THE COMET OF A SEASON

By JUSTIN McCARTRY, M. P.

He went home that night in doubting mood, unusual to him. He began to feel that his way was slipping from beneath him, or at least that he himself was slipping away from the path he had marked out. He found that there were emotions which could disturb him still, and which had nothing to do with his own career and public work. He had believed himself absolutely unimpassioned, master of all his emotions, capable of controlling not only every look, but every thought, and already he found himself distracted from the straight path by the strange and, as it seemed, simost fatal admiration he telt for Geraldine Rowan. And now for his farther confusion came the cross-light of a new sensation, far inferior in intensity and very different in color, but strong enough to perplex and dezzle for the moment -- a flame of petulant emotion toward a preity, saucy, young, aristocratic woman; a fear of her, and a longing to obtain some sort of mastery over her.

Montana began to think it would be well for him to set about his great scheme, to put it in motion, and make a grand triumphal departure from London with the close of the season, carrying Geraldine Rowan with him as his wife and as the companion of his expedition, his associate in the foundation of the sublime colony beyond the sear, out of which a new world and a new life for the old world were gradually to arise.

Did Montana really believe in this scheme? That, we suppose, no one can ever know. It is not likely-at least, from what was afterward discovered, it does not seem likely-that he had ever thought the matter deliberately over, or had done more than allow the idea to grow upon him from day to day. He believed very thoroughly in himself, and believed that anything he started must come to a success. He had worked himself into a Napoleonic faith in his star, and in Heaven's special protection of him. This faith may have been born of sheer vanity, or of prolonged mental strain almost approaching to a condition of Intellectual derangement, but, at all events, it supplied him with any quality of earnestness which he could be said to have possessed. Whatever the strength of his faitt, either in his project or himself, it does not appear that at this time he was making any preparation to carry his great scheme into effect. He listened to people's suggestions concerning it, and answered all manner of inquiries and letters. He gave every one to understand that the scheme was growing into active movement day by day, and that he had all its details under his own eyes and in his own hands; but nobody was ever admitted to genuine confidence with him, nor did he tell anybody what his pieparations were. He was merely at present enjoying his success in his own dashion. He had found a career, and this was its zenith. and its consummation. His strongest ambition all his life through had been to play to one great audience, that of London; to fashionable, sristocratic, wealthy London in the stalls and boxes, and artisan, hard-handed, poor-living London in the galleries. Now he had reached the height of his hopes. With one hand he grasped the West End and with the other the East. His vanity ought to have been almost satisfied. If he was capable of deliberately thinking over a difficulty or a crisis of any kind, we might assume that he went calmly and fully into counsel with himself, reviewed his position, and set his plans out before him to look at them. We might assume that, having done this, he had come to the conclusion that the zenith of his London career had in any caso been reached; that even if nothing out of the common had arisen, his object now must be to avoid the risk of a descent or an anticlimax; and that the incident in the church had hastoned the necessity of bringing the London episode to a conclusion. On the other hand, anything like a hasty departure from London would give the appearance of probability to the most improbable stery-Montana nad now really worked himself into a mood to regard Mr. Varlowe's story as monstrously improbable—and people lose faith in him. The conclusion to which Montana came was that he must stay in London to the close of the season and then depart. But it is not likely that this conclusion came by virtue of any slow and careful process of thought. It came to Montana by instinct, as most of his conclusions did. That was his way. He had no thought of a resolution one moment, and it was a fixed resolve the next. It pleased and comforted him to think that these instinctive and somewhat feminine conclusions were special revelations-the voices of oracles speaking within his breast and guid-

ing him aright. The little incident in the Church of Free Bouls did seem likely to have a certain influence over public opinion. It got about in all manner of more or less distorted versions. In no case did it amount to anything much more than the fact that there had been a scene in the church when Montana spoke there, and that some old man, whom nobody knew, had professed to recognize Montana as his con, and that Montana had disclaimed him. There was not much in that, perhaps, and very few people want into the question seriously enough to ask themselves whether the old man was same or incane, or whether there was the slightest foundation for the idea he had taken up. Still, the incident was of a certain importance. It called sharp attention to the fact that there was some mystery about Montana's career, which might not be a great and superb thing after all. The stream might, it traced back to its source, be found to arise in a commonplace little well in a stable-yard, instead of a dark and sacred spring among the solemn trees of some historic and haunted grove. The story set curiosity and inquity going in that direction, and that in itself was not ominous of nestness, his sincerity, his eloquence. Now count of bimself the true one?"

