

A long dining table patterned with many velvet pads and cushions and huge branch ing candlesticks with wax lights, the vases and other articles of the substantial order, and on the two ends of the table, the two large wooden chairs which were placed in the drawing-room, with pillows, cushions, and other kinds of contrivances for the comfort of the room. The wine in the glass was in the best of living—wines, but the large flags of home-brewed ale and stout were also of bright and sparkling color, graced the board, to which a woman butler directed an inquiring look. "Ah, Butler!" exclaimed his host, observing no glance in that direction, "there is something there which I think will suit your palate."

"No doubt, Sir Lionel, some of the best." "Then taste and try, Newman, before you say. John, turning to the old butler, "a tumbler of your old ale to Mr. Butler."

"Yes, Sir Lionel," and the next moment a tall beaker, frothed to the top, was handed by the old man, who stood by Butler, salver in hand, to watch its effect.

"Excellent, indeed," ejaculated Butler, as he returned the empty glass; "stouty or medicinal, but that, Sir Lionel."

"And you like it, Newman."

"He is a good judge of that beverage," remarked Conyers. "And now, John, I'll trouble you for a glass of the same."

A clear request followed from other quarters, with which the old butler was highly delighted. The dinner-hour was passing pleasantly, though leisurely, away. Selma contented among her neighbor, William Beauchamp, with many witty remarks in a low key, lest they might be overheard by her mamma, of whom alone she stood in some kind of awe. But Richard Vernon, who had seized upon the chair next Miss Douglas, watching her glances across the table to Beauchamp and his partner, resolved to have his revenge for her distant behavior to him.

"Miss Markham and Mr. Beauchamp appear mutually pleased with each other," he remarked; "in fact, her whispering speeches and furtive glances towards Lady Markham, betray the nature of their conversation, don't you think so, Miss Douglas?"

"I really do not know to what you allude, Mr. Vernon."

"Some are so blind as those who will not see," was the pointed reply.

"I can see nothing in Selma's conduct to-night different to what it generally is," she answered, in rather an indignant tone.

"Oh, indeed! Then, I suppose, you are also not aware of that which is the common topic of conversation in well-informed circles—Mr. William Beauchamp's equivocal attention to Miss Markham?"

The color rose suddenly to Blanche's face, and was as suddenly succeeded by a death-like pallor, of which being herself aware, she covered a glass of wine in her right hand, being entirely conscious of what she did, and watched the contents. Vernon watched her confusion with diabolical delight, adding, "My abrupt revelation has caused quite an unexpected exhibition of surprise on the part of Miss Douglas, but I suppose the news has not travelled quite so far as Throsby Hall."

"Nor anywhere else than through your own imagination, probably, Mr. Vernon," with which she turned away, directing some observation to Captain Markham, and would not again notice anything addressed to her by Vernon.

On the retirement of the ladies to the drawing-room, Constance, taking Blanche's arm, inquired what fresh impertinence Vernon had been guilty of, having observed them sparring at dinner, which called up again the blush on her friend's cheek.

"My dear Constance," he told me that your brother was seriously attached, if not engaged, to Selma Markham, and that everybody knew it, except myself."

"Never marry a widow. But here comes Selma."

"Well, children," she exclaimed, "what treason are you two girls concocting by yourselves in this snug corner? Plotting how you can be revenged on that arch fiend, Dick Vernon, for his insolent behavior to Blanche at dinner? What was he saying, my dear, to cause such angry looks to flash from those soft, dove-like eyes?"

"His remarks are so impertinent sometimes, that I cannot refrain, Selma, from exhibiting some resentment."

"And quite proper, too, my dear girl; it is very necessary for our sex to show men that thus far they may go, but no farther. Want of dignity and self-respect will always encourage such fops as Vernon to become troublesome, if not something more; so let him know for the future, that he is to keep at a respectful distance."

"That, I hope, he knows already," replied Blanche.

"So much the better, dear; don't spare him, for you may rest assured he will not spare you."

