

fully cherished expectations in the dust.

No, William; the time may arrive when I will no longer oppose your wishes; but should all be lost to me, I shall ever love and esteem you as my own dear brother.

Will nothing change your purpose, Blanche? Will no feeling of compassion or compunction induce you to avert my doom?

Do not urge me further, dear William, in pity to my agony of mind and dreadful sufferings these last few days. Oh, spare me the misery of listening to your reproaches, which, believe me, I do not deserve—we may meet again as before—as brother and sister.

Never Blanche, that time is past. Now near the sentence you have pronounced; if we part now, we never meet again, for I will leave my native land, and return to it no more, unless this night you promise to be mine.

Oh, William, recall that rash vow; think of your poor father, who would be broken-hearted if you left him; think of your sister and dear Aunt Gordon.

It is too late, Blanche; I have sworn to do so, and will keep my oath. You have forced me in despair to utter these hasty words; your false pride will entail this misery on us all.

It was now Blanche's turn to beg and implore her lover to alter his determination; but her voice fell unheeded on his ear, and leaning his head on his hand, he seemed lost in thought, and deaf to her entreaties.

Oh, William, she exclaimed, why will you not speak to me? only to say you will not go.

Go, yes, I know I must go, he muttered, without regarding her; Blanche Douglas sends me forth an outcast from my home, to die among strangers, scorned, despised, and neglected by her, for whom I would have sacrificed a hundred lives, had I them to give. Let me go, he cried, springing wildly from his seat as she attempted to hold his hand. I am crazed, maddened! and seizing his hat, he was rushing from the room like one distracted, when Blanche threw herself in his way, and casting her arms round his neck, cried, In mercy, speak to me, my own dear William, I am yours, now and for ever. Oh, say will you not leave me!

At that appeal his pent-up feelings gave way, and as his tears fell on her neck, he murmured, Oh, Blanche, Blanche, you have nearly killed me!

Forgive me, dear William, this once, she whispered, I will never cause you another moment's pain; and feeling him totter under her weight, she led him to the sofa, where he fell back exhausted on the cushion. She was kneeling by his side fruitlessly endeavoring to rouse him from his stupor, when Mrs. Gordon entered. Oh, aunt, aunt! I have killed him by my own folly—what can I do?

Run, my love, for a glass of wine; he has only fainted from over-exhaustion, poor fellow, having travelled day and night since your letter reached him.

Blanche rushed down stairs into the dining-room, and seized a decanter and glass from the table, and flew like a fairy to her lover's rescue, who had begun to recover consciousness from Mrs. Gordon's application of salts. Blanche, trembling and shaking, poured half the bottle over her aunt's dress, then too intent on Beauchamp to notice it; and having succeeded in making him swallow half a glass of wine, she continued bathing his forehead with eau de Cologne, until he revived and tried to sit up.

No, my dear boy, rest as you are a while longer, and drink some more wine—and three, I declare, that naughty child has spoilt my new dress—well, Blanche, to punish you you must take my place now by William's side; but mind he does not move until I return.

Blanche silently placed her hand in his,

That's right, my dear. Keep to that resolution, and all will be well. And now, give Beauchamp his glass of brandy-and-water, and make him eat a biscuit also.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Malcolm's anticipations were realised about his cousin, who was in a burning fever all night; and towards morning, becoming delirious, the family physician was sent for by Mrs. Gordon, who, with Constance, remained by her bedside, listening with tearful eyes to her ravings about her lover. Mrs. Gordon explained to the doctor what had occurred, as far as she deemed necessary, who prescribed the usual remedies in such cases, desiring she might be kept perfectly quiet, and no other person admitted to her room.

But stay, my dear madam, as he was leaving; if she should particularly want to see Lord Beauchamp on regaining consciousness, let him be sent for directly, as his presence will go far to allay this feverish excitement.

After taking the medicine, Blanche fell into a fitful doze for two hours, from which, awaking with a sudden start, she exclaimed—

Oh, aunt, he is gone—gone for ever; I sent him away never to return.

No, my love, he is not gone; you have been wandering; he is still here, in this house.

Oh, no, dear aunt; do not deceive me I know he is gone.

Then, my dear, promise to be calm and not speak, and you shall see him directly. Constance, will you call your brother?

In a few seconds, Beauchamp was kneeling by her bedside, with her hand in his.

You will not leave me, dear William, she murmured, as you said you would; oh, promise me not to go.

On my word of honor, my own dearest girl, I will never leave you more; but you must not talk now; so try to compose yourself, and remember I am always within call, if you want me.

Oh, don't go, William, she still whispered.

Keep my hand in yours, then, dear child, and I will sit by your bedside, if you will try to sleep, but you must not speak, or I will leave you.