went, embellishing it with heedless humor mixed up with his." here and there. From her lips it became a story of grotesque and Hudibrastic drollery. saying?'
It told of a whole service suddenly disturbed, "Wel laughter; of an orator and a prophet interrupt- people, would think you were some silly girl ed in the full flood of his discourse by a maniac, who insisted on rushing into the not sense to conceal it."

pulpit with him, clinging round his neck, Melissa looked up at nothing whatever of coquetry about it; but burst into tears.

could succeed in making so conspicuous a man-such an idol of society and of the people seem an object of laughter. It gave her the same sort of delight that some people get from amoying a favorite dog, or from putting ridiculous ornaments on a pet

If things went on like this people would soon begin to insist on questioning them-selves and their friends as to the exact meaning of some of Montana's sayings, and the are, and I dare say you don't think any harm precise practical nature of that scheme for a new world which he was understood to that age. But don't do it, my dear; have in hand. Vaguely, strangely, a sense be a little cautious. I can't tell you of the growing danger appeared to creep in exactly what I am thiking of, and there is upon Montana's mind. He began to feel it not very much to tell; but I am not quite as one even in a well warmed and curtained room grows to be conscious of the presence of the east wind. He became impressed with the necessity for doing somethingwhat, he did not yet exactly know. Montana | was going to say "your own," but he stopped was a man who, when brought face to face with a difficulty and compelled to act, would He was a resolute man, however, always act with wonderful quickness, energy, clearly saw his way to anything, and he now and courage. As indolent men of a certain saw his way very clearly to the necessity for class are surprisingly energetic when they have checking Melissa's public displays of her to shake off their indolence and do something, so Montana, a born dreamer of the unimaginative order—a man who could dream about himself, his career, and his soul, as an Indian | me to the North as soon as possible." fakir contemplates his body-had, when brought face to face with the necessity for action, the instinct of a commander and the eye of a pilot. He was conscious of this him- | come to that. Well, he must make allow- | have got it." self, and therefore never troubled himself ances. London in the season is London in about decisions and plans till the necessity the season, to be sure, and girls will like parbrought the moment of making the decision and announcing the plan. The incident in the Church of Free Souls

had much disturbed some of the inmates of Captain Marion's household. Geraldine kept silent about it. She would not give any bim, and be very happy away from home, opinion. Melissa raged and blezed against when her home is not in London. So he only opinion. Melissa raged and blezed against the silly old man who had presumed to interfere with Mr. Montans, and the somehow seemed to take Clement Hope into her wrath, and to regard the whole thing as a device in which that luckless young man had been directly and malignantly engaged. Katherine was on the same side, but she was more timid about expressing her opinions. She seemed scared an unusual thing for her-and cast furtive, almost fearful, glances every now and then at her husband, as it she were actually beginning to be straid of him. Mr. Trescoe, indeed, came out also in a new light. He spoke with an energy that no one ever before had supposed him to have. He boldly and bluntly denounced Montana as a "genuine humbug," declared that he had not the slightest doubt the old fellow was his father, and a duced deal too good a father for such a charlatan, and prophesied that before three months were over Montana would be known to everybody as a quack and a sham. These fearful opinions were combated with such anger and contempt by Melissa, that Captain Marion had to beg of Trescoe to discontinue his attacks, in order to save Melissa's temper and spare the nerves of the company. Captain Marion himself was clear and satisfied in his mind. Montana said the old man was not his father, and admiration for Mr. Gladstone, or there was an end of the matter. The old Mr. Browning, or Dean Stanley, man had been such a long time hoping and or Sir Frederick Leighton, and being praying for his son's return, that he was bidden by her father to rave an octave or ready to accept any good-looking stranger as the long-lost heir. The wonder was, Cap. utterly crushed by the rebuke. But the motain Marion said, that he had not found ment Mr. Aquitaine had gone Melissa threw somebody to take the place of his vanished son long ago. Whatever Montana said must be true. Captain Marion was not even annoyed or offended by those who did not agree with him on this point. It was settled and certain. Mr. Aquitaine came suddenly up from the

