

Lady Gladys let the book fall into her lap and pursued her own meditations undisturbed.

"How can Vivian care for that child after having loved me?" She thought bitterly. "She is not worthy of him; she cannot love him as he deserves. I would rather he had died in my arms that night than see him married to her. What has she done that she should be blest with his love! My king of men! Bravest—truest!"—her dark eyes glowing. "She shall not have him while I live, I swear!"—and she raised her white hand in solemn asseveration. "Oh, fool that I have been to cast him from me! Vivian, my love, my dearest!"

By-and-by, wearied out with her sorrow and remorse, she too fell fast asleep by the fire; and the firelight danced lovingly over the perfect lines of her graceful figure, glinting on her bronzed hair, lighting up the diamond sparkles in her ears, flickering over her round arms and sloping shoulders to the slender waist and tiny high-heeled shoe, and over the beautiful face, revealing the bright tears which hung on her eyelashes, and the drooping curves of the mouth, which still trembled in her sleep. She lay there peacefully, free for once from her jealousy and love.

It was her own fault. There was no excuse for her. She had married a man for his riches, jilting Vivian, who had then nothing much beside his love to offer her. And now retribution had overtaken her—she was free, and he no longer cared to marry her.

One evening they were all in the drawing-room after dinner, Miss MacLaren and her sister chatting over the fire; Bell, Frank Travers, Dollie, Captain North, and Charlie Murdoch, clustering round the piano, trying to render with their united vocal powers "Drink, Puppy, Drink," a song which Charlie had brought for their edification that afternoon. Lady Gladys sat by Sir Vivian's side—he was still confined to the sofa—apparently absorbed in knitting a black-silk sock, but really watching intently his uneasy looks at the merry group by the piano. Sir Vivian was still on the rack of jealousy and doubt; he fancied Dollie had avoided him of late, answered him shortly and coldly when he spoke to her, and never addressed him voluntarily after the first time when she had found him alone in the drawing-room, and, going up to him, had thanked him, stiffly as he thought, for having saved her life.

"I was not afraid," she had said shyly, "when I saw you coming."

Sir Vivian raised himself on his elbow and looked keenly into her blushing downcast face; but Dollie said no more, abashed by his scrutiny; and he fell back among his cushions with a weary sigh.

"Shall I put your pillows higher?"

"Thank you,"—gratefully.

Dollie advanced and laid hold of the pillow on which he was lying.

"What am I to do with it?" she thought, half inclined to laugh. "I can't pull it from under his head." She gave a gentle tug. He groaned as if in pain. "What nonsense!" thought Dollie wrathfully. "It could not have hurt him."

Acting on this belief, she gave it another pull, rather harder.

"Miss Dollie," he said, in an odd choking sort of voice—had it really hurt him after all, or was he, could he, be laughing?—"I think if you were to lift me head with one hand, you would be able to do it better."

Dollie opened her eyes to their fullest extent; she certainly had not bargained for this. His eyes unclosed; Dollie started and blushed.

"Do you want the tongs?" in a reproachful voice.

"I? No! I thought—I only—you might—mamma does;" and Dollie stopped, in utter confusion.

"Come here," he said gently. Dollie

obeyed. "Put your arm under my head." She put a trembling white arm under his head. "Now raise the pillow." She completed her task. "Are you afraid of me?"—looking into her face as she bent over him.

She was silent. He did not ask her again, and she went away and sat down by the window.

"That is the way she held North," he thought half sadly, half triumphantly; but I made her, and she did it to him of her own accord." He had never been told the way in which Dollie had preserved Captain North's life, for she had made them all promise never to talk about it again.

The group at the piano had broken up, Frank and Bell had gone into the conservatory, Captain North and Dollie were looking at the moon out of the deep bayed window, and Charlie had thrown himself into a distant chair, from which he could watch the pair, an occupation which, to judge by his gloomy face was not very enjoyable.

