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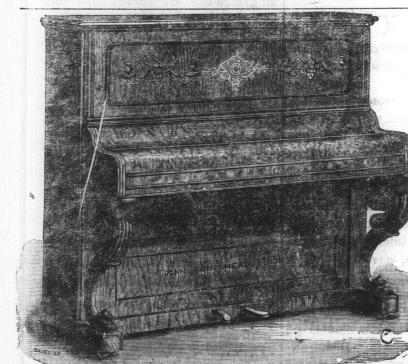
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CHAPTER XXIV.

(Continued.)

Whatever she did must be done quickly. She had no time to lose—the delay of ever one day might be fatal to her.

She sent for her two servants at once, and The office is centrally situated on Water Street, opposite R. Harvey's dry goods store, and you can come in and see us, whether you purchase or not, where all information you may require will be cheerfully given, and told them that some friends of hers were at the sea-side, and that she wished to join them. She could leave the house safely in their charge. They were to receive a certain sum in wages; and she gave them particular instructions how, when they received any letters for her, they were to be forwarded to the General Post Office, St. Martin's le Grand.

> ' But will you not leave us your own address ma'am,' asked the house-maid, 'so that, if anything happens, we can write to you direct? She was puzzled for a minute, and then she looked up with a smile.

'Of course I shall send you my address but, when I leave Cowes-to which place I am now going-I shall not be able to give any address, for I am not quite sure where we shall

The two servants saw nothing unusual in the fact that their beautiful young mistress finding home dull during her husband's absence, should go to the sea-side, and should afterward travel with her friends; it seemed so perfectly natural to them that they never even discussed it. Perhaps the prospect of some months by themselves with plenty of leisure and good wages, was not altogether displeasing to them. They entered heartily into all the arrangements made by their mistress. All letters were to be forwarded to 'Mrs. Estcourt, General Post-Office, St. Martin's-le-Grand, London.'

'No matter in what part of England I may be,' she said to herself, 'I shall be able to run up to London at least for one day in every

She commenced her preparations at once She packed up what clothes she would require, carefully putting away the costly and beautiful dresses in which Lord Rylestone had delighted to see her. She took only plain dresses, and none of her ornaments. Those were only to be worn before him; and when he was no longer here to delight in her beauty she did not care to adorn it. She was well provided with money, and on the summer day when she left the pretty villa there was not a doubt on her mind, not a shadow of fear on her beautiful face, not the faintest presentiment in her heart. The only thing that troubled her was her wedding-ring. What was she to do with it? She could not call herself Miss Avenel, and yet wear a wedding-ring; and she could not take it off-it seemed like an act of disloyalty to Allan. She would rather have cut off her hand than have drawn off her ring.

She found another with which she almost managed to hide it-at least, it was impossible to tell clearly what it was—and she trusted to the chapter of accidents that it would be overlooked. She could not have taken off her ring. A vision of the hour in which it was put on her finger came to her; she remembered the handsome, loving face bent over her and she kissed the little golden circle.

'It would be like losing my love" she thought. 'I could not part with my ring.' She bade good-by to her pretty little home. smiling as she looked at the flower-wreathed

'When I see you again,' she said, 'I shall know what so sorely preplexes me now, the secret of the will.'

The sun was shining when she left. Sh walked down the garden path where she had so often walked by her husband's side, and no warning came to her-no voice, cleaving the soft summer air, bade her stay.

When I return I shall know all,' she said to herself; 'and perhaps I may know enough to help my husband to regain his fortune.'

For the idea strongest upon her was that she was going direct to the enemy's camp-going amongst those who had robbed her husband, and who were his deadliest foes.

CHAPTER XXV.

SIR CHARLES and Lady Davenant were seated in the drawing-room of their pretty villa at Cowes. The kindly, hospitable baronet, who would not for the world have owned that " my lady" had a temper, was trying his best to re-

store calmness and serenity to the domestic atmosphere. Her ladyship was ruffled; grand charity bazaar had been organized, and a list of lady patronesses made out, and she was not one of them. As that list included the creme de la creme of Cowes, she was mor tified because it included the name of her great friend and rival, the Marchioness of Heatherbrae. She grew doubly annoyed when she found that it also included the name of Miss Cameron, whom she wished to know.

Sir Charles found some difficulty in restorng to his domestic atmosphere that which he loved best-peace. He assured his wife, in his blandest accents, that the oversight was a mistake, entirely attributable to the fact of her having been so short a time at Cowes.

'I came two days before the marchioness, she rejoined, in a querulous voice; 'and I think it very strange, Sir Charles.'

'Is there anything I can do, my dear,' asked he-' anything to remedy the mistake, I mean.' 'Certainly not,' replied her ladyship with

even suggest such a thing.' ' Well, my dear, since you will not allow me to cure the evil, suppose we enjoy it cheerfully,

after the manner of the old proverb.' 'I do not like proverbs,' said her ladyship,

'You will be sure to meet Miss Cameron at the Officers' Ball,' he observed, desirous of pleasing her. 'I know she is going.'

'I am not so sure that I have any great desie to make Miss Cameron's acquaintance,' said his wife; and then Sir Charles gave up the attempt to console her.

Suddenly he remembered something which he felt sure would not only please her, but entirely change the current of her thoughts.

my dear,' he said. 'Pray do not speak in parables, Sir Charles;

'I met some one this morning whom you like,

I like but few people.' 'I am sure of my ground, though, in this

With an air of complete resignation and patience her ladyship folded her jewelled

'When you are quite tired of a feeble effort to mystify me, you will speak plainly, Sir

The good-natured baronet found matters more serious than he had thought. He wished to make them pleasant as soon as possible.

'I think, my dear,' he said, 'you will be pleased when I tell you that Miss Avenel is staying here. I met her this morning.'

Then did her ladyship's face relax and a smile play round her lips. 'Miss Avenel? I am very glad to hear it.

shall be pleased to see her.'

'She spoke so nicely, so gratefully of you,' he continued, diplomatically.

'Is she here with her pupils?' asked her adyship, deigning to feel interested.

'No, I think not. She is here for her health, I should say. She looks ill-very pale

'Ah!' said Lady Davenant, complacently, she has found out her mistake in leaving Laston Priory. I told her that she would. I have a great respect for Miss Avenel. Her uncommon beauty was, of course, slightly against her, but she was an excellent governess. I have had three since she left me, but none of them could be compared with her. She was so fond of the children. Did you say she intended calling on me?'

'Yes,' he replied; 'she said she greatly desired to see the children. I told her they would all be at home this morning. She will probably call.'

Lady Davenant was pleased. She was stately, precise, and difficult to please, but she had liked Margarita. She forgot the list of dec22 patronesses—there was a great pleasure before her. She entertained a profound idea of her own wisdom. Miss Avenel had persisted in leaving her; but she had told her that she would repent it, and she was prepared to be very pleased in finding out that Miss Avenel had so repented.

There was an ususually gracious smile on her lips when Margarita entered the room, and kindly greetings were exchanged between them; and then her ladyship looked at her exgoverness in silent wonder. She could not quite understand the subtle change which had come over her; the tall perfect figure seemed to have acquired a new and nameless grace, there was a deeper beauty in the dark, passionate face, there were self-possession and dignity equal to her own.

She held Margarita's hand in her own for some minutes very kindly.

'Sir Charles told me, my dear Miss Avenel, that you were looking ill. I have never seen you look so well before.'

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Dated at New York, October 1, 1887.