North, and heard the description of the whole incident. The description, it must be owned was given with very different coloring, and even very different array of facts, by the varlous people round Captain Marion's table. Aquitaine looked grave. He did not put dway the whole slidir as a trivial and unmean ing incident. In the North he had been making special inquiries about the young man who had once been employed in his house, and who was undoubtedly Mr Varlowe's son. There were some clerks in the offices who still remembered young Varlowe clearly enough. They all bore testimony to one set of facts : that he was very tall, dark, singularly handsome, with strange, abstructed manners, and apparently an inordinate selfconceit and belief in himself. There statements set Aquitatne thinking. Now, when he heard that Mr. Varlowe had actually claimed Montana for his son, it did not impress his mind as absolutely certain that | people did such things in books, didn't they? the old livery stable keeper was laboring under an hallucination. This seemed to him | if he will have me!" to suggest some terribly momentous possibilities. If Montana was a deceiver in this, in what else might he not be a deceiver? It was now certain that, besides the hundreds and thousands in all I've been and done it this time, Geraldine; classes who had faith in him, and would and won't there be a row in the building trust anything to him, some of Aquitaiue's when my father comes to know!" own nearest and dearest personal friends were ready to put their property, their lives, their happiness, almost their very souls, at take you home long ago, or stay here his disposal. Up to this time Aquitaine had to look after you? Why did not you tell me not the faintest notion how things were going | what you were going to do?" with his own hapless little daughter. It Captain Marion's house at luncheon, and when he saw the girl's flashing eyes and quivering lips as she maintained Montana's perfect nobleness and integrity, it was only then that a suspicion shot into his mind, and made him ask himself bitterly why he had felt so much surprised that Marion took so little heed of his daughter Katherine and her too | wild in the other direction."

open devotion to Montana. Aguitaine was prompt in action. He went | dine; "I did not run him down." at once to Melissa. He found the girl in her room, and opened his subject with a certain sternness very unusual for him in his dealings with her.

"Look here, Melissa," he said, "I want you to be more careful than you are in the way you talk about Mr. Montana."

Meliesa started, and turned her eyes upon the carpet. Her lips trembled.

"I don't like to hear any girl," he said, " talking with such open admiration and rapgood for Montana. It indicated a new turn ture about a man, and making herself his in public opinion. Up to that time, people champion and his devotee. Besides, there champion and his devotes. Besides, there who disputed about him had only disputed is something I have heard about Montanaas to the man himself, his ear well, no, I won't say that; not that I have heard anything against him, but something they began to ask, "What is he after all? has come to my mind that makes a Where does he come from? Is his own ac | sort of doubt—and it may be right, or it may be wrong-but anyhow it is not well, in the Lady Vanessa told the story wherever she mean time, that you should get your name

"Oh, papa," said Melissa, "what are you

It told of a whole service suddenly disturbed, "Well, my dear, I am saying ex. ing point of law, could hardly have had a an entire congregation startled, first stricken what I think. Anybody who heard brain more perturbed by the difficulties and with amszement, and then convulsed with you raying about him to-day, before all those responsibilities of the hour. "When did you who had fallen in love with the man and had

Meliesa looked up at first, red and augry, sobbing on his bosom, and claiming him as and Aquitaine expected one of her familiar his long-lost son. Lady Vanessa admired outbursts of temper. But to his surprise her Montana in her own peculiar way, which had pretty little face became contorted and she

she delighted in making int of him and trying to make him look ridiculous. her father said, I have not been saying any-thing."

Why what is the matter with the child?" bad. It must be father said, I have not been saying any-thing."

How did you advice."

Well, I had

She covered her eyes with her handkerchief, and only sobbed out, "I never saw you apgry like that with me before: I'm not used to it."
Well, well, my dear, I don't mean to be

angry with you, but I want to impress you with some sense of the necessity of being a little careful. I quite understand a girl's admiring a man like Montana, and of course he is twenty years at least older than you about going into raptures about a man of certain about Montans, and I have given Marion a caution, though it won't do him any good, and his daughter Ketherine makes exhibitions of herself almost as bad as "-he ont of tenderness for poor Melissa's feelings. admiration for Montana.

