

## "LES GANTS GLACÉS."

(AN ANECDOTE OF THE FRONDE, 1650.)

Wrapped in smoke stood the towers of Bethel,  
The battle surged fierce by the town,  
On terror, and struggle, and turmoil,  
The sweet skies of Champagne looked down.  
Far away smiled the beautiful uplands,  
The blue Vosges lay solemn beyond;  
Well France knew such discord of colour,  
In the terrible days of the Fronde.

At the breach in the ramparts of Bethel  
Each stone was bought dearly by blood,  
For De Raslin was leading the stormers,  
And Turenne on the battlements stood.  
Again and again closed the conflict,  
The madness of strife upon all.  
Right well fought the ranks of the marshal,  
Yet twice they fell back from the wall.

Twice, thrice, repulsed, baffled, and beaten,  
They glared, where in gallant array,  
Brave in gilding, and 'brodery, and feather,  
The Guards, in reserve, watched the fray.  
"En avant les gants glacés!" they shouted,  
As suddenly rearward they bore,  
The gaps deep and wide in their columns,  
The lilies all dripping in gore.

"En avant les gants glacés!" and laughing  
At the challenge, the Household Brigade  
Dressed ranks, floated standards, blew trumpets,  
And flashed out each glittering blade;  
And carelessly, as to a banquet,  
And joyously as to a dance,  
Where the Frondeurs in triumph were gathered,  
Went the best blood of Scotland and France.

The gay plumes were shorn as in tempest,  
The gay scarves stained crimson and black,  
Storm of bullet and broadsword closed over them,  
Yet never one proud foot turned back,  
Though half of their number lay silent,  
On the breach their last effort had won,  
King Louis was master of Bethel  
Ere the day and its story was done.

And the fierce taunting cry grew a proverb,  
Ere revolt and his horrors were past;  
For men knew, ere o'er France's fair valleys,  
Peace waved her white banner at last,  
That the softest of tones in the boudoir,  
The lightest of steps in the "ronde,"  
Was theirs, whose keen swords bit the deepest  
In the terrible days of the Fronde.

[REGISTERED according to the Copyright Act of 1869.]

## TAKEN AT THE FLOOD.

## A NEW NOVEL.

By the Author of "Lady Audley's Secret," "Strangers and Pilgrims," &c., &c.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## SYLVIA TRIUMPHS.

After that outburst of passion, in the moonlit churchyard, Edmund Standen went home, humiliated, remorseful, and as completely miserable as he had ever been in his life. There was no sense of triumph in the thought that Sylvia was once more his own, but a sense of deepest shame. He felt like some felonious wretch whose pockets were crammed with stolen gold. The joy of possession was extinguished in the agony of self-abasement. His jewel, the treasure of his life, the only object he had ever ardently desired, was restored to him, but at a price that made the gift worthless.

Not long did he linger in Perriam churchyard after that fatal avowal of weakness. He kissed the pale forehead, the sweet red lips, as he had been wont to kiss them in days of old; looked into the depths of those luminous eyes, and tried to pierce the soul that gave them light, and then tore himself away with but a brief farewell. He would have seen Sylvia safe within her own door ere he left her, but this she forbade. Of the future neither spoke. She was more than content. Her heart swelled with secret triumph—for she had made her lover's marriage with Esther Rochdale an impossibility. After to-night's avowal he dare not fulfil his engagement to Miss Rochdale. Henceforward he belonged to her—Sylvia Perriam.

She did not therefore murmur at a leave-taking which seemed at once sudden, constrained, and hurried. She knew he was sorry for what he had done. That late repentance mattered little. He had done it.

Safe in the solitude of her room she gave herself up to the full rapture of triumph. She laughed softly to herself as she brushed her long bright hair before the large oval mirror, in the dressing-room which she had made a glistening temple of feminine luxury. What a victory she had won over her arch-enemy Mrs. Standen. How changed her position since that stately dowager had paid her a visit of condescension and conciliation to the village school-house.

