

THE TRIUMPHS OF DUTY.

CHAPTER XLIII. (CONTINUED.)

As the earl finished this truly contrite and resigned document, he became, although at the second reading, much affected, and his sole auditor the same. At length the duchess inquired.

"What step shall you take respecting the subtraction of the jewels from the creditors?"

"Last night, for this day's post, I have written to Mr. Oldham," replied the earl, "to search among his uncle's papers for a notice of that fact. This reply will be interesting, as containing details of the reason for my having had to transmit to him annual sums, up to the date of 1832, when I received his receipt for the whole of the payments made."

In a few days the answer arrived from Mr. Oldham, as follows:

"My lord, on reference to the papers of my uncle, I find recorded the fact of the arrival of an iron case, containing an oblong stone, enveloped in several papers, the exterior one being sealed with the arms of the Wooltons; also noticed a prosecution commenced against the guard of the mail coach, but stopped; and a compromise made with the creditors; also noted a correspondence with yourself, my lord, stating that, as the value of the jewels was unknown, the creditors were content to place them at four thousand pounds. To this last letter no reply having been received, the copy of a second letter merely urges an immediate acknowledgment of the first, and states that four thousand pounds in small installments would satisfy the remaining creditors. This letter was duly received, and each year your lordship remitted a sum, till in June, 1832, the whole, with the interest, was liquidated."

"Never were jewels more worthily redeemed," observed the duchess.

"And now you will wear them; will you not?" said Lord Charleton. "Not that you require any addition to the superb jewels you retain for life, as dowager Duchess of Peterworth; but for my sake."

"Ah! dear Charleton," replied she, "I have other remembrances of you. Give them all to Violet. I am thinking, like our humble friends, of the typical jewels of the New Jerusalem."

CHAPTER XLIV.

FRIENDSHIPS FOR HEAVEN AND THOSE FOR HELL.

That evening's post brought the announcement to the duchess, from her beloved step daughter, Lady Emily Whyne, that the colonel and herself were about to start for Vienna, in consequence of a communication from Mrs. Bligh, the companion of Lady Claud Chamberlayne, of a very unsatisfactory nature. Mrs. Bligh recorded a new friendship of nearly the same ardent nature as with the fascinating Hortense. This new friend was a German lady, married to an English man, closely united in office, as in esteem, to the ambassador, Lord Claud Chamberlayne. The especial temptation of this lady was, not ambition, but gambling; into which dangerous folly the weak Georgina had been drawn to the already loss of several hundreds. Lady Emily entreated the duchess to receive her daughter, Leonora, under her roof, until their return from Vienna.

"Thank God," wrote the duchess, in reply, "that Georgina has with her a person who was chosen by yourself, who possesses your confidence, and knows where to turn for prompt and effective assistance. God speed your journey! Send me Leonora; Lord Charleton joins me in this warm invitation; yes, send me Leonora; I value her more than you have ever done. You have made an idol of Georgina, and you are now punished by having to play second to every friend, or

rather female seducer, who crosses her path. Remember that I never permitted my preference for you should give pain to others. Do not resent my warm expressions, Emily, my dearest child. I am anxious to save the post. Onco more, God speed the journey! Love to Charles

"Your devoted mother,

"EMMA PETERWORTH"

About a week after this rapid exchange of letters, Miss Whyne, accompanied by the housekeeper and one of the footmen, in addition to her own maid, arrived at Woolton Court—an intelligent, loving creature; perhaps, too much so for the slender form and hectic cheek. When folded in the arms of her step-grandmother she trembled so much that she was gently laid on the sofa by that same grand-mamma and the hands locked in each other.

"My poor child," at length said the duchess, "weep on; it will relieve you. You have had partings; you are far from home."

"Oh, no, grandmamma!" cried Leonora, starting up; "it is not that; I am weeping for joy, I believe; and I feel very much exhausted. How long it is since I saw you, grandmamma; you look so well—younger than ever and so loving!"

"But do not weep on that account," said the duchess, herself holding the handkerchief to her eyes, "my little Nora is to become quite strong and gay at Woolton Court."

