

REDMOND O'DONNELL

LE CHASSEUR D'AFRIQUE.

PART II.

CHAPTER XV.—CONTINUED.

"Now he is perfectly quiet. The tableau in the sick room is this—Sir Arthur reading gravely alone the Castleford Chronicle at one side of the bed; Miss Hercastie gravely embroidering at the other; and Sir Peter, lying with wide open eyes that never leave Miss Hercastie's face. They all looked so very well content, that I came away."

"She laughed a little and gathered more hyacinths for her bouquet. Against the soldier glanced at her with those blue, brilliant eyes of his, but again the brown eyes were intently fixed on her flowers. Was Lady Cecil jealous?"

"It is a pity, no doubt, to interrupt so happy and well assorted a party," he said, "still I think I will be vandy enough to do it. I am very much interested in this matter, and am going to turn amateur detective and probe it to the bottom. A veritable ghost in this nineteenth century is a novel and wonderful curiosity; let us make the most of it. It is something even to see a man who has seen a ghost. It has never been my good fortune, in all my varied experience, to meet one before. I shall go at once and interview Sir Peter."

"He bowed and departed, and Pansy and Pearl, who had run off, joined Lady Cecil.

"How nice he is, aunty," Pearl said, "with such white teeth, and good-natured-looking, and everything. He's nicer than Sir Arthur. I don't like Sir Arthur, Pansy don't like Sir Arthur, nor Papa Peter, nor Major Frankland."

"He's lovely," said Pansy, "only he's too big. They're all too big except Papa Peter. Aunt Cecil, when I grow up I should like to marry Captain O'Donnell—shouldn't you?"

"My dear child," said Lady Cecil, "I should like to see you married to a man like that, but I don't think you should."

"I trust I am not an intruder, Sir Peter," the young Irishman said, coming forward, "but hearing of your accident—"

"Come in, O'Donnell—come in," the sharp quavering voice of the invalid said; "I wanted to see you. If you're tired sitting here, Sir Arthur, perhaps O'Donnell will take your place."

"With pleasure, Sir Peter." The chasseur came forward, saluted the lady and the Cornish baronet, and took Sir Arthur's vacated seat.

"And with your permission, Sir Peter, now that Captain O'Donnell has come, I will go to bed. I have not been out to-day, and my head aches. I will administer your medicine, though, before I go."

"He took it submissively from her hand. Captain O'Donnell watched every movement, and followed with his eyes the stately figure out of the room. She closed the door after her, and they were quite alone."

"What a very strange—very remarkable occurrence, Sir Peter," he began. "The talk is, that you saw a ghost. Now I thought ghosts were exploded ideas. Will you pardon me if I think so still?"

"I wish to Heaven I could," Sir Peter growled. The afternoon sunshine was pouring into the room; his nerves had recovered their tone, and he had a companion. He could talk sufficiently calmly now of the apparition. "Unfortunately for me, it admits of no doubt. As plainly as I see you sitting here beside me, I saw Katherine Dangerfield last night. I saw her face plainly—plainly in the light of the moon; the night was clear as day. Saw her as I have seen her a hundred times here in Scarswood."

"And she vanished when you looked at her?"

"I don't know when she vanished. My horse saw her as well as I; Wilson will tell you he found him trembling all over with terror when he came up. He threw me—I fell and fainted. I remember no more and I opened my eyes here in this room and—"

"He stopped and cast a look of nervous dread at the door.

"And you thought you saw the ghost a second time. You mistook Miss Hercastie for your dead relative; she wasn't a relative, but you know what I mean. She is very like her, is she not?"

"Awfully, frightfully like her," the baronet answered, in a trembling tone. "O'Donnell, I tell you I'm afraid of this woman—I don't know why, but I am. Perhaps because of her resemblance to Katherine; perhaps—her face, I don't know why, but her eyes, her tall, her voice, frighten me. They are so like—so like."

"And yet you persist in having her with you, in your room."

"Yes, and I can't tell you why there either. She frightens me, and she fascinates me. Why did she ever come here? Who is she? How dare she come to me so horribly like that dead girl?"

"How, indeed?" Captain O'Donnell answered. "Sir Peter, I have a great curiosity concerning this Katherine Dangerfield. Have you any picture of her? I would give a good deal to see one."

