

Jameson, you know—to come and see me, if she can?"

"Yes, my darling; and now, for the present, good morning. Keep up your spirits, and leave everything to me. I will arrange some means by which to circumvent your enemies."

And the clever intriguer, after bestowing a fond kiss on his young grandchild, quitted her apartment, to powder in privacy over the rest of the plans that were fermenting in his subtle head.

The last grand idea to which he intended to give his consideration was this:—

If he could only contrive, by some false report, to make Elwyn Esward believe Eola untrue to him, and that she had voluntarily renounced him, without in the slightest way placing himself in any danger of being suspected as the instigator of the rumour, then all the rest would flow on naturally. Elwyn would cease to trouble himself about an ungrateful girl who had so shamefully abused his generosity, and Eola, who he would take care should learn her lovers' indifference, would resent the indignity, and, without deigning to give or receive any explanation, would fall in with his (Sir George's) views, and resolve never to waste another thought on one so fickle and unworthy. It is singular how little the conceptions of schemes like these allow for the strength of human feelings.

The baronet, though loving Eola to adoration as he did, had never reflected that he was acting in a manner derogatory to every principle of affection, in thus destroying the chief hopes of her young soul, to satisfy his own selfish prejudices. He believed, or rather, endeavored to believe, that his intentions were good; but he forgot that the young heart, teeming with hope, and all the quick, warm impulses of the spring-time of beautiful life, could never be torn from its love-lit visions, and forced into a cold surrender of its most precious and joy-giving dreams with impunity and at will.

Leaving him to indulge in his mistake, we will follow, for a while, the proceedings of a more humble individual.

CHAPTER LV.

Job was walking along the sea-shore in deep reflection, every now and then broken by the conversation of his two voices.

During the last few weeks Joe had been more distracted by conscience than ever.—He had not seen Eola, but he had heard every day of her sufferings, and the news had driven him to the verge of despair.—Moreover, Joe was in love, and this circumstance aggravated his remorse in a way that will presently appear.

The object of his affections was a young girl who had been recently engaged by the baronet as an attendant on his grandchild; she was nineteen years of age, moderately pretty, very good-hearted, and very partial to Joe.

But somehow Joe could not be happy, in spite of all this. He never met his charmer without a tinge of remorse for the part he had taken in robbing another man of the girl he loved, and without a dire forboding that, as a judgment on his sin, his pretty Sarah would also be by some means snatched away from him.

Several times he had been on the point of confessing his error to the lady of his love, and asking her advice; but certain conscientious scruples regarding the laws of confidence restrained him. Somehow he could not bring himself to betray the baronet to one of his own domestics.

"No," said Joe to himself; "if I report at all, it must be at head-quarters—no going to the non-commissioned officers."

Joe had been in the army previous to entering the baronet's service, and had retained a few military phrases, which he sometimes scattered through his discourse, to make it expressive.

But we will go back to where we left Joe on the sea-shore. He was altogether different in appearance to the Joe who had stood outside the post-office in Truro, talking with numbers 1 and 2.

Then he was a dark visaged, slovenly-dressed vagabond-looking rascal, with a great black patch over one eye; now he was of fair complexion, jauntily attired, looking in every sense the gentleman's servant, and minus the black patch. And, of course, his name was no longer Joe, any more than he was Joe in the other things; but as we have used the appellation, and it will serve us as well as another, we may as well adhere to it.

After the two voices had talked themselves hoarse and out of breath, Joe's reflections took the form of a soliloquy:—

"Now, Joe, place yourself in that poor fellow's position," he said, pathetically, and trying very hard to realize the idea thus self-suggested. "How would you like to be cheated in that way by a set of hard-hearted ruffians? Not at all; no, of course you wouldn't. And wouldn't you be mighty miserable if you was? Yes, of course you would. And if a good-natured chap wrote and told you the game that was played on you, you wouldn't split on him would you? No, to be sure not; you'd keep his secret like a brick, and make the whole thing appear like chance-work, good luck, or something of the sort. Well, now suppose you write to this Mr. Esward—it wouldn't do so well to tell the girl; girls are so combustible like—go off into styrics, or scream, or faint, if they hear anything sudden and unexpected; always ready to explode at a moment's notice. Write and say you've got something important to communicate about somebody that he's interested in; but don't enter into particulars in the letter; that won't suit your palate—you ain't fond enough of writing. Ask him to come to Truro—get a day's holiday—go and meet him at an hotel—make him promise never to split on you, then tell all the grand plot, and let him meet the young lady afterwards as if by accident somehow; then she'll find out, of course, the trick that's been played, and the baronet can be bowled out, without your name ever showing up in the affair. Then the rest must be managed among themselves; but, at any rate, there'll be a fair play, no more underhand trickery, and you will have eased your mind, Joe, without doing yourself any harm. Yes, there's your game, now go and play it; no more skulking, no more mean-spirited fear of the consequence; do your duty, and face Sally like a man, which you've been more like a criminal all along."