Poor Charlie! Perhaps, of all of Dollie's lovers, he was the most to be pitied; he was too young to have any chance against the two men of the world who were his rivals, and almost from the beginning he knew that his love was hopeless. In time, no doubt, he would get over it; but meanwhile he existed only in her presence, counted the minutes until he met her again, thrilled with delight if she touched him accidentally. He had watched beneath her window all through the long nights when she had been so ill, fearing every shadow that flitted over the pane was the doctor, a friend of his, whom he had implored to come and tell him when she was dying. And Dollie never knew, nor guessed; and Bell had been so absorbed by nursing and engaged with her own tangled web of life that she had forgotten the pathetic misery on his face which she had seen on the night of the accident.

Unable any longer to bear the sight of the two whispering together, Charlie Murdoch went up to them and joined in their conversation, to the disgust of Captain North and the delight of Dollie, who liked the curly-haired soldier very much.

"What courage that young man has!" remarked Lady Gladys with a low laugh.

"Why?" asked Sir Vivian, affecting to misunderstand her, adding irritably, "he may be as brave as a lion; I dare say he is; but I do not see how he has shown it this evening."

"Ah, Poor Vivian, I had forgotten!"

"Forgotten what?"—still more irritably, "I am afraid I am rather more than usually dense tonight; but you certainly are talking riddles to me."

She bent over her knitting, which had got into an unaccountable tangle, and was silent.

"I am afraid I am very rude," he said more gently; "but you would forgive me if you only knew how much I love her."

Lady Gladys winced, and her color deepened.

"I cannot endure this suspense much longer, it is wearing my life away. If I only knew for certain, I might be able to bear it better; but I dare not ask her, and so end all my happiness at once by one blow. Has she ever spoken to you about me? Do you know whether she likes me or not?" he asked eagerly.

The knitting dropped from her hands, and she was silent, while the temptation to snatch him from Dollie for ever raged within her breast. She was physically unable to speak; and Sir Vivian, mistaking her silence for pitiful compassion, turned away his head with a deep sigh. It was too true then, Dollie did not love him, and most likely had told Lady Gladys so; and she was too kind-hearted to tell him the truth; and,

grateful for her sympathy, he turned round again, and taking her brown hand in his, he kissed them gently.

"Thank you for your kindness you have been a friend to me."

Lady Gladys drew away her hands away quietly.

"A true friend indeed!" she thought bitterly, hating herself for her treachery, and yet too weak to rectify his error.

"Tell me"—looking straight at her with miserable despairing eyes, which seemed to pierce like daggers into her heart—"do you think she would ever learn to care for me a little?"

"No," said Lady Gladys distinctly, with the pallor of death on her beautiful face; "she loves Captain North; she told me so."

CHAPTER V.

Another week had elapsed; they were still staying on at Edgbaston Hall, for Sir Vivian would not hear of the departure of any of his guests. One bright afternoon Charlie Murdoch, who had dropped in as usual, was strolling with Dollie up and down the terrace in the warm spring sunshine. Before them were Lady Gladys and Sir Vivian engaged in earnest talk; they all stopped when they reached the end of the walk, and leaning over the mossy stone balustrade, gazed over the lake lying so peacefully in the sunshine, at the green hills, and, far away in the distance, the white spires and towers of the city. It was a beautiful warm day, tempting the crocuses to lift their purple and golden heads above the brown earth, and deluding the little buds on the trees into unfolding their tiny green leaves, and then treacherously nipping them off with a sharp frost in the night.

"Will you come down to the lake?" asked Dollie, when the beauties of Nature had begun to pall upon her.

Charlie Murdoch assented gladly, and leaving Sir Vivian and Lady Gladys by themselves, they went down the steps into the quaint old-fashioned garden, taking the path which led down to the water. Sir Vivian watched them till they were out of sight, then he turned to Lady Gladys.

"Where is North to-day?"

"He has gone to Edinburgh to see a jeweller."

