

morrow. After what I had heard I felt that Sidney would not be safe till I was at her side. About those Lightwoods," he went on abruptly; "how long have they been in Leamington?"

"They took a house here about three months ago," I replied.

"Three months! And he—that"—he seemed to have a difficulty in pronouncing the name—"that Forrester is with them? And Sidney has been visiting them? Good heavens!" He started up and began to pace about the room.

"How much do you know? what has she told you?" he asked suddenly.

"She has told me nothing. I only know from your letter that you object to the acquaintance—I conclude because you disapprove of Captain Forrester's attentions."

"Judge whether I have reason to disapprove of them," he returned, coming to stop opposite me. "The scoundrel is a married man."

For a moment I was too startled to speak.

"Does Sidney know?" I asked. He shook his head.

"He has kept it so secret that his own sister does not know, I believe. I only learned it myself by chance a month ago. He has been married six years."

"When did Sidney first meet him?"

"About a year back, at his sister's house in Madras. He was in a regiment of native foot, and was over head and ears in debt, thanks to high play and fast living. Every one knew that he was on the lookout for 'a pretty fool with money,' to retrieve his fortunes, and the fool he selected was my daughter. He must have bewitched the girl, I think, for she has sense enough in other matters. Before I even suspected what was going on, he had induced her to engage herself to him, and had almost succeeded in persuading her into a clandestine marriage, knowing well that I should never give my consent."

"But he was married already!"

"Just so; but as I have told you, very few persons knew of that former marriage, and I presume he intended to purchase the silence of those who did with Sidney's money. He was aware that her mother's fortune was under her own control. Well, on discovering what was going on I was indignant, as you may think, and I resolved to send Sidney at once to you. I breathed more freely when I knew that the width of the Atlantic lay between her and Forrester. My security was of short duration, however, for a couple of months afterwards I learned that he had sold out and gone with his sister to England. At first I thought of writing to warn you against him, but on reflection I resolved to come instead. I got my leave at once, and sailed by the next ship—the *Chectah*. On board, acting as valet to General Fenwick, was Forrester's old servant, a Frenchman named Delplanque, who had been his 'âme damnée' for years, and was in all his secrets. Forrester had borrowed money from him it seemed, not a large sum, but all the poor fellow's savings, and had given him the slip and gone off with it to England."

"Out of revenge Delplanque came to me and told me something that startled me—namely, that his late master was a married man. He had deserted his wife—a Frenchwoman—long before, and she was living with her own people. Delplanque had witnessed the marriage, but had agreed to hold his tongue 'for a consideration.' He added that M. le Capitaine boasted he should outwit me, and introduce my daughter as Mrs. Forrester. Imagine if you can what I felt on hearing that, and how my anxiety was increased when I accidentally learned at Southampton that the Lightwoods were living at Leamington. Well, thank heaven, I have arrived in time. And now, Kate, send for Sidney—or stay," he added, rising, "let us go and fetch her."

I threw on my shawl again, and we went out into the quiet night.

"Oh, the sweet English girl!" exclaimed my brother, lifting his forehead to the breeze. "How it takes me back into the long past, when we were all together in the dear old home. I had looked forward to having one like it some day, Kate."

"And so you will have, I hope, Frank."

"Who knows? I have learned the folly of making plans for the future."

We passed through the gate in the wall, and crossed the lawn and garden of the cottage, where the flowers were pouring out their fragrance into the night.

The servant who answered our summons at the bell, and who was too well trained to betray any surprise at our untimely visit, ushered us at once into the room where Lady Hillyard was sitting, her favourite little sanctum on the ground floor, looking out on the garden.

A shaded lamp stood on the table, which cast a soft but brilliant light on the books and papers, leaving in half obscurity the silvered hair and high-bred features of the mistress of the house, who was writing. One glance round the room showed me that she was alone.

She looked up as we entered, rose, and after peering doubtfully for a moment at my companion, came forward to him with both hands outstretched.

"Francis, my dear cousin, welcome home!"

He took her hands, but his reply was uttered mechanically, and as his wandering round the room I saw in them the same mingling that had just struck chill to my own heart.

"Where is Sidney?" he asked, hoarsely. She withdrew her hands, and looked in surprise from his face to mine.

