

was to the effect that all his inquiries, after Mr. Elwyn in Nice were of no avail; he found he had gone from there, no one knew whither; but it was clearly evident that he had not returned to England with his cousin.

But, to the baronet's amazement, Eola neither cried in agony nor fainted in helpless despair. She buried her face in her handkerchief for a few seconds, and with a quiet, resigned expression, that would have done credit to a martyr, said, in accents of subdued sorrow—

"Then, grandpa, he must have deserted me; and if so, I must be resigned. I would not wish to claim his hand if his heart were no longer mine. For the future let us not mention the subject; time may perhaps aid me to recover myself."

The baronet was now fully confirmed in his opinion about her attachment to Elwyn, for, he thought, had it been real love, she could never thus coolly resign herself to relinquish it.

He therefore believed that in separating her from Elwyn he had done the best thing to promote her health and felicity; and, by the happy results attending his scheme, he felt more than ever convinced of its value.

Eola now never alluded by any chance to Elwyn; she never seemed to think of writing to the Jamesons, as Sir George had dreaded she would. Her whole heart seemed centred in the circle of pleasure in which she and her grandfather now moved, and all her thoughts appeared bent on the enjoyment of the numerous plans devised by the baronet for her pastime. There was scarcely a fete, or a review, or a flower-show that took place within a circle of twenty miles of their residence, at which the baronet and his beautiful grandchild did not appear.

In fact, Eola, to all appearance, had glided into the other extreme of feeling, for she seemed in a perfect flutter of merriment from morning till night. Her cheeks became a very home of roses, and her eyes glistened with pleasure.

She teased her fond grand-parent incessantly with her wild caprices, and seemed to think it the proper thing to make him join in every species of childish fun, meanwhile regarding him with a look of playful mischief, to which, in his exuberant joy at her altered demeanour, he was perfectly blind.

But there were fitful moments when towards her grandfather the young girl's voice and manner would assume, even in their joyousness, an expression of thoughtful regret, that showed there yet remained in her bosom a secret cause for annoyance, in spite of all her light-hearted happiness. But this expression never lasted long, and was generally succeeded by a quiet smile of mischievous satisfaction.

Sir George had delayed telling his darling the truth as to the means he had taken to accomplish her happiness, until the day on which the scene of our chapter occurred.

It was not to him, by any means, a pleasing task to make a clean breast of a discreditable proceeding; but his sense of honour constrained him sooner or later to do it; and on no account would he have had Eola learn it from other lips than his own. He had not entertained a doubt of his ability to procure her forgiveness for the deception he had practised upon her.

And thus we find him brought to the bar.

But this confession, or explanation, as the baronet mildly termed it, was intended to be the prelude to another subject near his heart or it might have been delayed still longer.

To be plain there was a gentleman in the case, and one who he had every reason to believe was, in his grandchild's eye, not an unfavoured personage; indeed, he had had some proof to the contrary; and it was this gentleman's suit that he was about to urge.

We spoke of the fair Eola as manifesting extreme sorrow and anger on hearing her grandfather's confession. This had rather taken him by surprise, such passionate grief not being anticipated by him from the gentle girl who still, notwithstanding all her new-found vivacity, was usually as winning and docile in temperament as ever.

In vain he entreated to be heard. She would not even allow him to speak for some time, but lay with her face buried in the cushions of her easy chair, waving him off with her hand, and apparently sobbing and trembling with emotion.

But we will take the liberty of peeping under that filmy web of a handkerchief.

Is it possible that Eola is laughing?

Yes, actually laughing! and her apparent sobs are the irrepressible breaking out of smothered merriment, while her trembling proceeds from the same cause.

And there she is, convulsed with laughter behind that sheltering handkerchief, while the admiral stands at a respectful distance,

begging to be heard and forgiven, and saying, in his anxiety, all sorts of ridiculous things, that redouble the mischievous maiden's mirth.

"Now, my own precious darling," he begins, in a humble tone.

"Don't call me a darling ever again, grandfather," exclaims the young creature, interrupting his meek expostulation; "at least" (with very marked emphasis) "not your darling."

"But my sweetest Eola—"

"Don't, grandpa! I shall never be your Eola entirely again. I wonder you can talk to me so, (sob), 'after deceiving me' (sob) in the manner you have. Oh! grandpa" (great agitation).

"My child, you will break my heart."

"You are trying your hardest to make mine burst" (violent sob); "cruel, unfeeling grandpa! Oh, dear! after all the—the love—I—have—shown—you" (succession of smothered sighs).

"But dearest Eola, I had no idea that your hopes still lay in that quarter. You have not mentioned Mr. Elwyn's name for months and I concluded, from your altered manner, your liveliness, improved health, and so on, that you had quite recovered from that absurd feeling. How was it possible I could dream otherwise, when my birdie has let me take her out and about like the veriest little butterfly in the world?"