"Fact is, Mel," he said, "If you don't be a little more careful, I should think the best der before her, but Meliesa had hurt her by thing would be for you to come back with speaking of American girls as if they were himself for hours and days, and contemplate thing would be for you to come back with

She started at the words. Aquitaine saw with pain that the suggestion was a terror to her. She did not want to go home. It had ties and balls, and the opera, and visits, and all the rest of it as long as grass grows and water runs, and the best of parents must be content to put up with the knowledge that do; I think I would not do it again." his daughter can get on very well without winced, and pulled himself together, and was good-humored as before.

"If you like to stay till the end of the season, Mel," he said, "you shall do so, my dear, but only on this condition, remember. Just bear my warning in mind. Don't make a display of your admiration for our friend. It is a very natural admiration, I am sure, and in one way I am glad to find that you can admire anybody so much as that; and I did not think it, somehow, once; and I ought to be glad of it, and I am glad of it in a way; only don't show it, my dear, den't show it so much."

CHAPTER XVII.

GERALDINE'S EXPEDITION. Now, there was nothing in all this conversation, one would think, that ought to have brought positive terror to the girl's breast. Nobody could know better than Melissa how little likely Mr. Aquitaine was to treat her with harshness; and, after all, even the most maidenly and modest of girls need not feel utterly humbled because her father has given her a caution not to talk too rapturously of a distinguished public man. One can easily imagine a very well regulated and orderly little girl losing herself in wide avowals of Gladstone, or

so lower in general company, and not feeling herself down on the floor all of a heap, and bemoaned herself there for a while, cowering like one in physical terror. Then, taken with a suddon thought, she jumped up, shook out her betossed skirts, dashed her hair into something like order, ran to Geraldine Rowan's room, and knocked at the door.

"Let me in! Quick! quick! Let me in!" Geraldine opened the door, and let the alarmed girl in.

"Oh, Geraldine!" she exclaimed, "I have done a dreadful thing. You must help me; you must do something—I don't know what; t von must get me out of this scrape. am in such a fix! Oh, why did I ever do it!"

"What have you done, dear?" Geraldine asked, really alarmed at the girl's manner.
"Such a dreadful thing! Oh! how can I tell you? But I had better tell you than anybody else. You must get me out of it. You must! you must!"

"But what have you done, my child?" "I have written to Mr. Montana. I have where over the world with him, if he'll let me, follow him as a page, if he likes-I think or I'll-I'll-I'll marry him, if he likes-

"You have not written this dreadful stuff to Mr. Montana?

"Oh, haven't I, though Yes, but I have and I have signed it with my name. Oh!

"What on earth possessed you to do such a plece of madness? Why did not Mr. Aqui-

"Well, it's partly your fault," said Melissa, was only when they discussed the question in flashing up; "and so you are bound to get me out of this fix," " Partly my fault?"

"Yes, I say it is your fault; and it's all your fault. You are to blame for the whole of it. Why did you go on so-condemning Mr. Montana and running him down? You might have known it would have set me off

"But I did not condemn him," said Geral-

"You sat and listened, and looked on spprovingly, while Mr. Trescoe-that foolthat dull, silly, weak creature!—yes, you listened while he ran Mr. Montana down; and you agreed with his doubts, and you agreed with everything that was said against him; and what was I to do? Of course I wasn't going to stand that. I resolved to show him | sort of fascination he seemed to exercise over that I, at least, did not doubt him; and there -that's why I did it; and you are to blame, and you must get me out of it now."

"What cau we do?' Geraldine said, almost in despair. "I don't know," said Melissa, sitting down

now rather composedly, and nursing one knee one who expects a confidence, or who regards between her two little hands; "but you have the whole meeting as other than a commongot me into it, Geraldine, and you must get place friendly visit.

me out of it, and that's all about it."

"Mr. Montana," she said—and then she me out of it, and that's all about it." Geraldine thought the matter out as well

as she could, her face puckered up with anxiety, and resting her chin upon her hand. A general on the eve of a difficult campaign. or a judge perplexed by some most exasperating point of law, could hardly have had a write this letter?" she said at last.

