

DEAR LAND.

When comes the day, all hearts to weigh, I stanch thy blood, or die, Shall we forget the sacred debt...

When I behold your mountains bold— Your noble lakes and streams— A mingled tide of grief and pride...

My grandfather died his home beside, They seized and hanged him there; His only crime, in evil time...

My boyish ear still clung to hear Of Erin's pride of yore, Ere Norman foot had dared pollute Her independent shores...

What hath is best your rights to wrest Let other heads divine; By work or word, with voice or sword...

Were sweet, endured for you, Dear Land— We must not weep for you.

REDMOND O'DONNELL OR, LE CHASSEUR D'AFRIQUE.

CHAPTER XIV.—CONTINUED.

He left her as he spoke. On the threshold he turned to say a last word. "Drive the trap back to your quarters in Castleford, I'll see you to-morrow, let things end which way they will. I'm going to Sir John now. Go at once—good-night!"

He ascended to the baronet's room. Dr. Graves was there, Katherine and Miss Talbot. The stricken soldier had been laid upon his bed, undressed, and everything done for him that it was possible to do. He lay rigid and stark, his heavy breathing the only sign of life.

"Well!" Peter Dangerfield said the word in a strained, tense sort of voice, and looked with eager, burning eyes at the medical man. "I can give no definite answer as yet, Mr. Dangerfield," Dr. Graves answered coldly, and turning his back upon him.

Peter Dangerfield drew a long breath. Death was written on every line of that ghastly, bloodless face. After a brief five months' reign, Sir John lay dying—dying childless, and he was heir-at-law!

He looked furtively at Katherine. She was standing motionless at the foot of the bed, gazing at that rigid form. She had removed nothing—not a flower—not a jewel—not even her gloves—veil, lace, and silk still floated about her. Her face kept its changeless calm—her eyes their still, frozen look.

"Of all the ways in which I thought she would take it, I never thought of this," he said to himself. "Are all women like her, or is she unlike all women? I never understood her—to-night I understand her least of all."

It was midnight now. He paused a moment at the oriel window to look out at the night. The storm had expended its fury, the rain and sleet had ceased. A wild north wind was blowing; it was turning bitterly cold. Up above the storm drifts were scudding before the gale, a few frosty stars glimmered, and a wafted moon lifted its pallid face out of the distant sea.

"And this was to have been her wedding day, and the bridegroom lies dying downstairs. I would not spare her one pang if I could, but I must own it's hard on her."

He went softly down the long stairway, and into the lower room where they had borne Gaston Dantree. Mr. Otis was with him still, and Talbot and De Vere.

"Is he dead?" Mr. Dangerfield demanded. He looked like that. They had washed away the blood, and bound up the wound. He lay with his eyes closed, and breathing faintly; but, dead and in his coffin, Gaston Dantree would never look more awfully corpse-like than now.

Mr. Otis lifted his quiet eyes. "Not dead, Mr. Dangerfield—not even likely to die, so far as I can see. What is to be done with him?"

"I hope not—I trust not. But you must not be here when he recovers consciousness." "What do you mean to do with him?" she asked, in the same low monotone. "He cannot stay here. Will you take him away?"

"Then take him to your own house. It is a great favor I ask, but you will do it I know. The expense shall be mine. I don't want him to die." A slight shudder passed over her as she said it; "and there is no one else I can ask. Will you do this for me?"

She laid her hand on his arm, and looked at him. A great compassion filled his heart for this girl, so cruelly bereaved through no fault of her own. He could not refuse.

"It shall be done. I will have him removed immediately, and if he dies it will be no fault of mine."

"I knew I might trust you. If it is possible, I will go there and see him. He must not die, Mr. Otis—he must not." A sudden swift gleam came into her dead eyes. "He must recover, and he must leave here. Take him at once, and thank you very much."

"Then the tall white figure fitted away and was gone, and the four men stood confounded and looked blandly into each other's startled eyes.

"What does she mean?" De Vere asked. "What does she want the scoundrel to live for? Egad! the only creditable thing he has ever done in the world will be his leaving it."

"It is for her father's sake, doubtless," suggested Squire Talbot. "Nothing of the sort," interrupted Peter Dangerfield. "She wants Dantree to recover for her own. If she has entirely done with him I'm greatly mistaken. I wouldn't stand in Dantree's shoes when he recovers for the crown of England. She is in an unnatural state just now—she'll awake after a little and be all the more terrible for her present calm."