"Oh, grandfather" (reproachfully); "and do you suppose that a woman" (the baronet could not avoid elevating his eyebrows, and giving vent to an ejaculatory "ahem" on hearing that high-sounding substantive applied to the childish girl before him); "do you suppose that a woman, simply because she is lively, careless, and full of fun" (a half sob), "and because she laughs, plays, sings, goes to fetes, flower-shows, and pic-nics, and always carries with her a merry smile—do you suppose that, merely because she does all this, she has forgotten a dear and lost lover?" (A violent trembling agitates the questioner.)

"Well," humbly ventured to remark the admiral, not a little struck by the extreme simplicity of the question, "I should think it probable that she has. Of course, I am not a good judge of your sex, but, but, I—aw—I must say I shouldn't think the lady had a very great regard for her lost lover, under the delightful circumstances you name."

Eola bounded from her seat. Her eyes were a trifle red, but she had heroically wiped away the tears. It did not cost her much trouble to do so.

"Then, sir," she cried, slightly stamping her little foot, "for once you are mistaken. A woman never forgets."

"Not when she laughs, plays, sings, goes to fetes, flower-shows, and pic-nics, and always carries with her a merry smile?" ironically inquired the baronet, getting a little bolder on finding his pet had partially recovered from her paroxysm of grief.

"Grandpa, you are most ungenerous to taunt me so," said the young girl, pointing, and averting her head to conceal the lurking smile she could not repress. "I tell you, a woman never forgets a man she has once loved, as I loved Elwyn."

Notwithstanding the part she was acting, there was a tremor of real, deep feeling in this lightly-uttered avowal that spoke of tenderness not to be belied.

"Eola," said the baronet, "you cannot mean that you still cherish that ridiculous notion of wishing to marry an ugly, penniless man, old enough to be your father?"

"Mr. Elwyn is neither old, ugly, nor penniless."

"Certainly, you never took the pains of describing to me his personal appearance; but from what you have said of his pale face, dark hair, and mournful eyes, I shouldn't think him much of a beauty to look at. Then his income! it would about buy you bread-and-cheese."

"One could buy a great deal of bread-and-cheese with eight hundred a-year."

"And then his age! Thirty-three?"

"Well, grandpa?"

"Well, child, it's simply preposterous to talk about it. The idea of a girl—a mere baby, I may say—marrying a man of that age! But," and the baronet placed his arm fondly round her neck, "you have put aside all those silly ideas now, haven't you?"

The girl shook her head with a doubtful smile.

"Well, well, darling, let us drop the subject," suggested her grandfather, cheerfully. "I know you see, though you will not own it, the folly of reverting to that bygone whim. Of course, it was very gallant to hear how you had been deceived, but that was the

chief grievance, wasn't it? Now you'll forgive poor old grandfather?"

Eola could not resist this appeal. Spite of all his faults, she dearly loved her doating grandsire.

Flinging her arms round his neck, she kissed him lovingly on both cheeks, and laid her pretty head caressingly on his shoulder.

"Dear, darling girl," cried the delighted admiral, hugging her slight form in a most alarming manner.

"And now, my pet, I have a few more remarks to make relative to yourself, and then I will not trouble you further. I wish, dear Eola, to ask you seriously, what are your feelings towards our present guest, Raymond Beresford?"

"My feelings, grandfather?" And the question was accompanied by a slight blush.

"Yes; you entertain some, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"But I mean, you do not merely flirt with him without entertaining some deeper sentiment?"

"Oh, I like him very well."

"Very much, I should think, from the way you treat him; and if not, I wish you did."

"Why, grandpa?"

"Because he's a good, high-minded, noble fellow; and a gentleman, every inch of him. Ah, Eola, I'd tell you a secret, only I am afraid of annoying you again."

"Oh, pray, grandpa, don't be afraid of that. I can control my temper, I hope."

"Well, Beresford is in love with you."

"With me?"

"Yes; you must have seen it long ago yourself, and it is wrong of you to flirt with him, Eola."

"I flirt, grandpa!"

"Well, not exactly flirt, but you are very friendly with him."

"I ought to be with my grandfather's guests."

"But tell me, truly, darling, have you no deeper feeling than mere friendship for him?"

"What if I had, grandpa?"

"Why, I should be very pleased; for, as I have said before, he is a noble-hearted man, and after my own heart."

"And thirty-three?"

A clear, ringing laugh broke from the lips of the young satirist, and she clapped her little hands, in provoking irony, in the baronet's face; but a moment after her arms were round his neck again in a soft caress.

"Don't let us talk any more about him now," she said, coaxingly. "I'll tell you all some day. But, hark!" she added, as the sound of approaching footsteps was heard; "here he comes; so we must leave off."

She had scarcely finished speaking when the gentleman in question entered the apartment, and advanced to where the baronet and his grandchild were standing.

"I have come to see if you would like to go for a ride with me this morning," he said, addressing the former in a familiar tone of polite courtesy.

