

pace that soon left the quiet suburb far behind. Through the sleepless night he wrestled with his inclinations, and subdued them. As early the next morning as there was a chance of finding Lady Ida at home to visitors, he presented himself at the Earl's, and after a short interview with his uncle in the study, they entered the morning-room, arm-in-arm.

Lady Ida was in close conference with Mrs. Lavington over a box of new trimmings, but a whisper from his lordship made the pretty widow reluctantly withdraw, and the Earl took her vacant seat.

Ida glanced at her cousin, who had paused beside a distant table, where he stood restlessly turning over the leaves of a book, and she saw that his face was haggard, as with some great trouble. Her own was as calm as usual. The tears of the previous night had been few, and soon wiped away.

"Darcy looks as if he had slept ill, or been a naughty boy, and snuggled noisily with other dissipated youths after he left us last evening," she observed, so playfully that he marvelled at her readiness to ignore what had passed between them.

"I believe that you can soon remove Darcy's uneasiness, my dear," her father replied. "For some years past it has been the dearest wish of his heart to make you his, and though I have no desire to bias your choice, I may say that your union would give me great, very great satisfaction."

Ida let the fringes fall from her hands, and modestly drooped her head while her father was speaking.

"My dear child," he added, "Darcy seems to be doubtful of obtaining a favorable answer to his suit. Shall I leave him to press it himself?"

The young lady's silence gave consent; but still the Earl lingered, till his glance at Darcy induced the latter to advance and touch his cousin's taper fingers. They were not withdrawn, and Lord Glenaughton, an air of profound relief chasing for awhile the wrinkles from his brow, quitted the room.

"For a few moments last night, Ida," the young man said, in the slow, husky tones of one who makes a painful confession,—"for a few minutes I suffered myself to forget how long I had given you reasons to suppose that you possessed my affections. If you can forgive this—if you can believe my assurance that I will do my utmost to secure your happiness—"

His voice grew so husky with emotion that he paused.

"I think we were both a little out of humor last night," Ida replied, smiling graciously; "but I have no doubt that we shall be very happy. You must not be offended if mamma is rather disagreeable to you just at first. Mothers will be ambitious for their daughters; and Lord Lechlade has always been such a favorite of hers."

"If you feel any doubt as to what your decision ought to be, pray consult Lady Glenaughton," cried Darcy, snatching at the chance of a reprieve.

"My dear cor, if you were not above such a paltry vanity, I should be inclined to say that you made that speech on purpose to be told that such an empty-headed fop as the poor little Marquis is forgotten in your presence. You may leave mamma to me. I shall be able to manage her."

Darcy said no more. The night's struggle between his inclinations and his honor had brought him to Glenaughton House to make the amende honorable to the beautiful Ida for permitting his thoughts to stray from her. This done he felt too dull and disappointed to exert his conversational powers. His cousin would make him an excellent wife, presiding at his table with inimitable grace; as to that closer communion of souls he had been wont to dream of, it was a myth—a romance that he must be content to seal up in his innermost heart as one that could never be developed in a sweet reality.

"I am only sorry," said Ida, presently, "that I cannot give you with my hand the reversion of the earldom, for I am sure Percy does not deserve it after his shameful behavior. You must be papa's son now, Darcy. Will you ring the bell, and ask Mrs. Lavington to come back, for the man has been waiting for these trimmings an immense while?"

And so Darcy's bride was won, and his fate decided.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THREATENED.

As Lestelle was passing the door of her drawing-room, thinking only of hiding in her own chamber the tears evoked by Darcy's farewell, which she recognised as a final one, Mr. Paulton presented himself at the door.

"Then you have returned at last!" he snarled. "The much-vaunted propriety that shrank from a page's garb, and closes your doors against men of the highest rank, is laid aside for a midnight stroll with a favored lover!"

"I saw your carriage at my door," said Lestelle, her lips white with anger. "Take care that it is never seen there again, lest you also subject yourself to the unpleasantness of being refused admission. From this time forward all intercourse between us ceases, except what my engagement at your theatre compels me to endure. You shall never have the opportunity to make these unwarrantable comments again."

But Wyatt Paulton's wrath had expended itself, and he preferred to be conciliating.