"Oh, I don't know; about an hour, ago, or it may be an hour and a half, perhaps, or two the right things, and I am sure whatever and the rapture of women? I would rather to have a crowd of children depending on him hours; before luncheon—before papa came you do is done with a right purpose," have one kindly word from you than the land whom he had to true to the right things, and I am sure whatever and the rapture of women? I would rather to have a crowd of children depending on him hours; before luncheon—before papa came you do is done with a right purpose," and talked to me. He has been talking to me. Did I, or didn't I, tell you? , Yes, he has been advising me and talking to me; and I know, if he found out this, things would be bad. It must have been an hour and a half.

ago, 1 think."
"How did you get it sent to the post?". "Well, I had it in my pocket when Sydney and I walked out to-day, and I just stayed a moment behind her at the corner of the street, and dropped it into the letter-box there." Good gracious!" said Geraldine, "what

deceits and dodges one gets into !" "Never mind-what one gets into," said Melissa; "get me out of this now; that is more to the point."

A wave of inspiration tossed up a purpose in Geraldine's mind. "He may not have got it yet," she said.

"We'll get it back from him, Melissa. 1 will go myself and get it back."
"Oh, will you?" said Melissa, her eye brightening up with hope and wonder. " Will

you have courage? Will you do it? Bave you the nerve? I know you American girls will do anything; but can you do this?" "I have nerve enough when I want to help a friend out of trouble," said Geraldine; "and I am not an American girl, Melissa, but I have learned in America not to be ashamed

or afraid of doing anything that is right.

Girls in America are slow and free, and they

are only thought to be afraid or ashamed of doing what is wrong." Then she stopped and began to feel rather ashamed of preaching at the poor little offengirls who would do anything, without regard for the proprieties. "Yes, I will go," Geraldine said again; "we may be beforehand

"If I could get it back again," Melissa murmured, piteeusly-"if I could only be certain that he had not read it, I am sure, Geraldine, I'd never do such a thing again; gives him his cue. at least, I think I wouldn't; oh, indeed, I

"I am sure you would not do it again," said Geraldine. "I would not do what I am going to do for you if I thought there was the least chance of your attempting such a

thing any more."
"Well, don's preach, there's a good girl," said Melissa; "I never could stand being preached at."

Even in all her gratitude to Geraldine she could not subdue her mutinous inclination, and would not be preached at. "I am airaid preaching does not do you

good," Geradine said, softly; " perhaps you are not much worse than many of your neighbors in that way. Anyhow, Melissa, I will run the risk. I will go to Mr. Montans. I will not trust to sending anybody. Nobody must know about this but you and I and he, and, if I can, he sha'n't know your name." "Yes," Geraldine thought to herself, "I will go. What does it matter? It is not anything wrong. What if people do think I am American in my ways, and that I venture to do things that English girls would not do? I don't care. This is not venturing very far, after all, to put a friend out of trouble; and if any one finds out that I have done so, and is angry with me, or thinks badly off me, well—I can bear it—I'd do no more than

that to help poor Melissa." That was the time from half-past five to you know the handwriting of the letter you seven. The general public were shut out at speak of?" this time, and Montana was shut in. Those who were able to see him then were the favored intimates to whom he had given the consigne, and who would come and talk to hesitation. him in a friendly way about anything or was a great privilege to be among those who you tell me," he said, "why you want the were admitted to Montan's hour of privacy. letter back?" were admitted to Montan's hour of privacy. Montana took care to give admittance in such a manner as to make it evident that he poorest and humblest followers had the password. Women as well as men were privi-leged. It was not long before Lady Vanessa about it." established for herself and her husband the right of entry, and she sometimes came even among these letters, and take away any one without her husband, and talked with Mon- you like." tann and whoever happened to be there, and Geraldine tried to be cool and composed. said, drawing Geraldine aside; "I must give occasionally smoked a cigarette in her affable She turned the pile of letters over and over, you a piece of advice; you are from America, and familiar way. Young men who and she sought out the one she fain would and girls do as they like there. You don't could get admittance at this special hour have. It was not there. No address was understand our ways. You must not come were proud of it, and talked of it a good deal | written in any handwriting in the least like

among their irlends. Now, as chance would have it, this was the went her way with heart high-beating, it | the next post or two and try again?" must be owned, but very resolute and quiet, determined to put the thing through, and not can't you give me any idea of what sort to let poor Meliesa get into trouble because of letter it is, or what it is about? Surely of any fearfulness or hesitation on her part.

