



"See, Janet, a four-leaved clover."

the general. "He has the reputation of being very dangerous—among ladies. It is only fair to give you warning of this," he adds, as his glance, whether by intention or accident, falls on Kate, who answers promptly:

"You are very kind, general; but surely you do not think that all the peril will be on our side. However dangerous Mr. Tarleton may be, we flatter ourselves that we shall be able to hold our own against his fascinations."

"If I may judge by what I have seen of your powers, Miss Kate, you can do more," replies the general, with a smile. "You may beat him with his own weapons at his own game."

discourage in time any renewal of the friendship which existed between himself and Will—not to speak of the girls."

"Why should I?" asks Mr. Lawrence.

"Why should you?" repeats his wife, in a tone of surprise; "I think that all which is said about Frank Tarleton's character and affairs is answer enough for that."

"Perhaps so," is the reply, "but when a man is down in the world is not generally the time I select for turning the cold shoulder to him."

"And you don't see that it is your duty to consider your daughters before you introduce a ruined and dissipated young man familiarly into your house?"

"My daughters!" says Mr. Lawrence. "Why, they grew up with Frank Tarleton as with their own brothers! It would be rather difficult to thrust him into the position of a stranger now."

"It may be disagreeable, but it will not be difficult," says Mrs. Lawrence. "I cannot do it alone, but, if you support me, I will undertake to make it very soon and very clearly understood that Frank Tarleton takes no familiar place in this house."

Her husband moves uneasily. "I cannot do

"Present my kind regards to Mrs. Lawrence, and believe me always,

"Faithfully yours,

"ANASTASIA BROOKE."

"This is something unexpected," says Mr. Lawrence, handing the letter to his wife, "but there is no nobody I shall like better to see; and I'll write at once and tell her so."

"I suppose you must," says Mrs. Lawrence, "but it is very inconvenient that she should come just now. I received a letter from Randall to-day, saying that Miss Vaughn is coming; and the house is not elastic, though you seem to think so."

"Randall be hanged!" says Randall's father with unusual irritation. "What claim to consideration has that girl he is making himself a consummate fool about, in comparison with

"You are mistaken," replies Mrs. Lawrence, with the majestic dignity of superior wisdom. "It will be too late then. The only way to prevent such things is to anticipate them."

"Well, we will see about it," says Mr. Lawrence, evasively. "Were there any letters for me to-day?"

"One; I laid it on the table here. There it is!"—uncovering a pale-gray envelope. "The handwriting is familiar to me, but I cannot think whose it is."

"Why didn't you open it, then?" asks Mr. Lawrence, carelessly. He takes up the envelope, opens it, and draws forth a sheet of paper bearing these lines:

"My dear Mr. Lawrence,—When we met last, you gave me a cordial invitation to visit Fairfield. I did not think at that time that I should ever do so—though I remember the days I spent there in my youth as among the happiest of my life—but since then my mind has changed, and if it would be entirely convenient to Mrs. Lawrence and yourself for me to spend a week or two with you during this lovely autumn season, I shall be glad to do so."

"Mamma tells me that papa has had a letter from Miss Brooke, and that she is coming to Fairfield," she says.

"We seem to have become very popular all at once," observes Janet. "Who else will descend on us, I wonder? Not that it matters greatly—a visitor more or less hardly counts when the house is full."

"Who is Miss Brooke?" asks Kate. "I don't think I ever heard of her before."

"I fancy you must have heard of her," answers Sophy. "She is a great friend of papa's—her father was his guardian, and they have known each other all their lives. She is an old maid, and immensely rich."



"I was lucky enough to find the ferns you wanted."

"How interesting! Perhaps she may play fairy-godmother to one or all of us. Rich old maids should feel that their special duty in life is to exert their benevolence towards portionless young ones."

"Unhappily they don't take that view of the matter," says Janet, "and Miss Brooke has relations of her own—I have heard papa speak of them. Still there is a chance for a turn of Fortune's wheel. More unlikely things have happened than that she should take a fancy to one of us—only, of course, you would be the one, Kate."

"I don't see why that follows," says Kate; "but this may be the luck that my four-leaved clover is to bring.—Sophy, do you know that I found a four-leaved clover to-day? See, here it is!" She opens the pages of "Our Mutual Friend," and displays her treasure-trove triumphantly. "I have put it at my favourite scene—the scene that, I suppose, I have read fifty times, and that I can no more read with dry eyes the fiftieth time than the first—where Lizzie saves Eugene."

"Who was not worth saving," says Janet, shortly. "My sympathies in that story are all with the schoolmaster. He was a man who was in earnest, and who knew his own mind."

"I can't say that I admired Eugene very much," says Kate, "but Lizzie loved him and that was enough. Listen! do you remember this?—'Now, merciful Heaven be thanked for that old time, enabling me, without a wasted moment, to have got the boat afloat again, and to row back against the stream! And grant, O blessed Lord God, that through me he may be raised from death, and preserved to some one else that he may be dear one day, though never dearer than to me!' Surely, if he had been ten times worse than he was, to have won such a heart as that would have made him worth saving."

Janet compresses her lips doubtfully, but Sophy—thrilled by the sweet voice which gave new meaning to the pathetic words—answers quickly:

"Yes, God be thanked, love does not wait upon worth or unworth; else there are few of us who would not go starving for it to the end of our days."

(To be continued.)



"I cannot do it, Margaret!"



Parting the leaves he looks over the river.

"Oh, I shall not aspire to accomplish so much as that," she says, gayly. "It will be wisest, no doubt, to keep one's self strictly on the defensive."

"Which no young lady so well fitted as yourself for offensive operations will ever be content to do," returns the general.

The subject ends here, but this jesting exchange of words makes a serious impression on the mind of Mrs. Lawrence; and after tea she follows her husband to the library—where he usually retires to read the daily papers—in order to set his duty as head of the family clearly before him.

"I am sorry to hear that Frank Tarleton has returned to the neighbourhood," she begins, "and I think, my dear, it will be wise if you

it, Margaret," he says. "It is something you should not ask of me. I remember Tarleton's father too well, and—upon my word, I don't think it is kind or charitable of you to condemn the poor young fellow before he has a chance to say a word for himself."

"I have no desire to condemn him," says Mrs. Lawrence. "What he has been is not my affair; but I must think of my daughters, and I ask you this—should you like him for a son-in-law?"

Mr. Lawrence laughs. "I believe women never hear a man's name that they don't figure to themselves how he would answer in a matrimonial point of view," he says. "It will be time enough to think of him as a son-in-law when he shows any disposition to become one."

Anastasia Brooke, who has been my life-long friend! If anybody is to be put off, let it be Miss Vaughn."

"That is impossible."

"Then manage as best you can; but remember that Miss Brooke must come."

He turns to his writing-desk as he speaks, and Mrs. Lawrence is aware that the words just uttered are an ultimatum. Notwithstanding that the reins of government usually rest in her hands, there are occasions when her husband asserts his authority, and on those rare occasions she has no other alternative but to submit.

So it chances that Sophy mentions the news of the intended arrival when the girls have retired to their chamber that night.