"Tush! You provoked my rudeness by your

folly. Let it pass. Have we not quarrelled before, and on slighter grounds?"

"Good night," Lestelle coldly said, and would have passed on, but he interposed his bulky form between her and the stairs.

"It is late, I acknowledge it, but I have something to say, to which you must listen!"

She passed her hand wearily across her forehead. "I am tired, and my head aches. I am not fit to cope with you now. To-morrow I will hear you, if you like."

But Paulton continued to hold the door of the room open, and invite her to enter.

"I grieve to add to your fatigue, but I have other engagements for the morrow; and it is of importance that we should understand each other without delay."

He permitted him to lead her to a reclining chair near the lamp, which a dexterous touch of his hand placed so that its light fell full upon her features. Something in the wistful expression they wore moved him in spite of himself, and it was with unexpected gentleness that he addressed her. "Child, in those early days when you had no friend, no teacher but me, I was patient with your ignorance, forbearing with the wayward humors you displayed, and generous to you beyond my means, which were small enough then, heaven knows! When the voice I was so carefully cultivating utterly failed, and even you were in despair, it was I who consoled, and bade you be hopeful of regaining it. Stop by stop have I led you on, sharing your discouragements as well as your successes; spending my time and my money freely in your service, and never resting till I have seen you climb—always with my help, remember—to the height which, but for me, would have been unattainable."

"For which well-rehearsed efforts you have received the sum of— But you know the total better than I can tell you," said Lestelle languidly.

"But you do not—you cannot imagine that my share in the profits of your engagements has really repaid me? Do you forget that I have devoted the best years of my lifetime to you?"

"No; nor the further reward you look to obtain!" she answered, raising herself from her listless attitude, and speaking with a touch of defiance in her accents.

"And what is that?" asked Paulton, crossing his bushy whiskers, and eyeing her keenly.

"Put your meaning into your words, *belles amie*. We will have no more hints at each other's intentions. Whether it be for peace or war, let us have no concealments."

"If you had said this long since, and acted up to it, I might have respected you more," Lestelle retorted. "You propose, if I am not mistaken, to establish my birth by means of the paper you stole from me the night you brought me to London, a wretched, timorous old man, who had eagerly snatched at the opportunity of escaping from one state of bondage, though it was only to fall into another almost as intolerable."

"Your words have a thankful ring, truly!" Mr. Paulton commented. "Had you not placed an undue value upon the paper, which, wisely, I think, I took into my own keeping, you would have seen that I had another and deeper reason for what I have done. Do you forget what I told you not long since?"

Lestelle pushed her chair back with a gesture of disgust.

"Do not repeat it! Do not compel me to remember how you spoke of making me your wife; but be thankful that I did not carry your words to Lestelle Hill—the patient, loving, much-enduring Lestelle."

"Mrs. Hill is a most exemplary person," Paulton carelessly replied; "but it is ridiculous to think that I have ever contemplated marrying her. She has been useful to me—extremely so. I don't know how I could have carried out my plans for your education if I had not secured her co-operation. But she has passed her first youth, and has neither wit, beauty, nor money to recommend her. Lestelle, from the time your own loveliness first began to expand, I resolved to wed you. Put aside the foolish dreams that have filled your mind of late, and consent to give me your hand."

"I am glad you do not dignify the bargain with any pretence of love," she answered, scornfully. "You are a clever man, Mr. Paulton; but you have not fathomed my nature as well as you fancy, or you would not have asked me this."

"Anyhow, I expected some such reply," he said, composedly. "I was prepared to hear you rail, and call me a madman, for thinking to mate my middle age with your girlhood. Say all you wish, then ponder a little, and ask yourself if it will be wise to reject me. You do not know all I offer; but recollect that not the least of my gifts shall be the power of revenge, if you will! Ha! did you suffer nothing to-night when that scornful girl stood in all the pride of her beauty, with the family jewels glittering on her neck and arms, so openly disdaining you?"

Lestelle clasped her hands together, and choked down a sob.

"It was hard to bear, but I have forgiven her."

"And robbed her of her lover. Was it for this you loitered with Darcy Lesmere to-night? Then you are a brave girl, *ma belle*—a brave girl!"

Lestelle curled her lip contemptuously.