"Yes, I have," the sick man said. "Do you see that escritoire over there? Open that—the key is in it; open the third drawer to the left and you will find a photograph of Katherine Dangerfield, taken a month before she died. You will see the wonderful likeness at once."

Redmond O'Donnell obeyed. He unlocked the escritoire, opened the drawer, and produced a picture wrapped in silver paper. It was a photograph, soft and clear as an engraving, and beautifully tinted. The chasseur took it to the window, and gazed upon it long and earnestly.

"The story of Katherine Dangerfield had been told him in brief, by different people at different times, and his sad pathos had touched him deeply. Her only fault had been that she had loved not wisely, but too well; had trusted too implicitly, and had beloved the man she loved, and was ready to endow her fortune, as generous and faithful as herself. And all had been torn from him in one bitter hour—all, and Death, the only friend who had been true, came to her aid. And now he held her picture, taken during the happiest period of her life, the month before her marriage. And, as Sir Peter had said, the first thing that had struck him was the strong resemblance to Miss Hercastie. No one could fail to look upon the two and not exclaim, 'How like!' Only at first glance, though; the more you looked, the more their striking similarity seemed to fade. It

was like, but could never have been taken for the portrait of my lady's mysterious governess. He sat down, and deliberately analyzed the features, one by one—the points of resemblance. He began at the beginning. First the hair, this pictured hair, was brown—pale chestnut brown, without a tinge of red or yellow; that is if the tinting had been true to nature. It rippled over neck and shoulders and down to the slim girl's waist, a bright, feathery cloud. Miss Hercastie's hair was jet black, straight as an Indian's, and twisted in great shining curls about her head. The hair in the picture was broad, open, intelligent. Miss Hercastie's hair was worn crepe down to her straight black brows. The pictured eyes laughed up at you from the part; the eyes of the governess were grave, somber, smileless.

The nose was the same—the same precisely—neither straight nor yet retroussé, not classic, and not snub. The mouth was handsome—the handsomest feature of all—square-cut at the corners, sweet, strong, like the eyes, smiling, and with bright, resolute lips. The shape of Miss Hercastie's was the same, the expression entirely different. All the hard lines, the rigid compression, the grave resolution of the living mouth were wanting in the pictured one. The chin was alike—a curved chin—a square, determined mouth, the throat was graceful and girlish, the shoulders sloping—the waist long and slender; Miss Hercastie's proportions were those of what men call "a fine woman."

The moments passed; in the sick room all was very still. The buzzing of the big blue flies on the pane, the restless tossing of the invalid, the chirp and rustle of summer life without, all were plainly audible. Had Captain O'Donnell fallen asleep over the picture? Peter broke out at last impatiently: "Well, O'Donnell, are you dreaming there? What do you think of the picture? Did you ever see such a likeness? It might be Miss Hercastie's portrait, might it not?"

O'Donnell rose up and returned to his place by the bedside, picture in hand.

"No," he said, with slow, thoughtful gravity, "never Miss Hercastie's picture; there is not one expression of this face like any she ever wears. Shall I tell you, Sir Peter, what it is like?"

"Of course; for what other reason have I shown it to you?"

"Then here's my opinion: If Katherine Dangerfield, instead of dying and being buried yonder in Castleford cemetery, had lived, and vowed vengeance for her wrongs, and came back here to wreak that vengeance, this picture would look now as Miss Hercastie's does."

Sir Peter half raised himself, alarmed, excited. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"This. This photographed face is full of latent power, undeveloped, unsuspected—to be used, as circumstances turn, for good or evil. If Katherine Dangerfield had lived, and her life had been a happy one, she would have been one of the best, the bravest, the most womanly of women—a model wife, an excellent mother, a noble matron. If she had lived, wronged and embittered as her life was, I believe, Sir Peter, there is no evil, no depth of sin, to which she would not be capable of sinking to gratify her revenge. It is the face of one who might have been a dangerous woman. This face looks a little, a very little, like Miss Hercastie. It she had not died, I should feel certain Miss Hercastie and Katherine Dangerfield were one and the same."

"There was a blank pause. Sir Peter lay back among his pillows, terrified, helpless. The chasseur's face was full of dark, grave thought.