Assured now of his presence, which calmed and soothed her troubled brain, she soon relapsed into a sound and refreshing sleep. Beauchamp sat gazing on her flushed face, and felt her burning and throbbing pulse. The tears chased each other down his cheek; and sinking down on his knees, he prayed long and fervently that God would be pleased to spare her life. Hear me O Father of all mercies—hear me! he murmured; and, of Thy infinite goodness, grant that this dear child may be restored to me again when, overcome by emotion, and the excitement and fatigue of the last two days, with his face resting on the bed, he fell fast asleep by her he loved so dearly, his hand still firmly locked in hers.

Mrs. Gordon, who had been watching Beauchamp's actions, cautiously approached, and hearing his heavy breathing, whispered Constance, Dear William has fallen asleep in that kneeling posture.

Oh, let him alone, aunt; he is quite worn out, poor fellow, in mind and body.

For three hours, neither Blanche nor Beauchamp stirred, when Alice softly entered the room, whispering the doctor was coming upstairs. Mrs. Gordon met him at the door, and placing her finger on her lips, in token of silence, pointed to the bed. The doctor crept on tiptoe to listen to his patient's breathing, and as noiselessly retreating, beckoned Mrs. Gordon out of the room. That will do,

serv'd. A duce'd lucky escape for you, Ayrshire.

What do you allude to, Baynton?

Oh, Danby thinks their heiress throw you over.

Danby had better attend to his own affairs, Baynton, and not meddle with other men's concerns; because he has been overturned, as you call it, I suppose he wishes to make it appear that I have had no better success; but who is his authority? That I shall expect to know, not choosing my name to go the round of all the clubs as a rejected man.

Tut! tut! Ayrshire, don't flare up in that fashion. Danby merely expressed that as his opinion; for he said he had tried to ascertain whether you had proposed or not, from Malcolm, who refused to give him any information; so it is merely conjecture on his part.

Very likely, Baynton; but I shall be obliged by your telling him, with my compliments, to keep his conjectures to himself for the future. You know, when I set my mind on buying a horse, price will not stop me; and if I should bid for a woman, the chances are in my favor, I think; eh, Baynton?

Oh, of course, we all know that your rent roll is as long as this room; but you would not marry a girl without any fortune at all, would you?

That would make no difference to me, if, in all other respects, she comes up to my standard.

Oh, very well; then I conclude the heiress may be had now for asking, as Mangle tells me old Harcourt is in a proper funk about refunding all the money he has received.

This last piece of information suggested an idea to the Marquis, who, taking his hat, wished Lord Henry good morning. Lord Ayrshire possessed a proud, haughty temper, and he could ill endure being foiled in anything he undertook, or being outdone or outbid by any other man. If he had set his mind on purchasing a horse at Tattersall's, every one was aware that knew him that it was mere waste of time to bid against him. Yet he was, from this peculiarity of temper, most wofully imposed upon, and horses were run up to three or four times their value by some of the knowing ones, just as Lord Henry said, to make him open his mouth. There was a manifest impatience in his mode of advancing against any other competitor, which at once betrayed his impatience of temper, as if no other man had a right to make an offer for the animal on which the Marquis of Ayrshire had once set his affections. One day, a remarkably fine, well-bred brougham horse was brought to the hammer, which immediately catching his lordship's eye, he inquired his age.

Six years old, my lord, replied Mr. Tattersall; high-stepper—nearly thoroughbred; what shall I say, my lord? a hundred? thank you, my lord; trot him down; take care, gentlemen. One hundred guineas are offered for that splendid animal—and ten—thank you, sir; a hundred and ten guineas.

Make it fifty, at once, gentlemen.

Thank you, my lord—one hundred and fifty guineas are bid; will any gentleman advance on that sum?

Twenty, from a voice near.

One hundred and seventy are offered—going at that figure.

Two hundred, exclaimed Lord Ayrshire.

Thank you, my lord. Two hundred guineas are bid—going at that price—going, gentlemen, for two hundred guineas—will nobody advance?—for the last time, going at two hundred guineas—a pause for a moment, and the hammer fell.

Well, Ayrshire, exclaimed Lord Henry, you would have the dark bay, notwithstanding my hints not to buy him.

I call him a light bay horse, Baynton.

Very likely—doctors differ; but I'll

some prior attachment.

That I do not think of much moment just now, as I believe few men, if any, would marry Miss Douglas under her present circumstances. Why, my dear sir, it would ruin any man of moderate fortune, if her cause were lost. But to save my credit in the fashionable world, I will take my chance, as I never can endure to be beaten, Mr. Harcourt; and cost what it may, I am resolved to marry your ward, now that I have gone so far.

Very well, my lord, then I think a little memorandum may be as well drawn up between us, just a few lines.

Oh, certainly, my dear sir; pray write down what you think necessary, and I will sign the paper.

Mr. Harcourt, being what is called a shrewd man of business (which means, in plain language, one who will take advantage of any weakness or blindness in his neighbor to drive a good bargain for himself), took care so to word this little document, that all responsibilities, past, present, and to come, incurred by himself, and the refunding of all rents received since her father's death, on his ward's account, should devolve on Lord Ayrshire's shoulders.