Montana had just entered his little reception-room to wait for any of his friends who might come, when he was told that a lady wanted to see him. He replied that he was engaged, and at that hour could see no one. The servant came back with a still more pressing request from the lady to spare her a and homage, and that sort of thing. You few moments.

Montana asked, would the lady favor him with her name?

Reply: "No, the lady would rather not. but she could say that he knew her very well."

Montana looked at his watch and saw that it yet wanted a minute or two to half-past five. Perhars nobody would come very punctually. He might get rid of this unusual visitor in good time. "Let the lady be shown up." To his surprise, when she came into the room, he saw that it was Geraldine Rowan. But if he felt surprised, as he certainly did, he took care not to show it. He advanced to Miss Rowan with so easy and friendly a younger. "Can it be possible," he said, manner that she might have thought he was expecting her, and a looker on might have supposed that her visit to him was the most ordinary and natural thing in the world.

Geraldine felt greatly re-assured by this, and there was something so gracious and kindly in his smile that she began to understand dimly what was the meaning of the so many men and women. They shook hands; Montana placed a chair for her, and said he was glad to see her in a tone admirably suited to encourage confidential communication, although neither in tone nor in look did he show the slightest appearance of

stopped for want of breath, and for a moment it seemed as if she really could get no words to go on with. Then she braced herself, and tried to find deliberate utterance. "Mr. Montana," she went on, "you will think it very strange that I have come in this way to see

you, and I think it strange myself." Montana only said, "I am not likely to think anything strange that Miss Rowan does; and besides, strange things are often

"Thank you," she said, and 'sne really felt grateful to him for the manner in which he had relieved her of some of her embarrage ment. "I sha'n't keep you long."
"That," said Montana, "Is' an 'ungracious

beginning."
"I sha'n't keep you long," she repeated. "I have come to ask you a favor, Mr. Mon-

tana. Perhaps it is an act of justice. ought to be. But I don't know, I am quite willing to put it as a favor." I only hope it is something hard to do so that I may do it, and show that I am not un-

worthy of being asked."
"It is not hard to do. I ought not to be hard to any man, and I should think it ought to be least of all hard to you. I put it as a favor. I don't come to you willingly, Mr. Montana; I don't admire you, and you know it. I don't believe in you, whatever other people may do."

"You will believe in me one day," said Montana, composedly, "and you will help me, and join with me. That is as certain as the rising of the sun to-morrow.

She looked at him with something like contempt. "I don't believe in you cow, at all events," she said, "and I am more than ever convinced that I am right by things that have lately happened. I don't believe you are what you say you are; at least, I believe you are what you say you are not."

Geraldine looked straight into his eyes to see if any sign of embarrassment or surprise might be found there as she spoke these audacious words. But the eyes returned her look with the calm, grave, sweet expression which was always in them. If Montana is an impostor," she thought he is well made up for his part.

The truth was, that Montana had prepared himself again and again for every possible with the postman. Mr. Montana may not utterance of this kind from every conceivable person, and was as little likely to be put out now as a trained actor on the stage is put out by the speech of the theatric opponent which

"Tell me," he said, gently, "what is the favor you want of me? if it is in my power, you shall have it all the same, whether you believe in me or not. How you act toward me could not be any guide for my acting toward you. The less you think well of me, the greater is my anxiety to show that I don't deserve to be thought badly of."

"Well," she said, "I want to get from you a letter which you must have got to day. I want to get it from you unread, if you will give it to me; but, read or not, I want it back again."

Montana now looked a little surprised. Certainly," he said, "you shall have any letter that I have received which concerns you in the least. But I have read scores of letters this morning already, and I don't remember one of them in which you could have the slightest interest. However, I give you my promise that you shall have any of them, or all of them, it you are in the least inclined."

