

"Of course we shall go. The dear Duchess is so dreadfully exclusive, that every one has been eager to secure a card. I wouldn't miss this concert for worlds!"

Then the meeting was inevitable; and Darcy dressed that evening with Ida's emphatically spoken words ringing in his ears, and some troublesome doubts lurking in his mind as to the anticipated rencontre.

(To be continued.)

For the Favorite.

TALES OF MY BOARDERS.

BY A. I. S.,
OF HUNTINGDON, C.

IV.

ONE day Mrs. Darvell received a letter—a letter with a deep mourning border, and containing the sad news of the death of her sister-in-law. The letter was written by her brother's only child, a girl of about seventeen, so Mrs. Darvell said, adding that she could not say for certain, as she had not heard from her sister-in-law since the death of her brother some ten years before.

Her niece wrote for the purpose of informing them of her mother's death, and of her own forlorn and destitute condition, begging of her aunt to find her some means of earning her livelihood.

"It's of no use, she can never be well enough educated to teach," said Mrs. Darvell, "and as for anything else, I will not hear of it. I never liked poor Susan; but George's child shall not go to service whilst I have a copper."

She took counsel with her husband, and the result was that they engaged a room for her, and wrote requesting her to come to them immediately, promising her all the affection and care they would have bestowed on a child of their own, had Providence so blessed them.

They were a most kind-hearted couple. A little rough and vulgar, perhaps; but charitable in the extreme. I could not but admire their goodness and kindness of heart in this particular instance. They had never seen their niece. They knew nothing whatever of her manners, character or looks. There had been no communication between them and her mother since her father's death, and none whatever between the girl and themselves, and nevertheless they were to adopt her as their child, and disposed to make her life happy and pleasant as far as lay in their power.

I had always liked Mrs. Darvell, and both she and her husband had been good friends of ours since they had taken up their residence with us. And although it necessitated a little closer stowing in our own family, I did not begrudge the inconvenience, as it gave them the satisfaction of receiving their niece without having to change their quarters with which they declared themselves well pleased.

You must not imagine that fear of losing two good inmates had anything to do with it, though I would have been indeed sorry to part with them; it did not, for I always had more applications for board than I could receive.

The answer to their letter came in the shape of Miss Saunders herself. That was the niece's name; Lucy Saunders. She was a pretty pink and white countrified looking girl. Rather *embonpoint*, but a nice, sonny, good-natured creature with, as we afterwards discovered, a slight dash of wilfulness that gave her certain piquancy.

She was rather depressed at first. Grief for her mother's loss, combined to the strangeness of everything around her, had that effect. It was not to be wondered at, that she should be very melancholy and lonely at first. Fresh from the country and from those who had known her since her infancy, she was suddenly cast, fatherless and motherless, among strangers, in a busy city she had never before seen.

Mrs. Darvell was excessively kind and good to her. Taking her about driving and shopping, and buying her more pretty things than the poor child had ever seen before. She had received a very good English education, and Mrs. Darvell spared no expense in procuring books for her further instruction, as well as for her amusement. She even engaged a music master to give her lessons at the house, although she herself had never received a like advantage. Lucy was a grateful girl, and she tried hard to prove her gratitude by her progress in music, and by shaking off her very natural depression. She became a great favorite with the children, who could not see her often enough, and teased and romped, and played with her to their hearts' content.

Her aunt and uncle became greatly attached to her, and their first thought was always Lucy.

Very pleasant was this introduction of young buoyant girl life into our house, and so the "young puppies," as Mrs. Darvell still called our young gentlemen, seemed to think. We had but five of them at that time, and from the very first they seemed disposed to lay their five hearts at Miss Lucy's feet. But Mrs. Darvell suspected as much, and she watched both them and Lucy with the eyes of a lynx.

"I do love auntie very, very much," said Lucy to me one day, "and I am sure that I ought to. She is so good and kind, but I do wish she would not watch me so when we are at table. If any of the gentlemen so much as offers me anything, she glares at me as though she expected that I would do something

outrageous. If any one passes something to me, she bends over and examines it, as if there might be either a billet-doux, or an infernal machine in it. I asked her the other day what she suspected and she answered: "You can never tell, child, they are so impudent."

"Do you think them impudent, Lucy," I asked. "No, indeed," she answered heartily. I think them all very nice, and I wish auntie would let us go down to the parlor a little oftener. Uncle could take care of me, if she does not care to come."