"Oh! yes, grandmamma. Anywhere near you; and I hear this is such a beautiful place. How happy are those who live in the country! How wearied I am of London and watering-places; yet, there are gardens in and about Belgrave-square and the sea is ever magnificent; but there is always such constraint. I am told there is a small lake in these grounds and banks of wild flowers! Oh! grandmamma, did I ever see wild flowers? I do not think I have ever seen them. And to see and inhale them with you, grandmamma, and to sit amongst them on those banks."

Here a salver of sandwiches, fruit, and wine and water caused an opportune pause, during which Lord Charleton entered, and received the thanks of the young visitor for the invitation conveyed by the duchess. The two ladies-companions, Mrs. Bentley and Miss Telford, now offered to conduct Leonora to the rooms destined for her use; and the happy girl was soon prattling to them both and admiring everything she saw around her.

Thus passed a week, when Lord Stanmore proposed to Lady Violet to arrange some party of pleasure for their young friend, having previously ascertained the bent of her tastes and wishes. Therefore, at Leonora's next visit, Violet soon found a good opening for saying:

"What is the most congenial to you, Leonora? What gives you the most pleasure of all your pursuits and amusements?"

A little pause, a smile, a blush, and the reply was:

"High Mass and Benediction."

"Oh! dearest Leonora," cried Violet, "what happiness this gives me; for ours will be a holy friendship. And to be so merry and pious! Why, this is just like the duchess!"

"Now it is my turn," said Leonora, "to exclaim 'Oh, dearest Violet! what happiness this gives me!' for nothing—that is," added she, laughing, "nothing after High Mass and Benediction—makes me so happy as to be thought like grandmamma; especially by you, Violet, whom I admire and esteem so much. In short, what can exceed the happiness of being always with those one loves and admires; and to be loved by them." added she, in a lower voice, while a diffident, hidden expression stole over her hitherto animated countenance, and a tear rose in the large bright eyes

"Dearest Leonora," said Violet, "I love you, all love you—from your grandmamma to the peasant woman who weeds the walks in the pleasure-grounds. How can you doubt?"

"I do not doubt, exactly," replied she; "but Violet,"—and the little head was on the shoulder of her friend—"I have been an unloved child!"

Some tears fell on both sides, of which Leonora was aware: and this effect of soothing sympathetic friendship was greater balm to her heart than the most eloquent flow of words from the lips of Violet.

"Oh! you sweet, blessed creature," said Leonora, "do not weep for me: this adversity in my home has been blessed to me; for I have fled into the sacred heart of my divine Redeemer: and His Mother has become mine. Still, as faith is weak, and the unseen is but too apt to be forgotten in things visible, I wish it were my duty to live always at Woolton Court, or to live near you, Violet."

A sudden thought struck Lady Violet. She gently raised the head of Leonora, and said:

"After emotion of a painful nature, it is very beneficial to have a little recreation; therefore, I wish to include you, dear Leonora, in a short drive, which my aunt and I are going to take, by appointment, to bring a picture, which Lord Stanmore has requested her to copy before she returns to London. I think you will enjoy this little trip, provided the duchess has no other plan for you."

"I will run directly and ascertain," said Leonora. "At what hour must I be ready?"

"At eleven and it is now past ten. We must not lose this bright sun!"

The duchess was engaged in writing when Leonora entered to ask permission to dine out with her friends, Clara and Violet, and she merely smiled and nodded her assent, without inquiry. Neither did Leonora inquire, nor give heed to aught beyond the happiness of being with congenial spirits, in the midst of scenery so far surpassing all she had ever viewed in her excursions from her London home. Lord Stanmore was on horseback, the carriage was open; he was, therefore, able to communicate all the local information he had gradually acquired to the ardent visitor.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE LORD OF THE MANOR.