"Perhaps you have not read this one yet," she said. "You have letters still remaining,

perhaps, unopened ?" "A good many," he said, with a melancholy smile. "The opening and reading of letters is one of the weariest occupations of my life. I sometimes feel inclined to wish there were no post-office. See, there is a heap of letters already lying on this table by the last post, One hour and a haif in the day Montana | which my secretary has not touched as yet, kept for himself and his few especial friends. nor I. Will you look among them? Do

"I do, very well." "Is the writer a man or a woman?" "It is a girl," Geraidize said, with some

One little gleam of curiosity and surprise nothing, and smoke a cigar with him. It did actually come into Montana's eyes. "Will

"Oh no," the said, "and that is another favor : pray don't ask me. I beg of you not to was now distributing his favors only among ask that. That is unreasonable; think I am | him still, for Melissa's sake. She hoped to the powerful and the great. Some of the ridiculous; think I am out of my senses, if you like, but grant me this favor. Do let me

"By all means," Montana answered. "Look

that of Melissa Aquitaine.

"It has not come yet," she said, " but it very time of the day when Geraldine had to will come. I don't know what to do." make her visit to Montana. She thought "What is this terrible letter?" Montana she could get to his place easily, speak to asked. "You see, if you give me any deshim, and go back again before it was time to cription by which I may know it, I can look written a mad love-letter, I have put my dress for dinner. There was not a moment for it, and will take care that it is sent to name to it; and I have told him I'll go any to be lost. She hurried down-stairs, and vou. Or would you rather come here after

> "Oh on," she said. "I can't come again." you may trust me so far as that ?"

> "I must." said Geraldine, rather dolefully-"I must trust vou. I can't come again today, and the letter will certainly reach you some time to-day. It is a letter in the handwriting of a girl who has written you ever so many letters before-letters of admiration may perhaps know the handwriting; I beg you, if you do, to send me back that letter unopened,"

"I don't remember any one handwriting in particular; I receive a great many letters from women, and let me say, Miss Rowan, not a few of them are foolish letters. Do 1 know the writer of this letter?"

"Pray don't ask me anything," said Geraldine. "The writer of the letter now wishes she had not written this last one, and I want to get it back."

Montana stopped for a moment, and a sudden expression came over his face which made him look as if he had grown ten years that you have yourself written these leiters, Geraldine, and that you now repent, and want this one back? If this is so, pray, pray let me recall my promise."

"I have not writter the letters," said Geraldine, with a scornful ring in her voice; "I of a fanatical, poor workingman, a member of never wrote any such-to you, of all men in the world. The foolish child who did write them has at last been wild enough to tell you her name, and I want you not to know her name; and if you will give me back the making his acquaintance—what time the letter—well—I shall thank you, and say that you are perhaps better than I thought." Poor Matthew Starr was a fanatic of be-She got out the words slowly, one by one, with difficulty and hesitation. "But if you won't give it back to me, then I can't help it -keep it-I have no more to say."

"You are angry with me," Montana said.

to this declaration she did not herself know, passionate intensity of hatred in War was to for at that moment the conversation was in the ontrance of Lady Vanessa (Continued ou Third Page.)

Barnes and her husband. The tall, handsome lady seemed to fill the pretty little reception room as she came in with her strong, grace. ful movement, every motion as she walked seeming to tell of careless, unconscious strength, and her face lighted with animation high spirits, and curiosity.

Mr. Barnes, her husband, was a young-look. ing, slerder, somewhat timid man, who al. ways seemed as if he were trying to escape from notice behind his wife's petticoats. He was a man of intelligence and ability in his. own way, a keen financier, a reader, and almost a scholar; but his business in life now was to be overshadowed by his wife, and it was his pleasure too. To rest in her shade made him happy. She was very fond of him, and he knew it, and liked her to have her own way in everything.

Lady Vauessa fixed her eyes inquiringly on

Geraldine, and after the interchange of a few words with Montana, she turned to the girl and said:

"I always remember any face I see, and I have seen this young lady somewhere-15 the Church of Free Souls, or whatever you call it Am I right, Mr. Mortana?"

Montana presented Geraldine. He was glad Lady Vanessa had come. Her coming prevented Geraldine from replying to his declara. tion. It compelled her to receive it without a protest. That was something.

"Yos, I thought as much," said Lady Va. nessa. "You are the young American girl, sin't you?-some one told me you were."

"No," said Geraldine, "I am not an American. I have lived in America, but I am an Irish girl." She usually had to explain about three times a day that, although she had lived for many years in America, she was nevertheless not an American.

"Oh, an Irish girl!" Lady Vanessa said. "I sec-yes, exactly; that is why you are so good-looking. They say all Irish girls are good looking, don't they?"