"Good Heavens, O'Donnell! Sir Peter's face is length. 'What do you mean?'"

"I hardly know yet. I feel like a man groping in the dark. Sir Peter, there can be no doubt—it is absurd of me to suppose such a thing—there can be no doubt Katherine Dangerfield did die?"

"No doubt," cried Sir Peter, shocked beyond expression. "Of course there was no doubt. Good Heavens above! O'Donnell, I—I never heard of such a thing. Dead! Whv, certainly she's dead—dead—buried six years ago. You can see her grave any day, for that matter, in Castleford cemetery."

"Ah! no doubt. Did I not say it was a most absurd supposition on my part? Of course she is dead, as you say. You saw her dead, is that right?"

"Yes, her dead!" the baronet repeated, with a shudder; "I only wish I had not. I saw her dead—cold, and white, and still—I saw her every day of my life; and Talbot saw her—ask Talbot—he was one of the men who saw her laid in her coffin and in her grave. Dead! Yes, she's dead—dead—dead. Poor little Kathie!"

"His voice choked; he turned away and covered his face with his hands. His nerves were all unstrung; he was weak and ailing, frightened and lonely, his very life was fast becoming a torture to him, he broke down. O'Donnell looked at him in surprise.

"You were fond of your cousin, then—I mean of this unhappy young lady? Why I thought—"

"You thought right," the little baronet cried, passionately, "I was not fond of her. I was a brute, a villain, a cowardly wretch. I insulted her—brutally, I tell you, and she—"

"His eyes dilated, his face grew ashen white. "I see her still, O'Donnell," he whispered, huskily, "as she stood before me then—like death, like snow, frozen and white, swearing that oath of vengeance: 'Living, I will pursue you to the ends of the earth. Dead, I will come from the grave and haunt you.' She swore it, and she was one, living or dead, to keep her word. What I saw last night has not been the living; and she will come to me from her boudoir and coffin again and again; until I go raving mad at last."

"His voice rose almost to a shriek of passion and fear. The last remnant of man's courage died out of the miserable little wretch's body, and he burst out into a tempest of womanish sobs and tears.

O'Donnell sat silent watching him—pity, contempt, disgust, all in his grave, silent face. He made no attempt to console or soothe this stricken sinner; most of all that was soft and tender in his nature had died a natural death years ago. He sat rigidly enough now, waiting for a hull in the storm. It came. Even Sir Peter Dangerfield had manliness enough left to be ashamed of crying like a whipped schoolboy.

"I—I can't help it, O'Donnell," he said; "pityously. 'If you only knew what I have gone through since that time, what I have suffered, what I still suffer, you would feel for me. Katherine Dangerfield is dead, and I saw her spirit last night, as I'll see it again and again, until I go mad or die.'"

"We have an old adage in our country," O'Donnell said, curtly, "that sorrow is soon enough when it comes." Now, for my part, I don't believe in ghostly visitations of any kind, in common with most people; but that is a point we won't argue. You believe you saw a ghost last night. Now, Sir Peter, is it not likely possible, that Miss Hercastie may be a somnambulist, and that all unconsciously she got out of bed on a sad night, and that it was she you saw under the Klag's Oak?"

"But Sir Peter shook his head.

"No," he said. "Some one asked that

very question—the earl I think it was—and Miss Hercastie replied; that she had never walked in her sleep in her life—that she had gone to her room at half past ten. And it wasn't Miss Hercastie—it was Katherine Dangerfield this time—it was Katherine Dangerfield. Captain O'Donnell shrugged his shoulders. Argument was wasted here. He drew out his watch. It was past six now, and nearing the Scarswood dinner hour.

"I won't stay to dine to-day, I think," he said rising. "Sir Peter, with your permission I'll keep this picture for the present; I don't see my way clearly through this maze, and I can't believe your solution of the enigma. Katherine Dangerfield may not have been noted for an overcoat of sound sense in her lifetime, but I can't believe that her ghost would remain so supremely silly after six years' interment as to take nocturnal rambles to Scarswood on purpose to keep a most sensationally row."

"I simply can't believe it. Shall I ring for some one to take my place?"

He rang. Mrs. Butler and one of the maids came, and the chasseur took his departure. The family were in their rooms dressing; he made his way out unnoticed; the lawn and terraces were deserted also, and he passed out of the house and the gates undisturbed.