"Keep your praise till I stoop to some mean action, and merit it. Darcy Lesmere is about to marry his cousin Ida; and I have been

amongst the first to congratulate him on the event."

"And you will be mine?"

"Never—never!" she answered, so emphatically, that Wyatt Paulton's face grew purple with passion.

"Take time to consider," he muttered. "Look on the reverse of the fair picture that I showed you but now. Wyatt Paulton's wife would be wealthy and distinguished. The girl who foolishly rejects him may learn that a bright can be cast on the fame of the most talented actress—that she may find herself set aside for some new favorite, and hissed where she has been applauded."

He drew nearer, and laid his hand on Lestelle's. She did not attempt to withdraw it, but

steadily met his threatening look.

"I am a dangerous foe, *belles amie*," he went on. "I have determined on this marriage too long to be easily turned from my purpose. You must be mine. You cannot establish your birth without my aid."

"This threat has lost its power over me," she mournfully exclaimed. "I have no longer any craving to know who or what I am. A name, however honorable, would not give me the love that could alone make life supportable."

"How long have you felt this strange indifference? Bah! it will pass away again. I will see you in a day or two, when you must be prepared with a definite reply to my proposals."

"Spare yourself the suspense this would involve," cried Lestelle, detaining him as he rose to leave her. "Your monaces, like your persuasions, have fallen powerless on my ears. You would but marry me to ensure your own aggrandizement."

"And yours, Lestelle. If I rise, you rise with me. Recollect this! Say your hand shall be mine, and I swear that you shall revenge yourself for every insult heaped upon you, and triumph over all those proud Glenaughtons!"

She laughed bitterly. "And scatter myself in the flames? Once I thought it would be very pleasant to do this; but not now. I will die as my mother died, and comfort myself as she did, that if I have been injured, I have borne to retaliate."

"Do you expect me to be stricken with admiration of such marvellous virtue?" he asked, with a sneer.

"No; for it is born of despair, not of any better feeling. Now let me go; and banish all hope of ever winning me to your wishes. If I had no other reason, I would still refuse to wed the man who has made the loving, trusting Lestelle his tool for years, and now ruthlessly flings her aside."

Wyatt Paulton stood for a moment or two fingering his watch-chain, and looking frowningly down into Lestelle's face. She kept her eyes raised to his, and not a trace of faltering could he perceive in their depths, or in the resolutely-set mouth that had spoken the decision he vainly strove to combat.

At last he picked up his hat.

"It is said, and henceforth I work alone. But I know why you have refused me, and how to strike the blow that shall make you regret this night's work."

Lestelle heard him with secret uneasiness, though she answered bravely enough. "I do not fear you. I am too indifferent regarding my future to care how soon you fulfil your threats."

"Keep such melodramatic speeches for the stage, little one. You have nothing to dread personally. You and I are still necessary to one another."

Some idea of his meaning now crossed Lestelle; and with paling cheeks, she rose, and followed him to the door.

"You will not attempt to injure Viscount Brancoseigh? You cannot have the heart to do that? The boy is dying; I saw it in his face last night when he came behind the scenes to speak to me. Ah! you have wrought him sorrow enough. For your own soul's sake, spare him!"

Paulton laughed. "You will develop into a tragedy-queen by-and-by, my child; but you need not inflict these rehearsals on me. As for young Percy, if I had wished to do him any harm, I should not have let you coax me out of those cheques to which he had rashly signed his father's name. Be tranquil, Percy Brancoseigh is not in my way; therefore I pass him by."

"And you will make no attempt to prove that I am the Earl of Glenaughton's child by an earlier marriage?"

"Most decidedly I shall not. Now, are you satisfied? Then, farewell."

Lestelle drew aside the curtains, and watched the carriage drive away. There was a dread of his malleous reprisals throbbing in her heart that she could not subdue. That he would fulfil his threat, and cause her to tremble for her rejection, she did not doubt. But in what way? If his vengeance were wreaked on her alone, it would be easy to endure it; but he had hinted that others were to be included in it, and Lestelle's fears grew more and more difficult to cope with.

A hand fell on her shoulder, and, with a scream, she turned to meet the sad eyes of Lestelle Hill.