Meanwhile, the dining-room rung with the cheerful voices of the old baronet's companions, who, under the good-humor and pleasantness of their warm-hearted host (no Lord Mervyn being present to damp their conviviality), indulged in their after-dinner jocularity without restraint. The last day's sport was run over again by the two veterans, and the arrangements for the ensuing week canvassed.

"I think," observed Mr. Compton, "it is my turn next, Mr. Beauchamp; we have plenty of foxes as well as pheasants, and Mrs. Compton and the children are quite impatient to see the hounds again."

"Whenever you like, Compton," replied the old squire, "after next week. Take your choice of the three days—Monday, Thursday, or Saturday."

"The last, then," said Compton, "as I promised to let some friends know the first regular fixture for our place."

"Well, Compton," said Conyers, "I wish your keeper would give Lord Mervyn the receipt for preserving foxes and pheasants under the same crust. His won't keep together; yours always do, and both last good till the end of the season."

"Everything depends on the seasoning supplied to the head-cook," replied Compton, good-humoredly, "which I never spare. In fact, he would get a peppering himself, if foxes and pheasants were not found in the same covert, and both good of their kind."

"I never tasted a roast fox," said Conyers, "although I have heard of a fool who once ordered one for dinner. But I'll bear testimony to the flavor of your pheasants; and the hounds seem to relish your foxes, too, by the way they so pertinaciously follow in their wake across country. Why, let me see, or think, rather, of my memorandum-book for last season, which records the eating of nine foxes out of ten, from Compton's little spinners, and all despatched after capital runs—pretty good for a game-preserver, and no fox hunter! Well, Compton, you are one of the right sort, barring an error in your education; but when your son and heir comes home for the Christmas holidays, I have promised Mrs. Compton to give him a few preliminary lessons in the art of horsemanship, and I hope he'll turn out a fox hunter—that's all the harm I shall do for him. And he won't make the worse statesman for having a knowledge of the wiles of Charles James Fox—Sir Francis, there, is an example of that sort, who can take the lead in the House of Commons, as well as over the pastures of Leicestershire—egad, sir, rode two of the quickest things we have had this season, only yesterday, with his arm in a sling!"

"Why, Conyers!" exclaimed Sir Francis, "you are becoming personally offensive to-night—that comes of mixing malt liquor and wine together—and the result is, that you are running riot most wantonly, and require the lash for babbling."

"Ah, very likely, Burnett, the old saying

"I don't like the spitchel?" pointing to his nasal organs, dropping blood, as he hustled along the street."

The introduction of coffee was a hint to Sir Lionel and his friends that their presence was now required in the drawing room, which failed not in being obeyed, deep potatoes not then being the fashion.

Constance and Blanche were seated together on an ottoman sipping their tea, when William Beauchamp joined them, a seat being offered by his sister between them, which he gladly accepted. Old John, the butler, had just entered the room; and, in passing with several smoking cups on his tray, piping hot from the housekeeper's room, his foot caught in the leg of a chair, and he would have precipitated the scalding liquid over Blanche Douglas, but for the quick eye and rapid movement of William Beauchamp, who sprang up before her, and received the contents over his own person.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried the old man. "To think that I should have done such a thing to, Mr. William."

"Better to me than Miss Douglas, my old friend."

"But you must be dreadfully scalded, sir," he added, "all through my awkwardness! What can I do?"

"Oh! William!" exclaimed Constance, jumping up to his aid. "Are you much hurt?"

"No, no, dear, not in the least. My best front and waistcoat are alone a little damaged."

"More than that, I expect, my boy," said Sir Lionel, walking hastily up. "Come with me, Will, directly, and change your things," and he followed his host from the room.

Blanche neither spoke nor rose from her seat; but her quivering lip and flushed face betrayed her emotion, which did not pass unnoticed by Mrs. Harcourt, whose attention was directed to the scene. But Constance (with a woman's quick perception of her feelings), standing before her friend to screen her from observation, stooped as if to examine her dress, and whispered, "Don't be alarmed, dear Blanche—all eyes are upon us—my brother is not hurt."