With this last eloquent burst of feeling, Joe turned his footsteps into the path leading up to the house.

As he approached the door, he met the baronet, who said he had been looking for him.

"I want you to give an eye to the goings on here to-day," said Sir George. "I'm going to Totnes, to see after a furnished house for us, until I can fix on some eligible place for a permanent residence."

"Going to leave St. Ives altogether, Sir George?" asked Joe, carelessly.

"Yes; it's not the sort of place I shall ever require again. I must purchase a handsome estate in some other part of the country. I shall sell all my property here."

And reiterating his injunction to Joe to 'give an eye to the goings on,' the baronet hurried off to finish some arrangements he was making for his journey.

He happened to have some very agreeable acquaintances in and around Totnes, and had decided on removing with his grandchild to that place, thinking that the society she would be enabled to cultivate there would distract her thoughts in a measure from her present trouble, until he could devise some still better source of excitement for her; and he proposed conveying her thither with as little delay as possible.

He did not return from Totnes until the following day, about noon, when he made his appearance before Eola with the intelligence that he had engaged a charming house; and, after several little additions, which he deemed indispensable for her own suite of apartments, should be affected, he intended that they should proceed to take up their residence in it.

Eola thanked him for his consideration, and tried to force a smile of pleasure at the news; but it died into a sickly, flickering expression of mock delight, lasted for a half a moment, and was succeeded by a wild burst of tears, as she sank in hopeless sorrow on his bosom.

"Come, do not give way like this, my darling," said the baronet, fondly kissing her pale cheek. "Am I not doing all in my power to render you comfortable, and to clear up this unhappy affair?"

"Oh, yes, dear grandfather, and—and I am very grateful, and thank you very much for all your kindness; but—but I am weak, and cannot bear trouble as well as I used to bear it. Pray forgive me, if I have hurt your feelings; I will try and not do so again."

"My sweet little pet! Forgive you? Oh! if none stood more in need to be forgiven, how happy the world might be!"

And, in spite of himself, Sir George could not help feeling how greatly he needed forgiveness, and how little he deserved it.

With the infallible rhetoric ever at his command, and of which he was a perfect master, he soon succeeded in calming the

young girl's sorrow, and in raising her hopes higher than ever.

His plan, as put forth to her, was to await Mr. Jameson's reply to the letter he professed to have written to that gentleman; and, if, as he supposed would be the case, it were to the effect that Elwyn had not returned from Italy or communicated with him, it was Sir George's pretended purpose to see Eola safely settled at Totnes, and to go himself to Nice in search of her lover, leaving Joe in charge of affairs at home. He intended, in case the young girl wrote any letters to her late protectress, Mrs. Jameson, to intercept them—a course easy for him to pursue, as it was a rule in the baronet's household that all letters sent from his establishment to the post should be conveyed in a locked bag, of which he and the postmaster alone possessed keys; and as Eola's health would not permit her to venture out walking for some time, Sir George knew that she could not take any letters to the post-office herself.

In the meanwhile, he would go to London for a week or so, and then return with some new story of Elwyn, which he might invent in the interim, and some fresh plan for future proceedings.

On the morning after his return from Totnes, Sir George presented himself in his grandchild's chamber with an open letter in his hand, written in a careless business hand, and purporting to have come from Mr. Jameson.

"Shall I read it to you, my pet? or will you do so for yourself?" he inquired, in an uninterested tone.

"Oh, you read it, grandfather," returned Eola.

The baronet complied, and read aloud the following:—

"DEAR SIR,—Your letter reached me this morning. I need scarcely tell you how greatly it has relieved my own and my family's apprehension, which for the last month has been extreme, both on Miss Leighton's account and Mr. Esward's; for we have not seen or heard anything of the latter during all that time. However, it is a great weight off our minds to know that the former, at least, is safe, and in good hands; and we must hope that Mr. Esward's silence and non-appearance are merely the result of some trifling accident, which will soon be cleared up."

"My sister, I am sorry to say, has returned to Edinburgh. I have written to her, communicating the glad news we have received, and forwarding Miss Leighton's kind invitation; which she will not, however, be enabled to accept, I fear, on account of the long journey its acceptance would entail; but this she will doubtless write and explain herself. With kind regards to Miss Leighton,

I am yours truly,

ARCHIBALD JAMESON.

CHAPTER LVI.

Elwyn Esward sits by his lonely hearth in solitary wretchedness. The brimming cup of happiness had scarcely touched his lips ere it was shattered in his grasp, and one of nauseous bitterness substituted. He now appears the picture of despair and misery.

Sick at heart, dejected, and harassed with the most agonizing thoughts, he sits on this cold February night by his cheerless fireside, and alternately mourns over past failures, and racks his brain for future projects.