"Has he?"—and Sir Vivian plunged into a fit of abstraction, from which his companion did not rouse him. "It is getting rather cold for you out here," he said at last. "We had better go in."

Dollie and Charlie walked along the bank until they reached the island, and stood once more beside the boat which had seen them in such different guise.

"How did you get it off the bank?" It must have been very heavy," said Dollie curiously.

"I hardly know: you see we managed it somehow," he replied with an effort. He did not like the memories of that night to be talked about.

"How did you know that we had fallen in?" pursued Dollie determined to investigate the subject thoroughly.

"Bramhall and I had started to look for you, and just then we heard North shouting for help. We skated as hard as we could before the wind in the direction of the cry. It was a good way to go, you know—a quarter of a mile from one end to the other. There was no light. 'The ladder!' cried Bramhall. Luckily the moon came out then, and we found the ladder and pushed it towards the broken ice. Then I saw you; Bramhall climbed along it, while I held down the other end, watching you. Before he got to the end, you sank—good Heaven, I shall never forget it!—never!" shuddering. "I could not swim myself, and I did not know if Bramhall could or not; and then he disappeared, and the water seemed to have swallowed you all."

"Poor boy!" said Dollie pityingly. "I am so glad at all events you would have been sorry if I had died then."

"Sorry!" he repeated. "That is a poor word. I would rather have died with you, like North, than lived without you."

Then he stopped, putting a strong curb on his passion. Why should he give her the pain of refusing him? But Dollie had not heard his last words; she was sitting on the edge of the boat looking into the water.

"I am not quite sure," she said drearily at length, "that I do not wish I had been left in the lake."

Charlie stared at these sad words from the mouth of his merry little divinity.

"What are you saying? You do not know what you mean, Miss Dollie." And then, seeing the grief in her face, "What troubles you, dear? Will you not tell me as if I were your brother?"

She was touched by his tender words. But how could she tell him, a man, that she had thought Sir Vivian cared for her, and now he did not?

"I was only joking"—with a forced little smile. "What should be the matter with me?"

"What indeed?" thought Charlie. "She has everything a girl's heart could wish for—health, youth, beauty, and above all, a lover to whom she is attached. What could grieve her?" And, looking wistfully at her, he said earnestly—

"If ever you are in trouble, Dollie—may I not call you so?—I hope you will tell me; will you not?"

Dollie promised to do so.

"You do not seem to get well again very quickly," he said discontentedly, scrutinising her pale face. "Do you know that you have lost all your roses, that your face is thinner than it used to be, and your eyes are growing larger and darker every day, and altogether you are quite different?"

"Oh, never mind me!" said Dollie pettishly. "How would you like me to stare at you and find out all your faults?"

Charlie looked away, rather hurt. She was changed indeed! The old Dollie had never been like that. After a little pause, she rose, and they both walked homewards in silence.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

COLOURS IN DRESS.

Nothing is so economical as handsome black, in spite of the first cost, since it may be turned and re-turned and made over and over again so long as it holds together, and Mrs. Grundy's sharp eyes may fail to recognise it after each transformation. On the other hand, a coloured dress in any positive shade becomes marked after it has been worn two or three times, and however carefully combined or converted into a new costume it is sure to be "shadowed" throughout its existence. Black, however, unless worn as mourning, is appropriate only for matrons and ladies who have passed the first blush. White, especially diaphanous white, is universally becoming when softened by lace and trimmed with bows and rosettes in coloured ribbon, is the pretty fashion now popular. Pole blue is becoming to blondes and brunettes with clear complexions, since it has a tendency to darken the shadows. Pale pink and bright pink suit olive complexions and hair of dark, reddish brown tint. Yellow has a tendency to make the skin look fair; many reds will lend it a positively greenish hue; mauve gives it a yellow tint, and light green can be worn only by women with a perfect complexion. Indeed, the only way to tell whether a colour is becoming is to hold a breadth of it about the head and neck, or if this is not practicable, throw it about the shoulders close to the face.