"I have heard all, my dear," said the latter, very quietly. "I grow so sleepy while waiting for you, that I fall down on the couch in yonder window, and did not wake till Wyatt's voice aroused me."

Lestelle wrapped her arms around her friend.

"My poor Lestelle! If you know how often I have longed to tell you he was unworthy!"

"I should not have believed you. Nothing

but the evidence of my own ears would have convinced me. I have been a very silly, credulous creature, Lestelle. I thought this man loved me."

She smiled so strangely as she spoke, that Lestelle tried to soothe her. "Come to bed, dear Lestelle. You have too much self-respect to grieve over the loss of such a lover. You must try to forget him."

"Not yet!" And now Lestelle spoke with fiery bitterness. "Mr. Wyatt Paulton's tool has a debt to pay. Let him look to himself. I have been faithful to his interests; I will be the same to my own."

She broke from Lestelle as she said this, and shut herself in her own room.

(To be continued.)

## NO. "17;"

OR,

## HOW I WAS TRAPPED.

BY A DETROIT REPORTER.

I knew but little of man's wickedness to man, when I was sixteen years old. Born and reared in the country, miles from even a village, and having only the society of boys of good habits, having Christian parents like myself, I never heard a real oath until I was fourteen, and the world of crime was a book of which I had never cut the leaves. I believed all men were like uncle Thompson, grandfather Fuller, and other neighbors about us, steady, industrious and honest.

I am going to tell you here what first opened my eyes.

The summer that brought my sixteenth birthday, also deprived me of a father. He was stricken down very suddenly, and it was only after the earth had closed over him that we could really feel our great loss. Many relatives came, and among them were two who came to stay, a sister of my mother's, and a niece. They came a distance of a hundred miles, and my aunt's son, a boy about my own age, came with them. It was the intention to let him stop a few days, and then send him back alone, he being used to traveling.

It was at length decided that when he went back I should go with him. A change of faces and location would blunt the edges of grief, and perhaps assist my health, which had not been good for several months. In going home with Fred, we should pass through Pittsburg. We would have to wait from seven until nine in the evening, change cars, and then a ride of twenty miles would finish the journey.

I will not trouble you with small particulars, but simply say that the day of our journey came; we rode safely to Pittsburg, and then prepared to wear away the time until nine o'clock. It was in October, and darkness had reigned over the city for half an hour before we reached it. Both of us had considerable money. I think I had about twelve dollars. I had a large wallet and in addition to the genuine bank bills, I had nearly a score of poor counterfeiters which Fred had given me, his father having got them in some way. Altogether, good and bad, one to look at my open wallet, would have thought it contained two or three hundred dollars.

We sat down in the depot for a short time, and then my curiosity was so great that Fred consented to a short walk on the streets. I had never seen a gas lamp, horse-car, nor many other every day matters to the city lads, and it was a rare treat for me. Fred had seen them all, and took everything as a matter of course. After half an hour spent in rambling around, we returned to the depot, and at eight o'clock Fred was asleep in his seat, being tired out.

My curiosity was not half-satisfied. There was a great display of fire-arms in a window three or four blocks away, and I longed for another look. I saw that it lacked an hour of train time, and I determined to take a walk on my own account. I had only to step out of the door to be upon the street, and there seemed to be no danger of my getting lost. I went out, and after a few minutes, I found the window; and for a long time stood and admired the guns, pistols, revolvers, game-bags, etc.

A block up the street was a jewelry store, displaying a window full of silver-ware, and here I had another treat. One block down another street a brass band commenced to play, as I stood looking at the silver, and of course I ran down there.

The band moved off after a moment, and I followed for a block or two, until seeing by a jeweler's clock that it only lacked a quarter of nine o'clock, I would not have more than time to reach the depot. Turning around, I started off on a rather frightened, and somewhat bewildered. I made two or three turns, and was quite sure that I was upon the street, leading to the depot. I expected every moment to come to the window filled with fire-arms, but after running a full mile and not finding it, I knew I had blundered, and was lost.

"Why, bless your soul!" exclaimed an old woman of whom I inquired the way, "you are more'n a mile from the depot, and your train left twenty minutes ago."

The woman kept a fruit and candy store, and while we were talking I took out my wallet, and made a purchase of some apples. There was a boy about my own age, but stouter, hanging