"I'll speak to her about it," I said, and indeed I thought it a great shame to keep the poor child continually cooped up with us, dutifully trying to become interested in her book or sewing, her only enlightenment being when I allowed one of the children to come down from the nursery, or when Mrs. Darvell permitted her to go up, which latter case occurred but rarely, as Mrs. Darvell was a strict disciplinarian, and believed that children could not be guided with too strict a rein. The first favorable opportunity that presented itself, I mentioned the subject to Mrs. Darvell, without, however, saying anything of my promise to Lucy. I had no scruples in speaking on the subject to Mrs. Darvell, although it could not be said to enter into my province, but she and I had become sufficiently intimate and friendly to make the step excusable. I represented to her that Lucy must marry some day, and there was less chance of her making a suitable match were she to be too strictly guarded from the approach of all admirers than there would be, were their admiration to become a matter of course, one to which she was accustomed. "And then," said I, appealing to the old lady's feelings, "she is so young, it is a pity to make an old woman of her. The life we lead may be very suitable for you and me, Mrs. Darvell; but I am sure we would not have liked it, when we were Lucy's age. Now do you think so?"

Mrs. Darvell laughed softly to herself. "No," said she, "I don't think I should have liked it, Mrs. Lang, my dear. I was a rare wild one, I can tell you. As full of life as ever a girl was," and she added in a whisper, laughing slyly, the while, "twice as fond of young men's society as ever Lucy can be. We lived on a farm, and there was never a shucking, husking nor party of any kind but I was present, and I had lots of admirers too, I can tell you," said she bridling her head proudly, "old and ugly as I am now."

"Then, Mrs. Darvell, you ought to feel more for poor Lucy. I am sure that she does not care more for young men or their admiration than other girls of her age; but it is no more than natural that she should like young people's society."

"No more it is," said her aunt, "but I can't go down stairs with those nasty fellows—young men aren't what they were in my day. And my friends are all married people."

However, the end of it was that she consented to take Lucy out more than she had done so far. And that very evening they went to a concert. Lucy at first had objected on account of her mourning, but her aunt had scouted the idea. "Hoot tut!" cried she, "you'll see as many there in black as there are out of it. Your poor mother won't be less happy in heaven for knowing that you are enjoying yourself." This argument and her own desires prevailed, and she gladly consented to accompany her aunt and uncle.

I was still in my sitting-room when they returned; but though Lucy came in for a moment, Mrs. Darvell went straight to her own bed-room. I asked Lucy how she had enjoyed herself?

"Oh! so much!" said she, "but auntie is in a dreadful humor. She was all right and enjoyed herself immensely, but on our way out of the Hall, Mr. Black joined us, and uncle gave me to his care. Of course he walked home with me. It would have been very queer, I think, had he not. Living in the same house and coming out of the concert-room together. But auntie would not see it, and insists that he is the worst of the 'puppies,' the most impudent of them all."

This had not been the first occasion on which Mr. Black had happened to either come in or go out at the same time as Miss Saunders, quite accidentally, of course, as they both took care to explain to me. However, it was no affair of mine. Mrs. Darvell I thought kept quite a strict enough watch on her niece without my interfering to awaken her further suspicions. Besides, as far as I knew, Mr. Black was a very worthy young man; not wealthy, certainly, but very respectable and industrious. Indeed I had often overheard his companions chaffing him about his "proper ways"—for virtues were as rare among the young men of twelve years ago, as they are now—and I thought Mrs. Darvell might consider her niece very fortunate in winning the love of such a good person—if she had won it—as Mr. Black.

For several days after this, Mrs. Darvell's temper was anything but angelic, and poor Lucy did not have what the Yankees call "a good time." She had a very wretched time. Her aunt would not allow her to stir out of the house without she accompanied her, nor to go down the parlor one instant before dinner was served. As for breakfast, she made her wait until the rest of the boarders had left the table.

"One thing about it," said Lucy to me in confidence, "I shall get thin. The breakfast is always cold and I can't eat. Whilst for dinner, I am so harassed beforehand, and so watched whilst at the table that I don't half satisfy my hunger. Just see how big my dress is for me." She really was not looking well, but whether that was owing to want of food or from being worried, I could not judge. Mrs. Darvell soon

noticed the change, and asked me what could be the reason. I told her what Lucy had said about her meals. The old woman was horrified at what she called her barbarity.