"Will she come here to pay me another visit, when she is told that Edmund is going to marry me after all?" wondered Sylvia. "I think not. She will hardly attempt to patronise Lady Perriam."

Of Esther Rochdale's wounded, or perhaps, broken heart, Sylvia thought not at all. Other people's broken hearts had never been a source of anguish to her. Besides she had always detested Miss Rochdale. She had hated her for being richer than herself, she had hated her still more for being better, purer, and truer than herself.

She rang for her maid,—she had her own maid now,—and told her to fetch Mrs. Carter. She was in a mood to confide in somebody, and there was no one else to whom she could unbosom herself.

Mrs. Carter came promptly in answer to that unwonted summons. She closed the door behind her carefully, drew

near Sylvia's chair, and bent over her with that tender look with which timidity was so painfully blended.

"Are you better, darling?" she asked softly.

"Better? I am well. Is your patient asleep?"

"Yes, he has been asleep since nine o'clock."

"He sleeps well, doesn't he?" asked Sylvia.

"Very well. Yes, thank heaven, his nights are all peace."

"And his days," said Sylvia, with a vexed look. "I should think they must be peaceful enough, too. You give him all he wants—all he can ever ask for?"

"I try my uttermost to make him comfortable, and even humour his caprices as far as possible. But in spite of that—"

"Well, what?" asked Sylvia, impatiently, as Mrs. Carter paused, playing nervously with the ribbon of her neat little black silk apron. She was peculiarly neat and precise in her dress at all times—a person never to be seen at a disadvantage. The quiet pauses of her monotonous life gave ample leisure for this scrupulous neatness.

"In spite of all my care he is sometimes very miserable," she said.

Sylvia shrugged her shoulders, and turned from her with an impatient movement.

"I suppose it is in the nature of his malady to be miserable," she answered coldly.

"I don't think it is altogether that."

"What does he want, then?"

"A little more liberty."

Lady Perriam turned upon her with a furious look, the lovely face distorted with anger.

"I forbid you ever to speak of him again," she said. "Do your duty. You are paid for that, and paid lavishly. But don't come whining to me and talking of his being unhappy—as if my interests were the last thing you cared about."

"Is that a fair thing to say, Sylvia, after what I have done for you?"

"You undo it every time you speak of it. A favour is no favour when it is sung in one's face."

"How often do you fling your bounties in my face?" retorted the mother, bitterly. "Why did you send for me to-night, if it was only to be unkind?"

"I didn't mean to be unkind—but you provoked me by speaking of a subject I hate."

"Indeed, Sylvia, it was you who questioned me."

"You should have some tact. I may have asked a straight question; but I did not invite reproaches, or lamentations."

Mrs. Carter looked at Lady Perriam with that half sorrowful half wondering expression which often marked her countenance. She was thinking of the strange resemblance in character between father and daughter. In each the same absorbing self-love—in each the same indifference to the woes of others.

Lady Perriam recovered her temper, and poured the story of her triumph into her mother's ear. It was not from any natural affection for that mother, whom she had, since her widowhood, condescended to acknowledge, in the seclusion of her own rooms—though to the little world of Perriam Place Sylvia's mother seemed no more than the hired sick nurse. It was from no impulse of filial love—but only from a desire to talk to some one—to have some sympathetic ear to listen to the triumph of woman's art over man's honour.

"It was not till I pretended to give him up that I brought him to my feet," she said, after telling her story. "Till then he was rock. I told him to go back to Esther Rochdale. He saw me melting from his sight—and in the next moment I was in his arms, and he was as much my own as when we parted by the tomb of the de Bossineys. It was a happy thought to make him meet me in the churchyard. The scene brought back all the old feelings. And now he is once more—my Edmund—and I am rich enough to laugh at Mrs. Standen's petty fortune. We will be married as soon as my year of widowhood is over—and he will come and lighten up this gloomy old house with his presence. I shall feel no more fear when he is by my side. Let the worst come it will be his business to protect me."