The marquis having hastily scanned the contents, signed the paper; and rising, said, Now, my dear sir, I rely entirely on your honor to keep this arrangement a profound secret.

Of course, my lord; on my own account only I should never mention it, or our plans would at once be defeated.

Mr. Harcourt had just carefully deposited this little document in his writing-desk, when the servant entered with Lord Beauchamp's card, saying his lordship wished to see him a few minutes alone.

Show Lord Beauchamp into my private room, was the reply; and in a few moments Beauchamp was receiving the warm congratulations of his *soi-disant* friend, which were estimated at their full value. Circumlocution or evasion being equally distasteful to Beauchamp's mind, the purport of his visit was soon explained, and his intention avowed, of settling the whole of Blanche's fortune on herself, as well as a very handsome addition from his own. In fact, Mr. Harcourt, you must be aware that I am actuated by no mercenary motives now, in asking for the hand of your ward.

Oh, quite so, my dear Beauchamp; but how long is it, may I ask, that you have been so attached to Blanche? a long time, I suspect, Beauchamp, eh? or at least, she has at least, been to you.

Then, dear sir, there is a greater prospect of our being happy together.

Well, my young friend, I have no objection to yourself; but there are grave objections in your way. This suit, which my deprive her of all her property, and then the responsibilities you would incur as her husband. All these things should be well considered; and in your present position, your father, no doubt, will expect you to marry a woman of fortune or rank equal to your own.

All these objections, with ten times more, will not alter my determination, provided you will consent to our union, he replied.

As the husband of Miss Douglas, you may be called on to refund all the rents received, my dear Beauchamp, which would amount to a large sum indeed. Are your funds sufficient, without crippling your income, to meet such a demand? This is really a most serious responsibility, and my advice to you, as an old friend, is, to give up all thoughts of marrying under such adverse circumstances.

The rental of property which has already been made over to me by my father, Mr. Harcourt, exceeds twenty-five thousand a year, besides ready money; and if you require to see the deed, with the rent roll, it shall be produced for your satisfaction; but on my word, as a gentleman, this is strictly

my own keeping. Well, child, is not he doing business in Harcourt's own style? He did not half like the conditions, yet I made him sign them.

But I fear, William, he made you do something too?

Yes, my love, he did, by which I have taken all the responsibility of this suit, and rejoiced am I to get the control of these matters into my own hands, or he and his lawyer, Borum, would have sacrificed your rights to their blundering. Now, my dear darling girl, I am the happiest fellow in existence, and you shall sing me that song this evening. Oh, leave the gay and frolic scene! Yes, my love, we will leave this murky atmosphere, and be off to the old Priory again.

Oh, when shall we go, dear William? I shall be so delighted to be in the country once more.

Then you do not wish to attend any more gay balls, or even have another night at the opera?

No, no—I am tired to death almost of dissipation.

And won't you miss that gay throng of courtiers and admirers, who declared they could exist only in the sunshine of your smiles?

Falsome flatterers all, dear William; my love and smiles are for you only, and I never wish to see London again.

Well, then, my love, run off to Aunt Gordon, and ask her to prepare for leaving as soon as convenient to herself—the day after to-morrow, if possible.

All the party in Grosvenor Square were much amused, if not edified, with Beauchamp's description of his interview with Mr. Harcourt, and his beating about the bush to ascertain whether he had money enough to bear the brunt of the fight now pending; and Malcolm shook with laughter at the wording of the paper Beauchamp had induced him to sign.

Why, my dear girl, old Harcourt, but this document, has assigned and made over to Beauchamp all his right and title in you, as if you were a floating cargo of goods or merchandise. What put it in your head, Beauchamp, to write all this down?

To make him ashamed of denying his bargain, if he ever felt inclined to do so, and to prevent his again interfering with that dear girl, of whom he has so often tried to make merchandise.

Well, thank goodness, we are quit of him at last; and now, Beauchamp, if we don't mangle that rascally firm of Mangle and Co. it is our own fault.

They shall have it, Malcolm, thick and threefold, and we will see Macmillan to-morrow.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The same evening as Blanche was singing to Beauchamp, the door of the drawing-room opened; and, without being announced, the squire, now Earl of Annandal, quietly walked in, taking them all by surprise. Constance sprang forward. My dear, dear father, she exclaimed, and rushed into his arms. Blanche ceased singing, and rose to meet him, although with some hesitation, which observing, he said, Have I not another daughter?

Indeed you have, my dear father, she cried, and was instantly locked in his embrace. You naughty, ungrateful child! murmured the old man, as he kissed her forehead, how could you treat my dear boy so unkindly, by writing such a letter, which drove him nearly crazy?

Because I thought my loss of fortune might—

What, child! make him love you less? Oh, Blanche! what a reflection on both our characters!—why, that is the very reason we should love you more, if possible, ten times more. But did you not promise me to love and regard me for ever as your own father?

To be Continued.