"The poor young thing!" she said. "Goodness knows I do not want to deprive her of food. A growing girl like her. How I do wish that Black fellow would mind his business and leave Lucy alone. She is a good obedient child if they would only leave her alone."

"Why, what have they been up to," I asked, thinking that perhaps Lucy had not been quite open with me, as indeed there was no reason she should be.

"Nothing and yet enough," said Mrs. Darvell, "more than enough. They are all, especially that Black creature, always pestering her with attentions, meeting her in the passages and in the streets. Walking home with her, even when Darvell and I are with her! Impudent creature!"

"And Lucy herself?" I asked.

"Lucy herself is very well. She behaves very properly. It is not her fault I must say."

For a while after this conversation I, too, kept a watch on Miss Lucy, without appearing to do so. And I noticed that she had changed her hours for practising her music. Instead of, as formerly, devoting to it the hours between breakfast and luncheon, she now chose those preceding dinner, and I remarked also that Mr. Black was always in early. Evidently Miss Saunders was not quite blameless, if blame there were on either side.

For my part having satisfied my curiosity so far, I took no further notice of what might be going on. One afternoon Lucy was sitting with me, sewing and talking gaily, when suddenly the door was thrown open and Mrs. Darvell made her appearance literally shaking with the rage she tried to control. She held a book in her hand and coming up to Lucy, who sat staring at her, growing whiter and whiter, she poked it almost into her face.

"So, Miss Lucy Saunders," she cried, "so you borrow books from young gentlemen, do you? And without your aunt's permission being given or asked! The old aunt is not a fit judge, perhaps, of how a young lady like you should behave."

"Oh! aunt!" was all poor Lucy could say.

Mrs. Darvell raved. She accused her niece of ingratitude, of indelicacy, of want of proper pride and then ended by bursting into tears protesting that she had not deserved such conduct, indeed she had not.

I arose hurriedly, but as I was leaving the room, I saw Lucy with her arms round her aunt's neck and I knew that everything would turn out right.

When I returned to the room an hour later, I found them both still there. There were traces of tears on the faces of both; but Mrs. Darvell did not even yet seem quite appeased. She still sat very erect holding the objectionable book, a rather the objectionable young man's book, for I believe the book itself was merely a copy of the poems of some author unknown to fame.

"We owe you an apology, Mrs. Lang," said she as I came in, "for taking possession of your room, and for driving you from it by such a scene."

I said that no apology was necessary, and that I trusted that both Mrs. Darvell and Lucy would occupy it whenever they felt so inclined. I was always pleased to see them there, as they well, &c., and more of the same kind of things. Of course I was not annoyed, we were all good friends. I had been a little astonished and rather alarmed at first, for poor Lucy, but not in the least annoyed. "This young lady," continued Mrs. Darvell, pointing to Lucy, "this young lady has not been quite so frank and open as we had supposed, Mrs. Lang." Poor Lucy blushed to rosy red.

"I am sure she has done nothing wrong," said I, pitying her embarrassment. "Young ladies cannot be expected to tell all their little affairs and their thoughts any more than their elders. I think you have expected a little too much from Lucy, Mrs. Darvell. That she would willingly hide anything of importance from you I will not believe."

"No indeed, Mrs. Lang," broke in Lucy. "I was going to tell her everything to-night. As for the book, I only got it this morning."

"You have not heard me out, Mrs. Lang," said Mrs. Darvell, stiffly. "Miss Saunders has engaged herself. She is going to marry Mr. Gregory Black, so she has kindly informed me. I am grateful for her confidence, coming as it has, at the last moment; but I shall still consider it my duty, both as regards our relationship and the position I have assumed as her adopted mother, to tell Mr. Darvell, and to try by every means in my power to prevent the marriage."

Lucy was crying again.

"Mrs. Darvell," I began; but Lucy broke in, sobbing as she spoke. "It's of no use, Mrs. Lang, she won't listen to a word. She says that Mr. Black is a beggar, and so I am sure I am, and I do not see why two beggars should not marry. He is as good as he can be. Nobody can say anything against his character. And as for not speaking to uncle or aunt, why he only spoke to me last evening, and intends to tell them both to-night. Of course I would not marry without their consent. We do not even think of marrying at all for a long while."