Mrs. Carter looked at her earnestly for some moments, and then knelt down by her chair, and clasped her hands and looked into her eyes with passionate appeal. "Oh, Sylvia," she cried, "why did God give you all good things except heart and conscience? It tortures me to hear you talk like this. I would rather see you groveling in the dust, anguish-stricken, than hear you speak of happiness—and count upon a prosperous future—knowing what I know."

## CHAPTER XLIX.

## "MORE BITTER THAN DEATH."

No sleep visited Edmund Standen's eyelids that night. His eyes had a seared feeling, as if he had been staring into the red-hot heart of a furnace. He did not delude himself by going to bed—but sat in his dressing room writing letters till some time after the cocks in the Dean House poultry yard had offered their shrill salutations to the morn, and had been answered by stranger cocks at remotest distance, and at all points of the compass. Once only did he pause from his task-work—and that was only to extinguish the burnt-down candles and draw up the Venetian blind. How bleak and cold the world looked at early dawn—even that summer world which would so soon be all aglow with brightness and colour.

It was exactly six o'clock when he sealed the last letter—he had written no less than three—laid them out in a neat row upon the mantel-shelf, where they appeared sufficiently conspicuous in their large business-like envelopes. By half-past six he had made his usual toilet and packed his portmanteau. This he contrived to convey down the wide shallow staircase noiselessly, and thus out through the long stone passage to the spacious stable yard. Here he found help enough, for the coachman and groom were both astir. He ordered the dogcart, put his portmanteau in, and drove off as the clock chimed the quarter before seven. His heart had been beating uneasily all the time. Esther and his mother were both early risers. One of them might hear the wheels, and be in time to witness his departure. Yet it mattered very little if they did see him. All the abominable truth would so soon be known.

"I didn't know you was going anywhere this morning, sir, or I'd have had the trap ready," said the groom, speculatively.

"I didn't know as much myself till last night. I'm going to Germany for a few months, on business. Oh! by the by, Evans, after you've dropped me at the station you'll take the dogcart home as fast as you can, and tell Jane to give my

mother the letters she'll find on the mantelpiece in my dressing-room. She'll have found them before you get home, I daresay, but there's just the chance of them being overlooked."

At the Monkhampton station Mr. Standen met a man he knew. Depart from a country town when you will there is generally some individual of your acquaintance who contrives to choose the same day and hour for his journeying. Mr. Standen was somewhat brief and unfriendly in his responses to the customary questions as to how far he was going and how long he was likely to be away. He withdrew himself to the compartment furthest from that chosen by his acquaintance, and altogether comforted himself in a sullen and bearish fashion. He was too angry with himself to be commonly civil to other people. What was he doing? Running away from the consequences of his sin; making a base and dastardly retreat from the ruin his dishonour had wrought. He could not look in Esther's face, and tell her how he had wronged her. He could not endure to see those gentle eyes, that had never looked upon him in unkindness, clouded by tears. He could fancy the white change in that innocent face, but he could not brook the sight of it. So he had written his plighted wife a long, passionate, despairing letter, full of remorse and self-upbraiding, humbling himself in the dust, but telling her all the bitter truth. He had been mistaken when he fancied himself cured of his first fatal passion; he had deceived himself when he thought he loved her, a hard and humiliating confession for any man to make, a crushing announcement for any woman to receive.

He was on his way to London by the early express, speeding on the first stage of a journey that he meant to be a long one, ere that letter was delivered to Esther Rochdale.