"Well, no; I can't go this morning," returned Sir George; "but perhaps little birdie here would like a ride," he added, glancing fondly at Eola, who blushed and cast down her eyes.

"If Miss Shipton will favor me with her company," said Mr. Beresford, "I shall feel very happy."

"Will you go, darling?" inquired Sir George.

"Oh, yes; I shall be pleased to do so," returned Eola, in a joyous voice, which, however, she was evidently desirous of subduing.

"Very well; I will ring and order the horses," said the baronet; "and you go and dress, my dear."

"Directly, grandpa. Mind, the grey pony for me;" and Eola tripped lightly from the room.

In less than a quarter of an hour she returned, attired in a grey riding habit, and one of the smartest of coquettish little hats.

The horses were waiting, and Sir George accompanied his granddaughter to the door, where Beresford, who had been seeing to the proper equipment of Eola's favorite pony, met them.

The baronet himself assisted the young girl to mount, and Beresford diligently busied himself in adjusting her stirrup.

"What a fortunate being I am," cried Eola, laughing, "to have such devoted attendants!"

Beresford looked up in her face for a moment; their eyes met—only in a lightning glance; but it spoke volumes.

"It is a service any one might envy," he murmured, in a tone of suppressed emotion.

The young girl did not reply; but gaily kissing her hand to her grandfather, gathered up her reins, and proceeded slowly onward, leaving her escort to follow.

The baronet watched the light figure of the fair rider, as the two equestrians cantered down the avenue leading through the noble park, with a deep thrill of pride and affection. Her bright golden ringlets, borne gently backwards on the faint summer breeze, and glittering and dancing in the summer sun; the graceful fluttering of her short grey habit, the elegant waving motion of the brilliant green plume ornamenting her tiny straw hat, and the ease with which she seemed to float rather than ride along the winding path, made her appear as pretty a picture as one could desire to view.

So thought Raymond Beresford.

At the park gates she turned round to see if her grandfather was still at the door; there he was, just discernible through the trees, and Eola waved an adieu with her handkerchief.

"Bless her little heart!" said the baronet, as he sauntered to his library; "I wish she cared more about Beresford."

CHAPTER LXV.

The individual introduced in the preceding chapter as Raymond Beresford, was a gentleman whom the baronet and his grandchild had met at the house of some mutual friends at Totnes, where he was staying for a few weeks on a visit.

He was an English gentleman of good birth, and a moderately handsome income; and had ingratiated himself, as we have seen, into the good opinion of the admiral to no small extent.

He was by no means undeserving of the encomiums lavished on him by Sir George, for they did but justice to qualities which in themselves, apart from external recommendations, won the hearts of all who came in sufficiently close contact with the owner to become familiar with his sterling virtue.

But, beyond his mental charms, Raymond Beresford was endowed by nature with great external attractions, and few could have found fault with the polished manners and winning features of a man so most unostentatiously agreeable, and totally void of vanity and arrogance.

His age might have been about thirty, or perhaps a year or two more; but, without trying to ape the juvenile, he had a way of making himself appear much younger than he really was—a kind of graceful yieldingness to those who were his juniors in years, that made him loved by the young, as well as admired by the old. Sir George liked him from the first hour of their acquaintance; in fact he was quite charmed with his new friend, and had been very pleased to observe that Eola shared his good opinion of him.

Raymond Beresford, to judge from his demeanour, was by no means insensible to the loveliness and winning simplicity of the young heiress, into whose congenial society he was thus so opportunely thrown; indeed, his reverential attention, lover-like anxiety, and ill-concealed partiality for her, had led many to the conclusion that he was really tenderly attached to her.

The young girl herself they found more difficult to read. She was evidently not insensible to the devotion shown her by Beresford; she appeared to admire his judgment, listen to his conversation, yield to his opinions, and show an anxiety for his company that could only have emanated from feelings of very powerful regard.

Yet, notwithstanding these symptoms of embryo affection, there was ever a constraint in her tone and manner when he was present—a timidity almost approximating to terror—lest she should say or do anything that could be construed into a tenderness which she was evidently desirous to conceal. She could converse with him before two or three persons on any subject, but without that freedom and girlish thoughtlessness which characterized her discourse with others, and with a hesitation that seemed to weigh every word before uttering it, lest she should commit herself; while there was a restraint in her manner and an embarrassment in her accent that were sometimes almost painful.

On quitting Totnes to proceed to Dunorlan Park, the baronet's new estate, Sir George had given Beresford an invitation to spend a few days with him on his way back to London, which invitation Beresford had accepted; but so delighted was the baronet with the society of his guest, that the few days had now extended to a few weeks, and still Sir George pressed him to prolong his visit.

We will now return to the day of the events related in the foregoing chapter.

It was evening. The pleasant trio forming the home circle of Dunorlan Park had just finished dinner, and the baronet was seated in his large arm chair by the open casement of the drawing-room. Beresford and Eola were loitering over the piano.

"I shall go and water my flowers," said the latter, suddenly. [TO BE CONTINUED.]