"I do not know," she answered; "she is not here; I have not seen her to-day."

"Lucy, Lucy," I cried, hardly knowing in my agitation what I said; "she must be here—she came here; I saw her go—"

"My dear," she answered gently, "Sidney is not here, she has not been here to-night. Compose yourself, and tell me what has happened."

"She said she should spend the evening with you. I saw her pass through the garden-door at about 8 o'clock, and she has not returned."

"Is the gate of your drive locked?" demanded Francis, turning to my cousin.

"No, not yet."

"That explains it: she came into your garden by one entrance, and left it by the other," he said, in a tone so unnaturally calm that I looked at him in wonder.

His face was white to the lips, and there was an expression upon the features that made them seem unfamiliar to me.

"Lucy," he continued, "you have a carriage, I think? Will you have it brought round at once, without a moment's delay?"

She glanced at me uneasily, but immediately assented, and left the room to give the order.

He stood with folded arms, looking down. I touched his shoulder.

"Frank, if we find them, you—you will not be harsh with Sidney?—promise me," I pleaded. "Poor child! her fault brings its own punishment."

He looked at me gravely.

"I will not be harsh with Sidney, I promise you," he replied, "but I have a reckoning to settle elsewhere." He walked away from me to the hearth, and said not another word.

In ten minutes the carriage was ready. I sent a message to Carter that we would probably return late, and that she was to sit up for us herself; then my brother gave the coachman Mrs. Lightwood's address and we were soon whirling rapidly toward the town.

A quarter of an hour afterward we drew up at the Lightwood's door.

The "little dance" had already commenced; the rooms were brilliantly lighted and when we were admitted, the widow, in an elaborate demitoe of "feuille-morte" silk and amber lace, was fast sweeping across the hall, followed by her eldest daughter, Carrie. She was a tall, showy-looking woman of forty or thereabouts, with fine teeth, a made-up complexion, and a false smile.

Expecting to see another of her guests, she was coming forward to greet us with some stereotyped phrase of welcome, when, seeing who it was, she stopped short, her bland expression changing with ludicrous abruptness to one of very genuine consternation. Recovering herself, however, she extended her hand to my brother, saying sweetly as she ushered us into a sitting-room: "Colonel Dane in England! what a delightful surprise, and how good of you to drop in upon us directly you arrived. You have brought Sidney, I hope. Where is she?"

"Where is she?" he repeated sternly; "that is the question I am come to ask you." She drew back a step, her false smile fading, and, like myself, my brother evidently read in her conscious face the confirmation of his worst fears.

"It is as I thought," he muttered; "they are gone," and his head dropped upon his breast.

"They? Who do you mean?" she questioned, hardly.

"Oh, Mrs. Lightwood," I exclaimed, "you know very well that Francis means my niece, Sidney, and your brother."

"What—they have eloped? is it possible?" she said, coolly; "but pray, Miss Dane, why should you take it for granted that I know it? I assure you it is news to me. I am not in my brother's secrets."

"Not in all of them, I believe," interposed Francis; "you did not know, for instance, that he had been a married man for the last six years."

The change in her face was something to remember.

"Married!" she gasped. "Fred. married! Nonsense, I don't believe it."

He took from his pocket-book, and handed to her, a folded paper, the copy of the marriage certificate. She glanced over it, then sank into a chair, her cheeks blanched to the colour of the paper.

"Colonel Dane," she faltered, in a changed voice, "I solemnly swear that I was ignorant of this. Fred. took care not to let me know it. And to think that I have helped and encouraged him to—good heavens!"

The blood rushed over her face, dyeing it crimson to the temples, and she broke off abruptly, biting her lip.

"Undo, if you can, the mischief your help and encouragement has brought about, and tell me where I shall find my daughter," he returned.

"I will tell you all I know. In the note I received from Sidney this afternoon there was an enclosure for Fred.—just a few hurried lines, telling him that you, Colonel Dane, were in England, and would be at Leamington to-morrow, and that she had made up her mind, at last, to consent to a runaway marriage. He was to take the next train to Birmingham, and wait for her at the station there; she would follow by the one that leaves here at 8.30, and they could go on to London by the express."

Francis glanced at his watch—a quarter to nine.

"Too late," he muttered, with a sound like a

groan; "they are on their way to London by this time, and once there—but I will follow them; if there is no train I will have a special."