What will your mother say, Otis, when you turn her house into a private hospital? "Whatever I do is good and admirable in my mother's eyes. I will trouble you, Mr. Dangerfield, to order the carriage, and the quietest horse in the stable. Every moment we lose now is of vital importance."

Mr. Dangerfield obeyed. The carriage was brought round, the wounded man, carefully covered from the cold, raw night air, carried out, and laid among the cushions. Squire Talbot, with little love for the stricken man, accompanied the assistant into Castleford. Gaston Dantree had been his guest, and though, after his base and dastardly conduct to-night, he could never again cross the threshold of Morecambe, he still felt bound to see him safely to his destination.

Captain De Vere remained behind at Scarswood, at the solicitation of Mr. Dangerfield. He could not return to his lodgings while things were in this uncertain state, neither could he remain alone. How would this night end? Would Sir John recover again, or would the New Year morning, breaking already, see him lord of his noble domain?

And upstairs, in the sick chamber, the dim night lamp flickered, and only the ticking of the clock sounded in the dead hush. Sir John lay motionless, Dr. Graves sat beside him, his wrist between his fingers, counting the beating of that sinking pulse.

An eminent physician had been telegraphed for to London, but it was more than doubtful if he would find the baronet alive on his arrival. And if Gaston Dantree died, would it not be as well so?

Beside him, at the foot of the bed, looking like the ghost of some dead bride in that spectral light, Katherine sat. She sat quite motionless, her eyes rarely leaving the face upon the pillow, her hands clasped on her lap, her face like marble. "At one fell swoop," she had lost—all!—home, friends, fortune, lover, father, name, and yet it is doubtful if in these first hours she suffered much. She could not realize it yet—the suddenness and horror of the blow had stunned her; hysterics and tears and woman's uttermost agony might come hereafter—now she sat still and calm. Her heart lay like a stone in her bosom, a dull heavy pain throbbing ceaselessly in her head, but her misery was tearless and dumb.

Dr. Graves, watching her uneasily and furtively, wondered what manner of woman this girl was. So unlike all others he had ever known, sitting here without one complaint, one sob, one cry of pain, with her bridegroom lost to her on her bridal night, the father who had adored her dying before her eyes.

And while the night light flickered, and the two pale watchers sat mutely there, the bright wintry sun arose—the happy New Year had begun. As its first rays stole in between the closed curtains, the sick man's eyes opened, and he rallied a little. His glance fell upon Katherine, a swift gleam of intelligence lit his eyes, his lips moved, and a few incoherent words came forth. In an instant she was bending above him, her ear to his lips.

"Darling papa! yes, what is it?" He strove hard to speak, but again only that muttered, incoherent sound. But the girl's quick ear had caught three words: "Indian cabinet—will." His thickening voice failed, his dim eyes looked with piteous, speechless agony up to hers.

"A will in the Indian cabinet—is that it, papa?" He nodded eagerly—a flash of light crossing his death-like face. "And you want me to set it for you?" He nodded again. "Quick!" he said, huskily, and she arose and left the room.

The Indian cabinet was in the library. There the lights still burned brightly, and there on the bench by the door had stood the lover for whom she had been ready to give up the world and all its glory—and who mercifully cast her off. She looked darkly that way once. "He will live!" she said to herself under her breath. "And I will remember it." Then she crossed to the tall cabinet, opened one drawer after another, and searched among the papers there for the paper she wanted.

"Oh, my God! too late!" Katherine's arms encircled him—she pressed her cold face close to his. "Papa, darling," softly and sweetly, "I don't want you to grieve for me—to think of me even. You are very, very ill—very ill, papa, and—had we not better send for a clergyman?"

He made a feeble motion of assent. She looked at Captain De Vere. "You will go?" she said. "He went at once. Then she bent close to him again, whispering gently and soothingly into his ear. But it is doubtful if he heard her. A stupor—the stupor which precedes death—was gathering over him; his dull eyes closed, his pale lips muttered, he moaned ceaselessly—the great last change was very near.

The sun was high in the blue January sky now, the whole world jubilant with the glad sunlight of the New Year. And in the town of Castleford people talked with bated breath of the strange, dread tragedy at Scarswood, and of nothing else. In a little cottage in the remotest suburb of the town, Gaston Dantree lay, senseless still, while life and death fought their sharp battle above his pillow. And in that stately and spacious chamber at Scarswood his lord lay dying, while clergyman and physicians stood by, useless and in vain.