He walked on to the town, lost in thought. What did the mystery mean? He might have thought the ghost a myth, a figment of Sir Peter's superstitious, overheated brain, but there was the evidence of the horse. The groom had found him quivering with terror—he had thrown his master in his frightened bound—and Saracen was a calm, well-tamed animal on ordinary occasions. Saracen was not superstitious, nor likely to be terrified by optical illusions. The horse had seen something—now what had that something been—coblin or human?"

It was a riddle the Chasseur d'Afrique could not read. He walked on with knitted brow and perplexed mind into and beyond the town. It was very quiet; the respectable fourth-class, shop-keeping, rate-paying citizens were in their back parlors drinking tea. An opal gray sky was overhead, a faint evening breeze was stirring, and the golden evening stars twinkled amid the golden gray. In its peace and hush Captain O'Donnell went on, out into the suburbs, opened the quaint old gate, and entered the solitary churchyard. The deep-hush of all reigned here; not a sound but the twitter of the birds in their nests and the rustling of the leaves could be heard. He passed on, looking at the inscriptions on the tombstones, until at last he reached that solitary corner, where, under the waving birch trees, six years ago, they had laid Sir John Dangerfield's adopted daughter.

He passed. The gray-stone was overrun with clematis, the grave with grass and weeds. He pushed aside the fragrant blossoms and read the inscription:

KATHERINE, ETAT 17, REBERGIAN.

"Rêrurgian—I shall rise again!" In the light of these latter events, how ominous the word sounded—like a threat from the dead. He stood there until the last yellow glimmer died out of the western sky, and the whole expanse had turned cold and gray. The rising night wind struck chill, when at last he aroused himself and turned away.

But before he had gone five yards he paused. Then after that momentary pause, he passed into the shadow of a tree-shaded walk, and stood still.

A man and a woman were standing just inside the gate, screened from passers-by outside, by the elms that waved above it. Even at that distance he recognized the woman's figure—it was not to be mistaken—it was Miss Hercastie.

Fate seemed to take a malicious pleasure in throwing her across her path, in foredooming her to play the spy.

He stood still. It was impossible to go a step onward without being seen, and what would the governess think, but that he had degenerated her steps again! He stood still. The backs of both were turned upon him, but he knew Miss Hercastie's stately figure and bearing, and dark, plain dress immediately. The man—O'Donnell was the man! For one moment O'Donnell's heart gave a bound—a sickening moment of fear. Was it—was it Sir Arthur Tregeenna! The height was the same; this man wore a gray suit and a conical felt hat; so did the Cornish baronet upon occasions. Could it be the chivalrous, the high-minded Cornishman could stoop to such deception, such double dealings, such treachery to himself and Lady Cecil as to keep private assignations with the governess!

As the thought crossed his mind the two turned, moved forward to the gate, and he saw with a sense of unutterable relief that he was mistaken. It was not Sir Arthur, it was in no way like him. He saw the face of an utter stranger. The daylight still lingered, and the moon shone radiantly bright; he saw their faces clearly. Miss Hercastie, calm, stately, as usual; the man tall, fair, sturdily built, with stooping shoulders and a pale, thin face. They were speaking as they approached the gate and him. In the profound stillness the last words of Miss Hercastie in her rich, sweet, full tones, came to him:

"You must go back, Henry, and at once, tonight. That you have been at Castleford all will cause talk enough. I had to tell you Marie De Lanson was here, but I certainly did not expect you to answer my letter in person. Say good-by now, and let me go on alone; it would be fatal to all my projects to be seen with you."

Their hands clasped. The man murmured something earnestly, in too low a tone to be heard. Miss Hercastie's clear voice responded:

"Give up! Give up now, after all I have suffered, all I have worked so hard to accomplish, all I have done already! Never! You should know me better than that. The first installment of my revenge I have had. What I have sworn, I will do; then, I care little who comes. Good night, my kind, my faithful friend; go back to London at once."

She pulled a thick lace veil she wore over her face and walked away, with her own rapid, resolute step. The man lingered for nearly ten minutes; then, he too, opened the gate and disappeared in the gloaming.