"I don't know," said Geraldine. "But you know that you are good-looking,"

said the pertinacious lady.

I don't admire myself."

"I don't," said Geraidine. Come, now, is that true?"
"Quite true," replied Geraldine, boldly. There are different ideas about good looks.

"Ob, you don't? Mr. Montana does, I dare

"Every one does," said Montana. " All who know Miss Rowan admire her." "Well, I am sure I admire you already,"

Lady Vanessa said. "But where did you get that pensive look in your eyes? You look as if you were dreaming." "I am short-sighted, and I suppose that

gives one a dreamy look." "Then I wish I were short-sighted," said Lady Vanessa. "That is exactly the sort of look I should like to have. Don't you think so, Albert? Do look at Miss Rowan's eyes, dear. Isn't there a wonderful expression in

them? Mr. Barnes looked, not very boldly, into Miss Rowan's eyes, and said, Yes, there was:

quite so-exactly. Geraldine felt embarrassed — an usual thing for her. She was not embarrassed in the least by Lady Vanessa's questions or compliments, but by the whole situation, by Montana's recent words, by the knowledge that the moments were passing rapidly away -so rapidly that she must get back soonand that she had not got the letter.

She must go. Other visitors would come, and it was impossible that Montana could now satisfy her request. She rose to go. She cast an appealing look at him. Despite his recent declaration she had to appeal to would understand her look, and come with her out of the room, and let her exchange another word with him. He did understand her, for he rose to accompany her to the stairs. But as she was going Lady Vanessa stopped

her with a friendly hand. "Look here, my dear young woman," she all alone here paying visits to handsome men like Mr. Montana. That will never do. People will talk about you. Don't be offended. I give you the advice for your good."

"I am much obliged to you," said Geraldine, coldly. "I think I can take care of myself." "Awfully proud," said Lady Vanessa, see; all right, dear; I mean no offence."

"Indeed, I have not taken offence," said Geraldine, recovering herself, and pleased with the frank ways of the eccentric lady. "You see, I am older than you," said Va

"I don't think you are really," Geraldine answered, "If it comes to that."

" Well, I'm older in experience; I'm married; I am well up in all the ways of our world here, and I know what people would say. I never care what they say of me, to be sure; but that's a different thing."
"Why is it so different?" Geraldine was too ingenuous even to suspect that Lady Va-

nessa meant to say, "Because I am a great lady and you are not." "Oh, well," and Vanessa laughed, "be cause, don't you see, I have caught my fish, child, and you haven't-at least, you haven't

hooked him yet. That's how it is." She gave her husband's arm a good-humored equeezs. "This is my fish, don't you see? 've hooked him." Then Lady Vanessa and Geraldine both became aware that a new visitor was entering the room-a visitor of a different class from any to which the Duchess of Magdie'ls

daughter was accustomed. We have already spoken of the wrecks coming to the shore, Montana being the shore to which they drifted. Among the wrecks which thus came floating toward him was that of a family in the East End, the family a small, odd sect of Peculiar People, or such like, who in an early chapter of this book has been described as attending Montana's first lecture in London, and going up to him and nevolence, a farious devotee of equality and of purity, a virtue's Quixots in the East End of London, and in a ragged mole-skin jacket. A wait and wreck of the ancient Chartist days, he had spent his gently, "and I don't wonder. I was wrong life working hard, rising early, resting late to think that you could have written such suffering want, weariness, disappointment letters. I know you would not; much as I after disappointment, seeing the light of want you to think well of me, I don't want every hope go out after the other, and still you to express a kindly feeling in such a living and feeding on his faith in an impos-way as that. You shall have the letter, of sible future of happiness and equality and course. I don't want to read the poor girl's goodness for the living world. He might in nonsense. I don't want to know her name, other days have been a martyr-perhaps s or who she is. I should give her good advice, Stylites. Fate had sentenced him to drudge if I knew her, and try to reason her out of her in Whitechapel, to marry a stupid little girl folly. What do I care about the admiration who in the end took to drink and died of drink

have one kindly word from you than the and whom he had to trust to the nursing homogo of all the other women in the world." of chance, or strangers, or each other, or any body, during his long daily work. They

CHAPTER XVIII. grewing, and most of them turned out as he What, Geraldine might have said in answer into the army, and he hated soldiering with a