She never left him—she neither slept nor ate. As she had been from the first—tearless, noiseless—so she was to the last. The perfumed laces—the dead white silk of her trailing robe—still swept their richness over the carpet; on arms and neck large pearls still shone, on her head the orange wreath and veil still remained. She had removed nothing but her gloves—she did it matter what she wore now? She sat beside the dying man, while the slow ghastly hours dragged on—an awful sight it seemed to the men who silently watched her. Her wedding day! and she sat here bereaved more cruelly, more bitterly, than ever widow in the world before.

Morning came and passed. The short January afternoon wore on. The sun dropped low, the blue twilight shadows were gathering once more. That celebrated physician from London had arrived, but all the physicians in the great Babylon were of little avail now. Lower and lower the red wintry sun dropped, flashing earth and sky with rose-light, and, as its last red ray faded and died amid the trees of Scarswood Park, Sir John Dangerfield passed from Scarswood and all earthly possessions forever. Without sign or struggle the shadow that goes before crept up, and shut out the light of life in one quiet instant from all the face.

Up and down, up and down in the crimson splendors of that New Year sunset Peter Dangerfield paced under the leafless trees. And this was to have been her wedding day; and no pang of pity—no touch of remorse came to him—it was not in nature to feel either. He only waited in a fever of impatience for the end.

It came. As he stood for an instant, his eyes fixed on that radiance in the west, thinking how fair and stately Scarswood looked beneath its light, Dr. Graves approached him. One look at his face was enough! His heart gave a great leap. At last! at last!—his hour had come.

"Sir Peter Dangerfield," the physician gravely said, "your uncle is dead." The late Sir John had been his friend; but a live dog is better than a dead lion. Sir John was dead, and Sir Peter reigned. It could do no harm to be the first to pay court to the new sovereign.

"Sir Peter!" he turned faint and giddy for a moment with great joy, and leaned speechlessly against a tree. Then he started up, his face flushing dark red, and made hastily for the house. Never before had the old baronial hall looked half so noble, half so grand; never before had the fair domain spread around him seemed half so stately an inheritance as now when he stood there in this first January sunset, master of Scarswood.

CHAPTER XV.

The funeral was over, and a very grand and stately ceremony it had been. There had been a profusion of mutes of black velvet and of ostrich feathers, a long procession of mourning coaches, a longer procession of the carriages of the county families—a whole army, it seemed, of the Dangerfield tenantry and the tradespeople of Castleford. For the late Sir John, during his brief reign, had made many friends, and over his death a halo of delicious romance hung. Miss Dangerfield was not Miss Dangerfield—his daughter was not his daughter, and over in that little cottage on the outskirts of the town, a young man lay—dying it might be—slain by the hand of the outraged baronet whom they were burying to-day.

It was a very solemn pageant. The bells of the town and of the hamlets about tolled all the day long! Scarswood Park had been alive from morning until night with people in carriages coming to leave cards. The principal church belfry in black. And "ashes to ashes—dust to dust," had been spoken, and they laid Sir John, with the dozens of other dead Dangerfields, under the chancel, where sturdy Sir Roland Dangerfield, knight, had knelt (in stone) for a hundred years, opposite his wife Elizabeth, with a stone cushion between them.

The funeral was over, and in the pale yellow glimmer of the January sunset the mourning coaches and the family carriages went their way, and the dead man's adopted daughter was driven back home. How! what an utter mockery that word must have sounded in her ears as she lay back among the sable cushions in her trailing capes and bonnet, and knowing that of all the homeless, houseless wretches adrift on the world, there was not one more homeless than she.

The pale yellow glow of the sunset was merging into the gloomy gray of evening as they reached Scarswood. Her faithful friend, Edith Talbot, who had been with her from the first, was with her still. The blinds were drawn up, shutters unbarred, Scarswood looked much the same as ever, only there was a hatching over the great dining-room windows, and in the house the servants, clad in the deepest mourning, moved about like ghosts, with bated breath and hushed voices, as though the lord of the manor still lived in state in these silent upper rooms. It all struck with a dreary chill on the heart of Miss Talbot, the gloom, the silence, the mourning robes, the desolation. She shuddered a little, and clung closer to Katherine's arm as they went up the wide black slippery creaking staircase, down which Gaston Dantree had been hurled. But there was that in her friend's face that made her very heart stand still with awe and expectation.

