss Spilling retired meekly, but troubled of heart. There is nothing easier than to alter a will. Yet Miss Spilling felt it was wisest to obey. Surely the patient service of years was not to be set at naught for some new fancy. But age is apt to be capricious, fickle even and Miss Spilling was not blind to the fact that there were seasons when Miss Glenlyne considered her a bore.

"You are not so amusing as you were fifteen years ago, Spilling," Miss Glenlyne would sometimes remark caustically; and Miss Spilling could but admit that fifteen years of a solitude scarcely less profound than the loneliness of a Carthusian monastery had not tended to enliven her spirits. She had come to Miss Glenlyne charged with all the gossip picked up in a half a dozen previous situations, and little by little she had exhausted her fund of frivolity and slander, and told her servants'-hall stories till they were threadbare.

Who could be sure that Miss Glenlyne would not be beguiled by some new favorite, even at the very end of her career? Sedulously had Miss Spilling striven to guard against this ever-present peril by keeping poor relations, old friends, and strangers alike at bay. But to-day she felt herself worsted, and retired to her own