No one had heard Edmund Standen's departure. The daily business of the quiet orderly household went on just in the usual methodical manner, though the young master had ordered the dogcart and driven off in that unexpected way. The servants, almost too respectable even to be inquisitive, concluded that this early departure had been arranged ever so long beforehand. Mr. Standen was going on a little bit of a tour in foreign parts before he married and settled down into a poudrous unlocomotive country gentleman. Mrs. Standen was always reserved. She was not a woman who unbosomed herself to an upper housemaid, or poured her woes into the ear of a cook. The Dean House servants lived on the fat of the land, had ample wages, and kind nursing in the hour of sickness; but they lived afar off from their mistress, and their feelings towards her were rather respectful than sympathetic.

Esther came down stairs at a few minutes before seven, just about five minutes after the dogcart containing her perjured lover had rolled briskly out of the stable yard, with that cheery sound which swift revolving wheels always have on a sunshiny morning—a sound of life and progress. She strayed out into the garden, loitered on the smooth gravel mall, gathered a bunch of dewy roses to fill an old oriental bowl on the breakfast table, thought, not quite happily, of Edmund. He had seemed dull and tired of late; had lost that active spirit which had made him eager for long walks—for new music—for small domestic pleasures. They were working him too hard at the Bank. Yes, that was it. He always came home tired now.

Esther made the round of garden and orchard, took Trotty, the eldest of Edmund's nieces, for an appetising before-breakfast walk in one of the meadows; did all she could to promote pleasant feelings between Trotty and the tawny red-skinned cows of whose placid looks Trotty went in awful fear, and then, relinquishing Trotty to the nurse, strolled slowly back to the house.

There are days when sad thoughts come uncalled. Just as she came to the glass door, there flashed upon Esther Rochdale the memory of a summer morning two years ago, the morning when Edmund told her of his engagement to Sylvia Carew. The very memory of that revelation made her shudder. She could recall the old forgotten pain; the sharp sting of an agony which she had hidden with all a woman's self-command.

"I don't think I could bear such another blow as that," she said to herself. "I think if I had to suffer like that again the pain would kill me. But what can put such a fancy into my head to-day, when everything is changed since that time, and I am thoroughly happy?"

She tried to dismiss a memory that seemed more foolishness, and went into the breakfast room, softly singing one of Edmund's favourite airs, as she arranged her roses.

Mrs. Standen was not seated before the urn with her open prayer book, ready for the eight o'clock prayers, after her usual manner at five minutes before the hour. She was standing by the breakfast table, with a pale disordered countenance, reading a letter.

Jane, the housemaid, came into the room with a tray just as Esther entered from the garden.

"Till them that I don't feel well enough to read prayers this morning," said Mrs. Standen, without looking up from the letter.

The servant stared ever so little. Illness, save of the most serious character, had never been wont to interfere with Mrs. Standen's religious duties. She had read prayers in the agonies of headache and neuralgia, in the prostration of influenza; yet she stood there this morning strong, and stern of aspect, and said she was too ill for that customary duty.

"Is there anything the matter, Auntie?" asked Esther, agitated. That pale set face struck terror to her, somehow. It was not grief, but anger that made it awful.

"There is this much the matter," replied Mrs. Standen, "My only son—my too well loved son—is a consummate villain."

"Auntie, are you mad?" cried Esther, with a faint shriek, clasping that rigid figure, looking wildly at that white resolute face.

Horrible visions of possible calamity flashed across her mind. Edmund had been forging, or embezzling, or something dreadful of that kind. People in banks so often end by forging. It seems almost a necessary consequence of a confidential position. He was a criminal—a felon—in prison. Let him be what he might she was his plighted wife, she would stand by him in the dock, at Dartmoor,—on the scaffold, if need were.

"Whatever he may be, or whatever he has done, I shall love him all the same," she said proudly, with a woman's wrong-headed pride in the extremity of her devotion to worthless man.

"Poor child," exclaimed Mrs. Standen, with bitter half-contemptuous pity. "He does not want your love, he does not value your fidelity. He has the only kind of love he cares for, the love of a wicked woman."

"Auntie," cries the girl with widely opening eyes, and one