And Captain O'Donnell! He stood like one petrified. Marie De Lanson! His sister's Louisiana name, on Miss Hercastie's lips—and to this man! What did it mean! And her revenge—the oath she had made, and meant to keep! What strange, incomprehensible jumble of mysteries was it altogether? His head absolutely turned giddy for a moment with the stirring thoughts that filled his brain.

Who was Miss Hercastie? He glanced at the grave, and the gray stone, gleaming in the moonlight, that told the legend of Katherine Dangerfield's death. If Katherine Dangerfield were dead—if what reason had he to doubt it? And yet?—and yet?—his blue eyes flashed, his lips set, and his face grew like iron with a sudden, stern resolve.

"I'll get at the bottom of this juggling. I'll find out who you are, my mysterious Miss Hercastie! I'll find out whether it was Katherine Dangerfield's ghost Sir Peter saw un-

der the King's Oak, or—a living woman! And, above all, I'll find out what the name of Marie De Lanson has to do with you or that man!"

CHAPTER XVI. THE STORY OF THE IVORY MINIATURE.

"Lady Cecil," Lord Buxland said, "a word with you!"

It was an ominous beginning. The earl never called his daughter by her proper name of title unless in a state of unusual gravity or unusual displeasure. They were alone together. The hour was just after dinner, and the ladies among whom the governess had figured, had adjourned from the dining to the drawing room. Miss O'Donnell had gone to the piano, my lady perused a popular novel. Miss Hercastie seated herself by the window with that filmy lace embroidery—Lady Dangerfield kept her constantly employed—and Lady Cecil, feeling oppressed and out of spirits somehow, had thrown a black lace mantilla over her head and white summer dress, and stepped through one of the open windows out upon the lawn, and down to the terrace. She was pacing slowly and thoughtfully up and down, a lovely vision in the sunset, when her father's voice abruptly spoke behind her.

She turned in surprise. She had imagined him with the other gentlemen, Sir Arthur, the major, and Sir Peter, over the wine and after-dinner talk, and here he was beside her, with a face of ominous gravity.

"With me, papa? Certainly. What is it?"

But her heart fluttered, guiltily a little, as she asked the question, what it was—something very unpleasant flashed upon her as at once.

"What is it?" Do you really need to ask that question, Lady Cecil? I have come to demand an explanation of your extraordinary conduct of late."

"My extraordinary conduct! Really, papa—"

"That will do! You feign surprises very well, my dear; but it doesn't deceive me. I repeat—your extraordinary conduct! What do you intend by it? In regard to Miss Hercastie, I mean, of course."

"Miss Hercastie!"

"Lady Cecil, be good enough to cease repeating everything I say as if you were a parrot," her father said, more irritation in his face and tone than she had ever seen or heard there before in her life. "Your hearing is not defective, I hope—I said Miss Hercastie. What do you mean by your conduct to that young woman? Why do you insist upon forcing her society upon us—by making her one of the family, as it were—by having her to dine with us? Oh, don't lay the blame upon Geneva—she would never think of so preposterous a thing if left to herself. I repeat once more, Lady Cecil—what does it mean?"

"Really, papa," and Lady Cecil tried to laugh—"I don't know so simple a matter would so seriously exercise you. I thought you believed in equality, fraternity—a word of the most rabid sort in politics, and—"

"Keep to the point, if you please," the earl interrupted, impatiently; "we're not talking politics now. It does not matter what I believe, whether I am radical or conservative in this affair, that I can see. It is a purely personal and family concern. Cecil—sternly—has Sir Arthur Tregeenna formally proposed to you yet?"

The faint carnation rose up all over Lady Cecil's fair, pretty face.

"No, papa."

"I thought not," but his face darkened as he said it. "And whose fault is that? Not Sir Arthur's, I am very certain."

"Sir Arthur's, surely, papa. What would you have? The absurd customs of England require that a lady shall wait until she is asked. Do you wish me to go to Sir Arthur and order him to marry me?"

"I wish you to act as a rational being, to cease acting in such a manner as to render a proposal forever impossible. Are you willfully blind, that you cannot see that he is falling in love with that confounded nursery governess?"

"My sight is perfect," Lady Cecil answered, coldly; "and if it were not I still might see that Sir Arthur takes little pains to conceal his preference. As it is probably the first time that austere gentleman ever felt a touch of the tender passion, it would be a thousand pities to come between him and it. I certainly shall not."