Half-an-hour's drive brought our party to the entrance-gate of Gelliot Manor; and Leonora was then informed that the picture—object of their drive—was that of a certain Lady Maude Woolton, who had been espoused, in the middle ages, to the Squire Gelliot; but that the best picture to be seen at the manor-house was the present squire. This soon proved to be true, although the rooms contained some good and rare paintings. The especial object of the drive had been already taken from its place, and a modern painting substituted, which latter sufficiently inspired Leonora to exclaim, "O! surely this is the most beautiful of all. If I could paint, this would be my choice! Lady Clara, is my taste correct?"

Turning round to her friends she perceived a smile on each one's countenance, and observing the squire more in detail, she smiled also, saying, "I begin to be aware that the picture is a likeness of Squire Gelliot in his youth."

"A very correct supposition," said the old gentleman, bowing, "considering the original as not here. This painting is a portrait of my son, Captain Gelliot, of the Life Guards. A better man than his father, but thought very like him. If God spare his life, he will be the forty-seventh squire of Gelliot Manor, since the grant of the lands, by William the Conqueror, in 1066."

"Ah! yes, squire," said Lord Stanmore, "you are the most ancient hero on English ground. We had no land till Agincourt; and to prove ourselves

as ancient as you, have to trace back to Dauphine in France."

"Your grant of lands," observed the squire, "was first under the title of Baron Woolton of Woolton. 'Tis a pity you ever accepted anything beyond. You intermarried with the Gelliot in 1380, and again in 1630, the title up to the last date being still Lord Woolton of Woolton. It is therefore incorrect, according to modern times, to label the picture I am lending you, 'the Lady Maude Woolton;' for you were not then earls. But the label was on before my birth, and may therefore remain; for doubtless such was then the usage. But now let me show you a fine picture of what in the London catalogues at exhibitions is termed 'dead life!' and the squire humorously introduced the party to a substantial luncheon, in a room commanding, as he informed them, the best mountain view to be obtained in the neighborhood. In the mean time the servants and horses were regaling to their full satisfaction. The squire had expected his friends to spend the day, and would not let them depart. So after the luncheon they wandered in the pleasure-grounds, and rested awhile in hermitages, and in a grotto with a fine echo; in the latter of which the Ladies Clara and Violet sang with Lord Stanmore.

"Do you sing?" said the old gentleman, with complacent looks, to Leonora.

"Not at present," replied she. "I have been forbidden; my chest is rather delicate. But after a few more weeks in this fine mountain air I shall be stronger, and then I will sing to you. I suppose you prefer everything English?"

"I do," said he; "but above all things I prefer to get you strong and well. This air and this soil are far more healthy than at Woolton Court. I am such an old man that you can very well come and regain your health here with me without wagging of evil tongues. I have an old house-keeper, who once knew better days: she will sit in the drawing-room while you are here. I will go now and arrange with Lord Stanmore."

"O, no!" cried Leonora, laughing; "I cannot give myself permission. I must ask it of grandmamma."

"Who is grandmamma?"

"The dowager duchess of Peterworth."

"Ho, ho! You are perched up at Eagles Crag! Too bleak! You must come here directly."

"I am not at Eagles Crag, for grandmamma now lives entirely at Woolton Court."

"Ho! so the old lovers are privately married at last," thought he; then aloud, "Now, do you not think this much the finest place?"

"I think," replied Leonora, "that the mountain scenery is really more grand and extensive. But you have no lake."

"Very bad for you that still water; the less you are near it the better. You shall see the Gelliot cascade—far beyond any lake. Perhaps we have time even now."

The squire looked at his watch, just as Lord Stanmore came to represent, that when a lady undertakes to act the true mother's part to her infant, she must submit to the trammels of that duty, and not remain too many hours from home.

"I must, therefore," continued Lord Stanmore, "return to Woolton Court with Lady Violet; but if you, squire, will convoy Lady Clara and Miss Whyne in your own carriage, and spend a few days at Woolton Court, it will make us all very happy."

"O, do say yes!" exclaimed Leonora.

"Then I will say yes," responded the gallant old squire. "And we shall soon follow you on the road, Lord Stanmore; for this little lady must not be out after sunset. But I