He had hastened from Italy immediately on receiving the distressing news of his beloved one's abduction, and diligently followed up the false scent for her recovery.

This he had done with a frantic ardor that had entailed on him some very unpleasant consequences, and nearly involved him in a serious difficulty. He had gone straight to York, pounced upon the lessee of the theatre, and demanded to be told the whereabouts of the villain who was about to procure for him a tight-rope dancer.

The man, as a matter of course, was first astonished, then indignant at such a summary proceeding, and finally threatened to deliver Elwyn over to the police. At this, the latter was so enraged that he vehemently declared the lessee to be a base fellow, accused him of concealing the young lady, and, there and then, himself called in the aid of the law to compel the supposed instigator of Eola's abduction to renounce his claim, and deliver up his prisoner. Upon this, the lessee had called Elwyn a lunatic; in return, Elwyn nearly knocked him down; and the dispute ended for the time by both gentlemen being brought before the magistrates. But here, it being clearly proved that the lessee was innocent of the charge brought against him, the affair was amicably settled, and Elwyn was compelled to own to himself that he had been sent to York on a wild-goose chase;

for it was now quite clear that the letter from Northallerton had been a mere ruse to lure him off the right scent.

Since this adventure he had been half over England in pursuit of the gipsy band; had gone to every travelling show and circus that had crossed his path, followed every suspicious looking man, or cart, till fairly satisfied that they were not in any way concerned in the affair of the abduction, and, in fact, prosecuted his search in every form, reasonable or unreasonable.

And now he was once more in London, as wise, with regard to the fate of the lost one, as when he left it.

He had not advertised; for, as Sir George had anticipated, he considered this, under the circumstances, a vain and fruitless trouble.

But now the idea suddenly occurred to his mind that perhaps the gipsies had been tempted to steal Eola from mercenary motives, with a view to extort a handsome sum from her friends as a ransom; and were doubtless only awaiting the offer of a large reward to bring her forward, and claim it.

His eyes lighted up with a gleam of pleasure long strangers to them, as the joyful thought crossed his mind; and, blaming himself for not having conceived it before, he was meditating on the form in which he could most advantageously publish the tempting advertisement, when his servant entered with a letter that had been forwarded by a messenger from Stockwell.

It was a strange looking billet, the envelope of a very unfashionable plainness, and the superscription written in one of the most quaint, scrawling, out-of-the-way hands imaginable. It had been addressed to him at Mr. Jameson's, and bore the post mark of St. Ives.

What were the contents of this letter, it is needless to transcribe; it is sufficient to say that they were of a nature to cause Elwyn the most wonderfully sudden transition from grief to joy. Before daylight the next morning he was on his way to Truro.

But now, while Elwyn Esward is once more eagerly following up the search for his lost love; while our little Eola is reposing, in misplaced trust, upon a brittle reed, and her scheming grandfather is laying his worldly-wise plots, and meanwhile fondling and worshipping the artless dupe of his designs, let us revert once more to that hapless being left far back in our pages—that benighted wreck of beauty and vanity—Zerneen.

CHAPTER LVII.

We left Zerneen in the private asylum of the medical man to whose charge she had, by Esward's directions, been committed. A premature confinement had now given to the young gipsy's arms a tiny babe, upon whose countenance was stamped indelibly the tell-tale look of suffering. Poor, miserable winter-blossom! Well might its infant features bear the brand of sorrow! And yet, withal, it was loved.

How the poor mother hung over it in silent admiration!—how she clasped its little emaciated body to her heart!—what a pitiful expression of sympathy stole over her yet beautiful features whenever its low, wailing cries struck upon her ears!

She was still insane, though not so much so as when first introduced into the establishment of the doctor. Her madness had never been of a fierce, raving character; it was a still, deep, unbroken stupor, dreadful to witness, but harmless in its efforts.

There had been intervals of almost perfect sanity during her residence in the house, though few and far between; but a relapse had always followed.

The doctor, who was really a clever man in his profession, had however, from the first entertained the greatest hopes of her restoration to perfect reason on the birth of her child—a crisis on which he had every reason to believe the young sufferer's malady would take a decided change. And his hopes proved to be not utterly unfounded; and her demeanor towards her babe gave every promise of justifying the doctor's hypothesis, that if the infant's life were spared, she would eventually recover her reason entirely.

But the poor little blighted bud was not destined to linger long on earth.

A month passed, and a quiet, chastened sorrow appeared to have succeeded in Zerneen's breast the vacant despondency that had so long pervaded it. But now the ill-fated child began to waste and sicken, and the truth could no longer remain disguised from the hapless parent that she must lose her babe. Insane though she still was, she saw the hand of death laid upon that small wasted cheek, and felt and said in her heart, 'My child will die.'

[To be continued.]