"What do you mean?"

"This, papa," Lady Cecil said, "there is no use in getting angry and excited—that if Sir Arthur prefers Miss Hercastie to me I shall never be Miss Hercastie's rival. And if he can honestly and truly fall in love with her, as I believe it is in his nature to love, I honor and congratulate him on his choice. Why should you or I try to thwart it? He is not bound to me in any way; he cares as little for me, in the way of love, as I do for him. Miss Hercastie is a much cleverer woman than I am, or ever shall be, and if he wishes it, why let him marry her. She certainly suits him much better than I should, and for the difference in rank, if he can overlook that, we surely may. Of this be very certain—her eyes flashed and her color rose—'I will accept no man's hand while his heart is another woman's, though his fortunes were three times thirty thousand a year.'"

The earl listened, amazed, scorn, anger, passion, swaying alternately over his placid face; but he heard her to the end. His eyes flashed, and rarely left them curling his lips cynically now.

"Fine sentiments," he said; "fine heroics, taken second hand, no doubt from the Castleford circulating library. You appear to have changed; your mind of late, my dear; we did not hear these lofty sentiments when you spoke together some weeks ago of this matter in London. But things have changed since then, and other actors have appeared upon the scene. I wonder now—and he folded his arms and looked at her with sneering sarcasm—"whether the coming of that very fine young Irishman, Redmond O'Donnell, has had anything to do with it?"

Long practice had taught him to stab home—surely and strongly. The flush of color that had arisen to her face died out as he spoke, leaving her whiter than her dress.

"This is your revenge," she said slowly; "but I think my father might have spared me that. From other than his lips I should deem it an insult."

"Indeed, and why, I wonder? He's very handsome, he has the dash and the noble woman love, and he is the hero of a thousand battles. You all like strong warriors, don't you? And then—it may have been fancy—but I used to think, long ago in Ireland, that you were in some danger of—"

"You understand, I suppose? Did you ever wonder, my dear, why I carried you off so suddenly? That was why. You were only sixteen, and I was thirty. You were so youthful, although I don't think your youthful penchant was returned at that time, Irish hearts are proverbially inflammable, and it might have been. Being poor as a church mouse yourself, it would hardly have done to ally you to another

church mouse as long as bread and cheese are requisites of existence. I carried you off, and you plied on the stem for a few weeks, then Cecil was herself again. Now, the hero of Torrylen is with us once more, and I remember the French have a proverb about me always returning to his first love. Your conduct of late has certainly been extraordinary; that there must be some reason for it."

He stopped.

She never spoke. She was white to the lips with some painful inward emotion; but brown eyes looked straight before her, with a light no one had ever seen before in the soft eyes of La Reine Blanche.

"You do not answer," her father said, beginning to feel that he might have gone too far; "perhaps then I am wrong after all in my suppositions. If so, I beg your pardon. But this matter lies so near my heart, my dear, that you will forgive me if in my displeasure and disappointment I speak harshly."

His heart! The Right Honorable the Earl of Buxland's heart! A smile crossed his daughter's lips—a faint, bitter smile, not pleasant to see on lips so young and sweet.

"I repeat it," her father said, as though answering that scornful smile, "my heart is set upon your marriage with the son of my oldest friend. It will be the bitterest blow of my life if that marriage is not consummated."

"Papa," Lady Cecil answered, "let us drop our masks—there is no one to see or hear. Your heart is fixed on my marriage with the son of your oldest friend. How would it be if the son of that oldest friend were penniless as—"

as Redmond O'Donnell, for instance, whom you fear so greatly? It is the thirty thousand a year you wish me to marry, is it not? It is a rich and liberal son-in-law your heart is set on, I fancy. You call it by a prettier name, but that is what it really comes to."

"Very well, my dear—on the thirty thousand, if you will. I am penniless, you are penniless. In the degradation of marrying a fortune greater than the degradation of giving on the bounty of a man like Peter Dangerfield? You are an earl's daughter, a reigning belle, high-bred and high-bred, and you are a pauper. The food you eat, the roof that shelters you, the dress you wear, are unpaid for. This sort of thing can't go on forever. A crisis is very near—flight, exile for me; for you, my proud, high-spirited Cecil, what?"