I never liked her better than I did then, as she stood there sobbing, yet proudly defending her absent lover. I even think Mrs. Darvell was moved, for she made no answer but "we shall see, we shall see," as she walked to the door. Lucy remained a few moments to tell

me how much she thanked me for standing her friend, and how grateful she was to her aunt and uncle for all their kindness. How sorry she was to annoy and grieve her aunt; "But I can't give him up on that account, can I Mrs. Lang?" said she.

I did not presume to advise her on this point, but told her to wait until Mr. Black had spoken to her uncle.

The interview between Mr. and Mrs. Darvell, their niece and Mr. Black took place in my sitting-room. Mrs. Darvell wished me to be of the party in council, but I declined. I expected the meeting would be a stormy one, and I did not wish either to see Mrs. Darvell make herself absurd, or hear the "puppy" abused.

Lucy told me the result. Mr. Darvell would not be influenced either way. He would make enquiries about Mr. Black, and if the reports were good he would give him his wife's niece, and see that they were not in want until Mr. Black's salary should be such as would enable them to live without such help from him. Mrs. Darvell after the first few words said nothing one way or the other.

Well, Mr. Darvell made the threatened enquiries, and heard nothing but what was to Mr. Black's credit. He was industrious, respectable, temperate, and of good morals.

Mr. Darvell was enchanted, and agreed readily to their marriage, as soon as Lucy's first year of mourning should have expired. Mrs. Darvell offered no further objection, and even wiped his name from the list of "puppies."

They all remained with us until the wedding, when Mr. and Mrs. Darvell took up their residence with the newly-married pair. Mr. Black worked hard and rose rapidly in his employer's good graces. He is now a wealthy man and one of our foremost politicians. Mr. and Mrs. Darvell are both dead. Lucy inherited their money. She is almost as broad as she is long, but nice looking still, and there is not a happier woman living than she is, surrounded by her numerous olive branches and under the protecting care of her "impudent young puppy."

PLOTTING MAMMAS.

It may be taken for granted that it is the desire of most loving mammas to see their daughters married. But, at the same time, it is indisputable that many anxious mothers would rather their daughters remained single for a number of years than contract an unsatisfactory matrimonial alliance. Thus, the fond parent is placed in rather a difficult position, and has a double task to perform. On the one hand, she has to look out for eligible young men, and, on the other, to guard her unsuspecting children against penniless adventurers. In her eyes, a poverty-stricken youth is, necessarily, the enemy of all maidens whose fathers live at the rate of some thousands per annum. She may have married a man who, when he commenced life could, with little difficulty, have put all the money he possessed in his pocket; but that is no reason why her darling child should do anything so silly. Love in a cottage may be all very well in its way; and, perhaps, at one time she considered it the height of human bliss. But age brings experience and knowledge, and what, in the hey-day of youth, appears pure gold, is, in middle-age, discovered to be tawdry tinsel. Besides, though her husband has turned out trumps, it by no means follows that if she confided her daughter to a man occupying a similar position to that in which her partner commenced life, he will ever rise above it. So she prefers, like the prudent soul that she is, to be upon the safe side. Thus, she fixes her attention upon men who have already made a name and position, and prepares her traps for both him and her daughter to fall into. One great difficulty invariably besets her path. Really eligible *prospects* are frequently pretty well up in years, and most girls have an objection to wedding men who are much older than themselves. To remove this objection is not always an easy matter, for, sometimes, even the most obedient daughters have wills of their own. Thus, though they will not go to the extent of marrying in defiance of their parents' opposition, neither will they encourage the advances of men of whom their hearts do not approve.

Various are the conditions under which the diplomatic powers of the clever, plotting mamma are called into play. She knows very well that it is unwise to drive her child—the merest folly to attempt to coerce her. Though ineligible candidates must be laughed out of court, there should be no apparent desire to strongly advocate the cause of a man of whom she approves. Hints may be dropped, but they must be very judicious, as to his wealth, his moral worth, and his ability. His appearance must be carefully, but favorably, commented upon. There must, in fact, be no indications on the part of mamma that she is at all interested in his affairs, save to the extent in which she is interested in those of any other friend or casual acquaintance. The daughter must be led to imagine that she is at perfect liberty either to encourage or discourage his advances. It is a mistake to suppose that, save in very exceptional instances, fathers or mothers command their daughters to accept a certain man as their husband. At the worst a little pressure is exerted. More is done by insinuation than straightforward speech. But every opportunity is afforded a desirable being of prosecuting his suit. Whenever he puts in an appearance, mamma manages that her child shall be in the way.