She was white as death. At all times she had been pale, but not like this—never before like this! As she had been from the first hour the blow fell, so she was still, silent, tearless, rigid. All those days and nights when Sir John Dangerfield had lain stark and dead before her, she had sat immovable in the big carved oak chair at his head, her clasped hands lying still, her face whiter than snow, white almost as the dead, her eyes fixed straight before her in a fixed unseeing stare. Of what was she thinking as she sat there—of

all that was past, of all that was to come? No one knew. People who had thought they had known her best looked at her in wonder and distrust, began to realize they had never known her at all. Friends came, and friends went—she never heeded; they spoke to her as of a thing, compassionately, and she answered in briefest monosyllables, and closed her lips more resolutely than before. The only one of them all she ever addressed directly was Mr. Otis, and then only in one short phrase, "How 'is he?" The answer invariably was "Aluch the same—no worse, no better." Mr. Otis, with his keen, thin face and steel-blue eyes, watched this singular sort of girl with even more interest than the rest of the curious. He was a young man who thought more than he spoke, and who studied human nature. Women at best are incomprehensible creatures scarcely to be treated as rational beings in the trying hours of life, but beyond all of her sex this girl was a sphinx.

She had lost lover, father, fortune, home, and name all in one hour and she had never shed one tear, never uttered one complaint. Other women's hearts would have broken for half, and she, a child of seventeen, bore all like a Spartan. Was it that she did not feel at all—or that she felt so much? Would this frozen calm outlast her life, or would the ice break all at once, suddenly and terribly, and let the black and bitter waters below rush forth?

"If it ever does, then was to those who have ruined her," Mr. Otis thought. "This girl is no common girl, and not to be judged by common rules. I thought so from the first time I saw her—happy and hopeful, I think so more than ever now—in her desolation and despair. She loved the man she has lost with a passion and abandon which (thank Heaven!) few girls of seventeen ever feel. She loved the father who is dead, the name and rank she bore, the noble inheritance that was to be hers. And all has gone from her, and she sits here like this! Let Mrs. Vavasor take care, let Peter Dangerfield be warned, and most of all, let Gaston Dantree die, for on my life I believe a day of terrible reckoning will come."

But Gaston Dantree was not going to die; that matter was settled beyond possibility of doubt before the day of the funeral. He would live. He told her so now, as she asked the question; and as Henry Otis spoke the words, his eyes were fixed upon her with a keen, powerful look. She did not even seem to see him—her eyes looked out of the window at the gray shadows veiling the wintry landscape, a slight, indescribable smile dawned for a second over her white face.

"He will live," she repeated softly; "I am glad of that." She looked up and met the young surgeon's level, searching gaze. "I am glad of that," she said again, slowly "if such a lost wretch as I am has a right to be glad at all. You have been very kind Mr. Otis."

She gave him her hand with some of her old frank grace. "Thank you very much. I will repay you some day if I can."

He took the slim fingers in his, more moved than she knew. How could those white little fingers work? how could they write the young lady's name? how could they compass moved him, and in that instant there dawned within him a love and pity that never left him. He longed with manhood's strong compassion to take this poor little womanly martyr in his sheltered arms, and hold her there safe from sorrow, and suffering, and sin, it might be, in the dark days to come.

The only hours in which life and their old fire had come to the large, weary eyes of the girl, had been the hours when Sir Peter Dangerfield had come into the death-chamber. Then a curious expression would set her lips hard, and kindle a furive, ceaseless gleam in her eyes. Sir Peter! He was that now beyond the shadow of a doubt—the legal forms which would prove his right presently were only forms. Sir Peter wore the weeds of woe well. He was pale and restless, his deep black made him look quite ghastly; his small, pale, nearsighted eyes blinked away uneasily from that stately figure sitting in the great armchair. Mr. Otis noticed this, too—what did not those sharp eyes of his see?

"I'm a poor man," he said one evening, under his breath, as he watched the dark glance with which Katherine followed the new baronet out of the room—"I'm a poor man, and I would like to be a rich one, but for all your prospective baronetcy, all your eight thousand a year, Sir Peter Dangerfield, I wouldn't stand in your shoes to-night."