"Oh, how kind of him to save me at his own risk!" she replied. "I am sure he must be dreadfully scalded."

"Oh, no, my dear girl; I hope the tea was not very hot."

In a few minutes, Sir Lionel returned to the room when Vernon asked, in a sneering tone, if Mr. William Beauchamp was so seriously injured as to require surgical assistance.

"Not that, sir," replied Sir Lionel, indignantly, "although his chest is like a red piece of beef; but thank God, he saved Blanche Douglas, poor child, from what would have been a serious injury to her fair skin, through the blundering of that old fool John."

"What a fuss about a cup of tea!" again sneered Vernon.

"Hark'e, sir," said the baronet, now thoroughly roused; "no more of your sneers, or I'll throw the next relay that comes into your lap, and you'll hop higher than ever you did in a hornpipe."

"Never perpetrated such a monstrosity, Sir Lionel; that dance only suits such high-flyers as Miss Selma."

"I'll make you dance to some purpose presently," muttered that mischievous young lady to herself, with which intent she approached Mr. Vernon, who was loling in an easy chair, and began thanking him, in mocking terms, for his polite allusion to her gymnastic exercises, at the same time beckoning the servant, who held the salver, to take an empty cup she had in her hand. But on his approaching with two other full cups on the tray, with a touch of her elbow, the contents were adroitly tipped over into her persecutor's lap. In an instant he was on his legs, hopping and jumping about with the pain.

"Hang it, madam," he exclaimed in a

ing his voice to a whisper, added, "willingly, most willingly, dear Blanche, would I risk my life to protect you from harm," which caused the blood to rush to her very forehead, so deeply did these words strike to her heart. Mrs. Harcourt's keen glance noticed Beauchamp's impressive manner to her niece, as well as her evident confusion at his words, and walking across to where they were sitting, begged Constance and Blanche to sing the last duet they had been practising together. Refusal was out of the question; and as the two girls rose to go to the piano, Mrs. Harcourt detained Beauchamp by asking his advice about her pet spaniel, but, in reality, to detach him from her niece, and try to discover his true feelings towards her. After the dog's malady had been discussed, she asked, "Don't you think Blanche very much improved in her singing, Mr. Beauchamp?"

"Yes, indeed, she is," was the frank reply; "she sings charmingly, and is a sweet, unaffected girl."

"She must not now be treated as a girl any longer, Mr. Beauchamp, having nearly reached her eighteenth year; and she is to be introduced, as I dare say you have heard, at our next Christmas ball; and considering her position, fortune, and personal attractions, Mr. Harcourt and myself are justified, I think, in expecting that she will form some matrimonial connection."

"There is no station, save one, to which Miss Douglas may not aspire," replied Beauchamp, in the same quiet, indifferent tone of voice.

"We certainly shall not give our consent to her marrying any person who has not an equivalent in fortune or in rank; but I believe she is already attached to her cousin, Lord Malcolm, whom we are expecting at Throsby, next month."

Her eyes were riveted on Beauchamp as she uttered this last sentence, but a steady, firm look was all she could discover there—no embarrassment was perceptible; only a slight curl on his upper lip told Mrs. Harcourt, as plainly as words, that William Beauchamp thoroughly understood her. She was not, however, aware of a fact, known as yet to himself and one other person only, that Lord Malcolm's affections had been given to another.

Relieved from Mrs. Harcourt's catechising and roused by her insinuation, Beauchamp took his revenge by immediately joining Blanche and Constance, who now left the piano, and he attached himself to them for the remainder of the evening.

On returning to the drawing room, Vernon remarked this happy party, and again began his comments to Mrs. Harcourt on Beauchamp's attention to her niece.

"Did you notice Miss Douglas," he asked, "when the accident happened, by that old stupid man upsetting the tea?"