She leaned against a slender rose-wreathed pillar, and covered her face with both hands, her heart too full for words.

"Truth is unpleasant," her father pursued, "but there are times when it must be spoken. This is one of them. You are acting like a fool—I really can't help saying it—and must be brought to your senses. Let us look the facts in the face. You came down here with every intention of accepting Sir Arthur—Sir Arthur—comes down with every intention of proposing. On the day following the picnic I know he meant to propose; I saw it on his face—any one might see it. Everything had gone on velvet; you played your cards very well," she winced at the words—"our object was attained. When Geneva sent him into the violet boudoir in search of you, I could have sworn he would have proposed before he came out. Five minutes after I saw that confounded Miss Hercastie, sent by the Demon of Mischievousness, to doubt, follow and spoil all. He met her, you consented her as though she had been his equal, and the trouble began. Without beauty, without vivacity, without station, she is yet one of those women whose subtle power is as irresistible to some men as it is incomprehensible. What you, with all your beauty, all your attractions, all your prior claim, have failed to do, she has done. He is an honorable man, and with the honest simplicity of a child, I believe in your soul he has not of the faintest idea that he is falling in love with the faintest idea that he is falling in love with her. She fascinates him, and he is led unconsciously into the trap. She is one of your silent deep, dangerous sort. She will marry him—mark my words, Queenie—that young woman will marry him."

She looked up, pale and tremulous, in the silvery dusk.

"Well, papa, and if she does? She will not be the first governess who has married a baronet."

"My dear, there is this of it. That woman is no ordinary governess; she is an adventurer, and one of the deepest and most unprincipled sort."

"Papa! this is cruel, this is unjust. You know nothing of Miss Hercastie."

"I have eyes and I have studied physiognomy before now. That woman is capable of deeds you never think of; she is clever, deep-thinking, and unscrupulous. She will marry Sir Arthur before he knows it, and the day that makes her his wife is the day that hers in his life-long misery. I can't stand by and see it. You must save him, Cecil."

"Papa, it is impossible. Oh, pray let me alone. What can I do? I liked him, I esteemed him, I might grow to love him in time, as a wife should do, as deserving a husband. While his heart was free, I was willing to obey you, to retrieve our fallen fortunes, and to marry him. But all that is changed. We have fallen very low, but there is still a deeper depth than low poverty. If he cares for her, if he wishes to marry her, if he loves her, in short, it would be degrading on my part to accept his hand. I do not want to be poor, I do not want to anger or disobey you, papa, but I cannot—I cannot—I cannot!"

Her voice broke in a sort of sob, her brown eyes were full of passionate pleading and pain. Her fingers tore at unseeing the flowers from the pillar and flung them wantonly away.

"It is not too late yet," the earl said calmly; "the mischief has begun—it is not done. Trust to me; I will repair it—I will save him."

She looked at him suspiciously.

"How?"

"I shall have Miss Hercastie sent away. I shall explain to Geneva, and at any cost the governess shall be dismissed. And pending that dismissal she shall not be allowed to appear in our midst. Lead us not into temptation! Not a word, Cecil; in this matter I shall act as I please. You must marry Sir Arthur Tregeenna—you shall—not fate itself can part you. This is the last evening of Miss Hercastie's appearance in the drawing-room—the last week (if I can manage it so speedily) of her stay at Scarswood. And for you, don't hold poor Tregeenna at arm's length as you do. You avoid him on every possible occasion; you slip away and leave him whenever you can. Don't let me fancy my suspicions about O'Donnell are correct."

Lady Cecil started up, stung beyond all endurance by the last words.

"Again Redmond O'Donnell! Papa, this is not to be endured even from you. You insult me, you slander him. It was you who brought him here. Why did you do it? He would never have come of his own free will—"

"You insisted upon it. And since he has been here, has he given you grounds for your unjustified dislike? Has he said or done anything to offend you beyond the most formal courtesy of a gentleman to a lady? Have you ever seen us together?—has he been half a quarter as attentive as Major Frankland, or the rector's son? Leave Captain O'Donnell's

name out of the discussion. Believe me, if all your fears were as groundless as your fears of him, your mind would be easily set at rest. He treats me with a civil indifference that is as unflattering as it is sincere."

She turned abruptly to