And now it was all over, and Katherine, trailing her black robes behind her, was back at Scarswood. "For the last time, Edith," she said softly to her companion, "for the last time."

"Katherine," her friend faltered, "what do you mean? Oh, Kathie, don't look so—don't smile like that for pity's sake. You make me afraid of you."

For a smile, strange and ominous, had dawned over Katherine's face, as she met her friend's piteous glance.

"I'm afraid of me," she repeated. "Well—I am a hideous object, I dare say, by this time, and I don't dare to look in the glass for fear I should grow afraid of myself. I'm afraid of myself! That is just it—I'm afraid of myself—horribly afraid—afraid—afraid. Edith," she caught her friend's arm with sudden strength, "you like me a little now—yes, yes, I know you do; and in the years that are to come I know you will hate me—hate and abhor me! Edith, I loved my father—dearly, dearly—but I tell you I am glad he is dead and buried to-night."

"Oh, Katherine! Katherine!" Katherine Dangerfield went steadily on, "and I am strong, and healthy, and likely to live for fifty years to come. What sort of a woman do you think I will be half or a quarter of a century from now? Think of me as I am to-night. Edith Talbot, when the time comes for you to shrink at the sound of my name—an orphan, who had no father to lose, a widow in her wedding hour, a houseless, friendless wretch, trained to think herself a baronet's daughter and heiress."

The passion within her was rising now, strong, but surely rising. Her hands were clenched, her eyes bright in the creeping dusk, her voice deep, suppressed, and intense. Edith Talbot clasped her hands ceaselessly upon her face, and looked beseechingly up at her.

"Not houseless—not friendless, Katherine, darling—never that while my mother and I live. Oh, come with us—let Morecambe be your home—let me be your sister. I love you, dear—indeed I do, and never half so fondly as now. Come with us, and give up those dark and dreadful thoughts that I know are in your mind. Come Kathie—darling—come!"

She drew her friend's face down and kissed it again and again. And Katherine held her tight for one moment, and then let her go. "It is like you Edith," she only said, "like you and your brother. But then it was always a weakness of your house to take the losing side. I do not say much, but believe me I am very grateful. And now, my little pale pet, I will send you home—you are worn out in your loyal fidelity to your fallen friend. I will send you home, and to-morrow, or next day, you will come back to Scarswood."

She kissed her and put her from her. Edith Talbot looked at her distrustfully in the fading light. "To-morrow or next day! But when I come back to Scarswood shall I find Katherine here?" Katherine was standing where the light fell strongest. She turned abruptly away at these words. "Where else should you find me? You don't think Peter Dan—may I beg his pardon—Sir Peter will turn me on the street for a day or two at least. Here is your brother, Edith—I don't want to meet him, and I should rather be alone. You must go."

The words sounded ungracious, but Edith understood her—understood her swift impetuous kiss and the flight from the room. She wanted to be alone—always the impulse of all wild animals in the first throbs of pain. And though Katherine showed it in no way, nor even much looked it, Edith knew how the wound was bleeding inwardly, and that it was just such strong natures as this that suffered most, and suffered mutely.

"Going to stay all night at Scarswood alone—deuced strange girl that," the squire grumbled. "Never shed a tear since it all happened; they say—a woman that doesn't cry is a woman of the wrong sort. She's got Otis to fetch round that coxcomb Dantree, but now that she's got him fetched round, what is she going to do with him? She's got to walk out in a day or two and leave that little cad of an attorney lord of the manor? She never says a word or lifts a finger to help herself. And I used to think that girl had pluck."

"What would you have her do? What can she do?" his sister demanded, impatiently. "What can any woman do when she's wronged, but break her heart and beat it?" "Some women are devils—just that!" the young squire responded, gravely; "and I believe in my soul Katherine Dangerfield has more of the devil in her than even the generality of women. If Messieurs Dantree and Dangerfield have heard the last of their handiwork, then I'm a Dutchman. If Katherine Dangerfield can't have justice, take my word for it, Miss Talbot, she'll have revenge."

His sister said nothing—she shivered beneath her sables and looked back wistfully towards Scarswood. She loved her friend truly and greatly as girls rarely love; and, as Katherine had said, it was ever the way of her chivalrous race to take the losing side—a way that in troubled times gone by had cost more than one Talbot his head. A vision rose before her of Katherine alone in those empty, dark rooms, where death had been so lately, brooding with that pale, sombre face, over her wrongs.