"Yes," she said, "Mr. Vernon, I did; and any young girl, when suddenly frightened, as she must have been, would naturally change color and feel agitated; even at my age, such an occurrence would have made me nervous. But Mr. Beauchamp has been enlightened by me, since you left the room, as to our expectations with regard to my niece, and the communication was received with the most perfect indifference, so that I am quite satisfied his intentions are merely those of a neighbor to one he has known from childhood; particularly as I informed him, also, of Blanche's attachment to her cousin, Lord Malcolm, which did not excite the least surprise."

"Well, Mrs. Harcourt, although you may be satisfied, I am not."

"And pray, Mr. Vernon, may I ask, why you take such an extraordinary interest in my niece?"

"Simply, madam, because I should be sorry to see her thrown away upon such a clod of a fox-hunter as Will Beauchamp."

"Indeed, Mr. Vernon, I ought to feel much obliged by your anxiety for her welfare; but I think some refined young gentlemen might take a lesson from the clod, William

Harcourt told me the other evening."

"Did she tell you so, Mr. Beauchamp?"

"Yes," he replied, mournfully; "and are not her words nearly confirmed, when Blanche's old friend William is addressed as Mr. Beauchamp?"

"And yet," she said, timidly, though firmly, "Blanche Douglas will, I hope, ever be Blanche Douglas to William Beauchamp and his dear sister Constance."

"Heaven grant it," he replied, fervently; "unchanged in heart, though I must not expect in name. Next month you will make your debut in public, as the heiress; and oh! Blanche, think you not of the homage (your just due) which will then be offered at your feet by the rich, the titled, and the gay, all eager for a share of those sunny smiles, by which the heart of Will Beauchamp has been so often gladdened, when pressing the hand he now holds within his own. Fearful to me, alas! will be that change, whose coming I dread, as about to separate us for ever."

"Oh, never, William, believe me, can I so change towards you, as to prefer new acquaintances, however agreeable, to old and well-tried friends."

A tap at the window made Beauchamp spring from the sofa, and there stood Aunt Gordon; but how long she had been there he did not then know. Blanche at the same moment hurried from the room, to put on her bonnet; and Beauchamp, taking up his hat, hastened to meet Mrs. Gordon in the garden, who, shaking hands with him most cordially, said, "So, William, instead of coming to help Aunt Gordon in her garden, you have been occupied in the drawing-room making love to her niece. What have you to say, sir, to this grave charge? guilty, or not guilty?"

"Not guilty, dear Aunt Gordon."

"Then why that heightened color and averted eye? I expected candour, not evasion, from William Beauchamp, she replied, looking offended.

"From you, my dear, kind friend," said Beauchamp, "I have no concealments; you have a double right to know what I said to Blanche, and every word I have spoken to her shall be repeated to you." He then related the conversation which had passed between them, which had arisen from Mrs. Harcourt's observations to him the other night, and the melancholy reflections that had filled his mind ever since, that Blanche Douglas would soon be lost to him for ever.

"So then, William, you do love my niece, notwithstanding your plea of not guilty to making love just now?"

"Dear Aunt Gordon, I will not deny that her happiness is dearer, far dearer to me than my life; but there is a barrier between us which cannot be passed. Her guardian expects she will marry a person either of high rank, or, at least, of fortune equal to her own, which is but reasonable; and there can be little doubt, that on her entrance into the world, her beauty and attractions, joined with that far greater recommendation, money, will immediately cause even coronets to be laid at her feet. What, then! should I selfishly endeavor (by gaining this dear girl's affections) to debar her from all those glittering, lofty prospects in life, to which she is so justly entitled? No, my dear madam, it cannot, and shall not be said of Will Beauchamp, that he ever stood in the path of Blanche Douglas (even had he the power to do so), to prevent her promotion to a higher sphere, in which she is so eminently qualified to shine."

"Then it is the opinion of Mr. William Beauchamp, that honors and riches are the only things which can prefer happiness?"

"One would think so," he replied, "by the avidity with which they are so universally sought after. But surely the fortunate possessors of great talents or endowments may lawfully aspire to, and accept, any further preferment offered them, as a just tribute to their deserts."

To be Continued.