

Bee blushed and lowered her head, but did not reply.

Claudia answered to her :

'Beatrice does not like Lord Vincent ; and does not approve of the marriage,' she said, defiantly.

'Humph !' exclaimed the judge, and not another word was spoken during the drive.

It was a rather long one. The church selected for the performance of the marriage rites being St. John's at the West End of town, where the bridegroom and his friends were to meet the bride and her attendants.

They reached the church at last ; the other carriages arrived a few seconds after them, and the whole party alighted and went in.

The bridegroom and his friends were already there. And the bridal procession formed and went up the middle aisle to the altar, where the bishop in his sacerdotal robes stood ready to perform the ceremony.

The bridal party formed before the altar, the bishop opened the book, and the ceremony commenced. It proceeded according to the ritual, and without the slightest deviation from commonplace routine.

When the bishop came to that part of the rites in which he utters the awful adjuration—'I require and charge you both, as ye shall answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined in matrimony, ye do now declare it. For he ye well assured, that if any persons are joined together otherwise than God's Word doth allow, their marriage is not lawful.'—But, who was standing with her mother and father near the bridal circle, looking up at the bride.

Oh ! could Claudia, loving another, looking the bridegroom, kneel in that sacred church, before that holy altar, in the presence of God's minister, in the presence of God himself, hear that solemn adjuration, and persevere in her avowal ?

Yes, Claudia could ! as tens of thousands, from ignorance, from insensibility, or from recklessness, have done before her ; and as tens of thousands more, from the same causes, will do so here !

The ceremony proceeded until it reached the part where the ring is placed upon the bride's finger, and all went well enough until, as they were rising from the prayer of 'Our Father,' the bride happened to lower her hand, and the ring, which was too large

for her finger, dropped off, and rolled away, and passed out of sight.

The ceremony ended, and the ring was sought for ; but could not be found then ; and, I may as well tell you now, it has not been found yet.

Seeing at length that their search was fruitless, the gentlemen of the bridal train reluctantly gave up the ring for lost, and the whole party filed into the chancel, to sign their names in the register, that lay for this purpose on the communion table.

The bridegroom first approached and wrote his. It was a prolonged and sonorous roll of names, such as frequently compose the tail of a nobleman's title :

Malcolm—Victor—Stuart—D'Arciac—Gordon, Dugald, Viscount Vincent.

Then the bride signed hers, and the witnesses theirs.

When Mr. Brudenell came to sign his own name as one of the witnesses, he happened to glance at the bridegroom's long train of names. He read them over with a smile at their length, but his eyes fastened upon the last one—'Dugald,' 'Dugald,' 'Dugald !' Herman Brudenell, like the immortal Burton, thought he had 'heard that name before,' in fact, was sure he had 'heard that name before !' Yes, verily ; he had heard it in connection with his sister's fatal flight, in which a certain Captain Dugald had been her companion ! And he resolved to make cautious inquiries of the viscount. He had known Lord Vincent on the Continent ; but he had either never happened to hear what his family name was, or if he had chanced to do so, he had forgotten the circumstances. At all events, it was not until the instant in which he read the viscount's signature in the register that he discovered the family name of Lord Vincent and the disreputable name of Eleanor Brudenell's unprincipled lover to be the same.

But this was no time for brooding over the subject ! He signed his own signature, which was the last one on the list, and then joined the bridal party, who were now leaving the church.

At the door a signal change took place in the order of the procession.

Lord Vincent, with a courtesy as earnest and a smile as beaming and gallant, as the occasion required, handed his bride into his own carriage.

Judge Merlin, Ishmael and Beatrice rode together.

And others returned in the order in which they had come.

Ishmael was coming out of that strange, benumbed state that had descended for a while all his senses of suffering—coming