"With her nature, it is enough to drive her to madness or suicide," Miss Talbot thought. "I will go back to-morrow and fetch her with me, say what she will. To be left to herself is the very worst thing that can possibly happen to her now."

Katherine was not alone, however. There had followed their carriage to Scarswood another, and that other contained the heir and the late baronet's lawyer. Mr. Mansfield, the Castleford solicitor, was talking very earnestly concerning that unspoken and invalid will.

"You will pardon the liberty I take, Sir Peter, in urging you to do this poor young lady justice." Probably you need no urging—you have been her friend—who so recently thought yourself her cousin. Your late excellent uncle was my friend since my earliest youth—I know and you know how he loved his daughter—Katherine, I mean. I trust and believe, Sir Peter, you will do her justice."

The smile on the face of the new baronet might have damped the old solicitor's hope could he have seen it, but the fast closing night hid it as he lay back in the cushions. "How, pray, Mr. Mansfield?"

"The sneer was just perceptible. It was there, however, and the lawyer remarked it. "By giving her at once the three thousand pounds which he wished to leave her in that unassigned will, if will it can really be called, drawn up informally by himself, and speaking of her only. I suppose the knowledge of this woman Vavasor's power, and his dread of her, prevented him from making his will properly, months ago. But to those three thousand pounds, the remains of his late wife's portion, you, at least, Sir Peter, have no shadow of moral right. Legally, of course, everything is yours, but law, as you know, is not always justice."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Mansfield," the other interrupted coolly; "law and justice in this case go hand-in-hand. My late lamented uncle tried his best to defraud me of my rights—you can't deny that."

"He is dead, Sir Peter, and you know the old Latin proverb: 'Speak no ill of the dead.'"

"If truth be ill, it must be spoken, though the dead had been a king instead of a baronet; and I claim that I have a legal and moral right to everything—everything—you understand, Mr. Mansfield—this three thousand pounds and all. I think, on the whole, Miss Katherine Dangerfield has every reason to be thankful for the life of ease and luxury she has led—she, who, for aught we know, might have been a beggar's born. There is no need to get angry, Mr. Mansfield—I am speaking the truth."

"Then I am to understand, Sir Peter," the lawyer said, raising his voice, "that you refuse to do her even this scant justice—that you mean to send her forth penniless into the world to make her own way as she best can? Am I to understand this?"

"My good fellow—no," the young baronet said, in the slowest, laziest, and most insolent of tones; "nothing of the sort—I shan't turn my late relative into the world. She shall live and enliven Scarswood and me by her charming presence as long as she pleases. But you will kindly allow me to make my own terms with her, and be generous after my own fashion. May I ask if it is to visit and condole with Miss Dangerfield that you are on your way to Scarswood now? I suppose we must call her Miss Dangerfield for convenience sake—her own name, if she ever had a legal right to a name, being enveloped in a delightful cloud of mystery and romance. I wonder how she finds it to be a heroine?"

"Sir Peter Dangerfield," the old lawyer began hotly; but the baronet waved his hand authoritatively. "That will do, Mr. Mansfield. I have been in your office, I admit, and I have been an impoverished attorney while you were a well-to-do solicitor; perhaps you had a right to dictate to me then. Our relations have changed—I deny your right now. Be kind enough to keep your temper, and for the future your advice."

And then Sir Peter folded his small arms across his small chest, and looked with the malicious delight of a small nature through his eye-glass at the dejected solicitor. "I owe him a good many home-thrusts," the baronet thought, with a chuckle. "I think I have paid off one instalment at least; I shall pay off all I owe before long."

They reached Scarswood—dark and gloomy the old house loomed up in the chill, gray, wintry twilight. A crescent moon swung over the trees, and the stars bright and frosty, were out. No lights gleamed anywhere along the front of the building; except the soothing of the night-wind, no sound reached their ears.

"If one believed in ghosts, Scarswood looks a fit place for a ghostly carnival to-night," Mr. Mansfield thought; "it is like a haunted house. I wonder can poor old Sir John's shade rest easy in the tomb, with his one eye lamb at the mercy of this contemptible little wolf?"

"I am going to the library, Mansfield," the new baronet said, with cool familiarity. "If you or—Miss Dangerfield want me, you send for me there. Only this premise; I will come to no terms with her in your presence. What I have to say to her, I shall say to her alone."

