

daren't put it like you do because she is constantly saying nasty spiteful things about people herself.'

'You must give her the benefit of the same doubt,' he replied, smiling a little. 'You cannot tell what may have happened to sour her temper.'

At this moment I heard the gong. 'I must go now,' I said. 'Good night, Mr. Charlcote. I wish you taught me, instead of Miss Lambert. I don't think I should be a Bohemian then?'

He drew me to him and kissed me. 'Whatever you are, my child,' he said tenderly, 'you will be true metal, no counterfeit. Be loving and true, Vera, and things will come right for you; though I doubt there will be a fiery baptism.'

CHAPTER II.

FLASH TO THE RESCUE.

INCREDIBLE though the fact may seem, it is none the less an indisputable one, that I, Veronica Dormer, the only child of the Dean of Wichborough, born and reared amidst all the solemn stately surroundings of a rather more than usually aristocratic cathedral establishment, was, at the age of nine years, as thorough-going a Bohemian as it was possible for such a child to be. A good many factors had, I suspect, been at work to bring about that amazing result. Heredity may have played its part, for I have come since to know that my placid imperturbable mother came of an old north country family, whose almost sole occupation for centuries had been raids, successful or not as the case might be, on their neighbours' cattle across the border, and desperate resistance against reprisals. Perchance a dormancy for a few generations of the hereditary tendencies of the race had caused a storage of force, and I was the favoured recipient of the accumulated results. At any rate I am certain, had I been born a man, a few centuries since, I should have been the boldest moss-trooper on all the border side. I am sure that until I was fully