And without bestowing another word or glance on Mrs. Lightwood he left the house.

When we reached the station we found it silent and deserted. A porter who was lounging against the door of the booking office informed us, in answer to our inquiries respecting the Birmingham train, that the last "regular" had gone at 3.30, but that a "scursion" would pass through in half an hour and we could go on by that if we choose. It seemed to our impatience much more than half an hour before the lamps of the excursion train gleamed in the distance. Every compartment was crammed with noisy "Black country" folks and it was with some difficulty that we found seats in a second-class carriage—first-class there was none.

"It is odd, my companions whispered, bending toward me across the carriage; "when I took the tickets just now I made some inquiries of the clerk and he declared most positively that no young lady answering to Sidney's description booked to Birmingham by the last train. It is possible that Mrs. Lightwood has deceived us?"

I did not know what to think; it was all dark to me; dark as the wide vague scene through which we were musing.

As I sat looking out into the gloom, Sidney's face as I had seen it last, pale and grave and calm, rose before me with strange vividness, and would not be dismissed.

We did not exchange another word till, on emerging from a long tunnel, we found ourselves suddenly in the light and noise and bustle of the Birmingham station.

"Stay here while I make inquiries," Francis said, as the train slackened speed, and gilded down the platform. "If they have—What do you say?" He broke off, as I caught his arm with a sudden exclamation:

"Francis, look! There is Captain Forrester."

He stood alone, on the edge of the platform; his valise in his hand, his travelling rug over his arm, looking eagerly into every carriage as it passed. My brother did not wait for the train to stop before he leaped out, and as the others came hurrying up, still searching the carriages with a look of disappointment and perplexity, they met each other face to face. I saw Forrester start and recoil, but I saw no more then, for the train bore me on past them several yards.

When I alighted it was some moments before I could find them in the crowd. At length I saw them standing under a lamp, the light of which fell full upon their faces, my brother's white and stern, Forrester's excited and perplexed.

"But I assure you, Colonel Dane, that I have told you the truth," the latter was saying as I approached. "Your daughter is not with me, nor do I know where she is. She appointed to come by the 8.30 train; as she did not I concluded she had been prevented, and I waited, hoping she would arrive by this one."

"You had a note from her this evening; show it me," said Francis, abruptly, after a pause.

"It will confirm what I have told you," the other returned, as he produced and handed to him a half sheet of paper covered with hastily scrawled lines, which I read over my brother's shoulder:

Papa is in England, and will be at Leamington to-morrow. He is more than ever determined to part us. It seems. I have made up my mind at last to consent to what you proposed—a clandestine marriage. Take the next train to Birmingham; I will follow by the one that leaves here at 8.30. We can go on to London, or where you will; I trust the rest to you. I gave you my heart long ago; now I place my honor in your hands. Yours ever,

"SIDNEY."

"God knows I would not have betrayed her," said Forrester, who had watched our faces as we read. "Before noon to-morrow, she would have been my wife, and—"

"Who would have been the witness to this marriage?" questioned my brother, looking him full in the face. "Delplanque's successor?"

He started, and reddened to the roots of his hair, more, as it seemed, with the sudden surprise than any other emotion.

"Delplanque is an infernal traitor," he muttered, looking down.

"Like master, like man," was the bitter retort.

"But if Sidney is not with you, where can she be?" I exclaimed anxiously: "she is not at home."

A vague dread of I knew not what was beginning to creep over me.

"Francis, let us go back at once; ask when the next train leaves," I urged.

"Allow me to ascertain for you," said Forrester. He hurried away, and returned in a few minutes with the information that the next train was the midnight express. After a slight hesitation, he turned to Francis and added: "I shall hold myself at your disposition, Colonel Dane, for the next week, should you require satisfaction. That is my London address."

He handed my brother a card, which the latter tore in two, and threw away without glancing at it. "Gentlemen do not fight now, and if they did, no gentleman would fight you," he replied, with an emphasis which brought the blood to Forrester's cheeks. "If you had succeeded in your villainous scheme, I would have given you

a villain's chastisement; as it is, I only require you to keep out of my path for the future. Come, Kate," and drawing my hand through his arm, he moved away.