He opened the library door, entered, and closed it with an emphatic bang. The elder man looked anxiously after him on the landing.

"What does the little reptile mean? I don't half like the tone in which he speaks of Katherine. He doesn't mean to—no, he doesn't—no man dare insult her in the home of her downfall!"

He sent a servant to announce his presence, the French girl Ninon; she came to him in a moment, and ushered him into the room where Katherine sat alone.

It was her old familiar sitting-room or boudoir, all fitted up with crimson and gold, for she had ever loved bright colors. The firelight leaping in the grate alone lit it now, and before the fire, lying back in a great carved and gilded chair, Katherine sat. The bright cushions against which her head lay threw out with startling relief the gray pallor of her face, the dead black of her dress. How changed she was—how changed—how changed out of all knowledge! And there were people who had called her cold, and heartless, and unfeeling because she had sat with dry eyes, and still face beside her dead, "unfeeling!" and worn and altered like this.

She looked round and held out her hand, with the faint shadow of her former bright smile, to her friend.

"My dear," he said very gently, "I do not intrude upon you too soon, do I? But I could not wait; I came with Sir Peter straight from the funeral here. As things stand now, the sooner your affairs are settled the better."

She lifted her head a little and looked at him. "Peter Dangerfield here—so soon! He is in haste to take possession. Does he intend to remain all night?—and am I to leave at once?"

"You are not to leave until you see fit, for a thousand Peter Dangerfields! I don't know whether he intends remaining over night or not; certainly not, though, I should say, if you object."

"I! What right have I to object. The house is his, and everything in it. He is perfectly justified in taking possession at once, and in turning me out if he sees fit."

"He will never do that, my child; and I think—I hope—I am sure he will act as common justice requires, and give you at once the three thousand pounds your father bequeathed to you in that unassigned will."

"The half rose from her chair; a light flashed into her face; a rush of passionate words leaped to her lips. Mr. Mansfield drew back. It was the old fiery temper breaking through the frozen calm of those latter days' despair. But all at once she checked herself—she who never before had checked a single emotion. She sank slowly back into her seat, and a strange set expression hardened her mouth.

"You think so, Mr. Mansfield—you think he will be generous enough for that? And it is in his power not to give it to me if he likes—those three thousand pounds?"

"Certainly, it is in his power; but no one save the veriest monster would think of acting a part so thoroughly mean and base. He has come into a great fortune suddenly and unexpectedly, and you have to lose. Surely no wretch lives on earth so utterly despicable as to wish to retain also the portion of the late Lady Dangerfield. Sir John's last effort was to sign that will; it ought to be the most sacred thing on earth to Sir John's successor."

She listened very quietly, the shadow of a scornful smile on her face.

"Mr. Mansfield, I am afraid there is something wanting in your knowledge of human nature, in your opinion of Sir Peter Dangerfield. You forget how long this new-made baronet has been defrauded of his rights as her presumptive. You forget that some months ago I refused to marry him—that I even insulted him—my abominable temper, Mr. Mansfield. You forget he owes me a long debt, and that it is in his power to repay me now. And I think Sir Peter is a gentleman who will conscientiously pay every debt of that sort to the uttermost farthing."

"My dear Miss Dangerfield—" "And that is still another injury," the girl said. "I have presumed to wear an honorable and ancient name—a nameless wail and stray, born in an almshouse or a bord, very likely. And you think he will really give me these three thousand pounds? Did he tell you so, Mr. Mansfield?"

"No, he told me nothing." The old lawyer shifted away uneasily, as he spoke, from the strange expression in the large, staidist eyes. "He said he would see you alone, and make his own terms with you. I infer from that he intends to do something. He is in the library—shall I go and send him here, or would you rather it were to-morrow?"

She was silent for a moment—looking into the fire—her mouth set in that hard, straight line. He watched her uneasily—he could not understand her any more than the others. Was she going to take it quietly and humbly like this?—she, who two weeks ago had been the proudest girl in Sussex. Was she going to accept Peter Dangerfield's dole of charity, and thank him for his generosity? Or did those compressed lips, the dry, bright glitter of those eyes, speak of coming tempest and revolt? He was out of his depth altogether.

"Well, my dear," he said, fidgeting, "shall I send him, or—" To be continued.

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