The tender, luminous rose color of dawn was creeping over the eastern sky when we reached home once more.

In the pale, mysterious twilight, the house, with its closed shutters and drawn blinds, had a ghostly look—a look that made me shudder, reminding me of death. The door was opened by Carter.

"Where is Miss Sidney—has she returned?" was my hurried question.

"Miss Sidney, ma'am? I thought she was with you; no, she has not returned."

My brother and I looked at each other blankly.

"Perhaps she has left a letter," I suggested; "let us go up-stairs and look." I led the way to her bed-room. At the door I paused, and obeying an instinct I have never been able to account for, motioned to him to wait, and let me go in first. I entered, but had hardly crossed the threshold when I drew back with an inarticulate cry.

The window was wide open, admitting the chill air and cold grave light of dawn; a small writing-table stood near it, on which still burnt a shaded lamp, and there, with her back to me, sat—Sidney. She was dressed as I saw her the night before; her hat and a small traveling-valise lay on a chair near her. Her letter-case was open before her, and she appeared to have fallen asleep in the act of writing, for her cheek rested on a half-finished letter and the pen was still in her fingers.

All this I saw at a glance as I stood on the threshold; a dreadful fear clutched at my heart, and seemed to turn me to stone.

"Sidney!"

There was no answer. I hurried to her side. The hand I touched was marble cold; on the fair face I turned to the light was the deep mysterious calm which is never seen on the features of the living. She was dead. Hours before, God's messenger had come for her, in fire from heaven, and without a moment's warning, she had been snatched out of life into eternity; snatched from the brink of ruin, from dishonor worse than death, from long heart-break and bitter shame and misery.

Even to us who loved her, it was not difficult to say "Heaven's will be done."

The unfinished letter was to her father, a few tear-stained lines, entreating his forgiveness for the step she was about to take. We ascertained to a moment the time of her death, for the works of her watch had been stopped by the fatal flash, and the hand pointed to 7.30. And now occurs the question which has haunted me ever since. If Sidney died at 7.30, who, or rather, what was the figure bearing her likeness which I beheld at 8 o'clock? I leave the reader to answer.

CUSTER'S FIELD GLASS.—About eighteen months ago, while Senator Christyancy, of Michigan, was in the South investigating the election frauds, he paid a visit to Gen. Wade Hampton, and the conversation drifted into war reminiscences. Among other military personages, General Hampton spoke of General Custer, and expressed his appreciation of the dead hero in the highest terms. Senator Christyancy replied that he was well acquainted with all of General Custer's family, having known him from childhood. Then General Hampton remarked that during the war, some of the soldiers of his command, at the battle of Brandywine, had captured a field glass belonging to General Custer and given it to him, and he (General Hampton) had used it during the last two years of the conflict. Senator Christyancy was asked if he thought Mrs. Custer would like to have the glass. The Senator said "Yes," and at once wrote to Mrs. Custer about the matter. She sent a letter to General Hampton, saying that she would doubly appreciate the relic because it had been the property of two brave men, and she added that her husband had been an admirer of General Hampton. The latter sent word that as soon as he could get the glass brought down from his mountain home he would forward it, and the historic glass is now on its way to Monroe, Mich., the home of Mrs. Custer, where she has a large collection of war souvenirs arranged in a cabinet.

## HUMOROUS.

EVERY man may have his weak side, and that weak side may be his inability to stand around and see two dogs fight and not care which whips.

THE Rev. Jasper says that the moon is "a disquieted mass of opaque conflagrancy," and it seems as if he had really struck the right thing now.

THIS is just the kind of weather that puzzles a man as to the propriety of taking his umbrella. The propriety of taking somebody else's umbrella seems to be less puzzling.

A MAN was killed by a circular saw, and in his obituary notice it was stated that he was "a good citizen, an upright man and an ardent patriot, but of limited information with regard to circular saws."

A PEDESTRIAN wants to wager that he can walk five hundred miles under water in twenty-five days. The bet should be promptly taken; no opportunity to get a professional pedestrian five hundred miles under water should be allowed to pass.

"TRUE worth, like the rose, will blush at its own sweetness." Good. Could never understand before why our face was so red.

The doctor and the nervous man  
Will never have two creeds;  
For the former needs his patients,  
And the latter patience needs.