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KATE ASHWOOD.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—(Continued.)

Maria's excitement did Kate good, and prevented her from dwelling too much on her own sorrows; and then letters came frequently from Mrs. Merton, telling of her little ones, and how they were beginning to talk, and that she had taught them to say 'grandpapa,' and 'Aunt Kate.'

She had been staying at a country house at some distance from her home, and some of the neighbours were invited to dinner to meet her and Mr. Merton. What was her surprise when she heard the servant announce the names of Mr. and Lady Fanny Herman!

Mrs. Merton mentioned also in her letter that Lady Fanny was very agreeable, and appeared to consider her husband perfect. All these details interested the Ashwood family. Have not the most trifling incidents appertaining to those we love an immense importance in our eyes?

Kate was becoming stronger. The climate of Pau was of benefit to her, and she was often amused with some of the people she met. Mrs. Palmer discovered that she had been in love for three years with a Mr. O'Brien and she told all her acquaintance so. Kate therefore became an object of interest to sojourners at Pau.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

While Kate, her father, and Maria were at Pau, Mary Ashwood's little baby was born—a son. Charles was delighted, and wrote of it to his family in the greatest glee. He described each feature in its true face accurately. Its eyes, of course, were like its own darling mother's.

Charles wrote that Mary was recovering well, and was perfectly inseparable from her darling;

that, in fact, he was becoming quite jealous; she never would allow it to be taken out of her sight—she loved it and clung to it with such intense affection. It was named Charles, after its father and grandfather; and there was as much joy about the birth of that child as if it were heir to a kingdom.

Mr. Leicester put a £50 note into its tiny fingers the day of the christening, and kissed it, and told it to be like its father and mother.—What a kind good soul he was! He delighted in doing kind acts to others; this he considered to be the luxury of wealth, and it gave him intense pleasure. How Mary's eloquent eyes thanked him on these occasions! She told him how her and Charles's grateful love for him would never cease. Mr. Leicester told her to be quiet and not talk such nonsense, or that he would be quite angry with her.

He had but one sister in the world, and she was married to a colonel in India. She had three children—two daughters and a son. Mrs. Deleer had often wished to return to Ireland to see her brother; but the colonel was devotedly attached to his profession. He held an important military post, from which he derived a large income; and he preferred remaining in India.

Mr. Leicester lived many years to enjoy his money; and he saw Mary's children clustering around her—merry, happy children—ere death summoned him away. He spent his life well and happily, doing good to all around him; an ornament to Christianity by the lustre of his virtues. It is true that of education he had but little.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

And now for the other personages in our little story. Towards spring Fitz-James, having got his mines into perfect working-order, considered himself at liberty to go to Pau and marry his lovely bride. Kate was as beautiful and loving as ever; and she welcomed Fitz-James cordially. No impediment now remained to the fulfilment of this long engagement. So many weddings have, however, been already mentioned in this story, that it is needless to give any description of the nuptials, save that they were performed in the orthodox manner. Fitz-James, as we know, was a Catholic, and Kate Ashwood a Protestant; so the marriage was celebrated according to the rites of both churches.

How delighted they were may well be conceived when the knot was at length tied. To attempt to describe the feelings of Fitz-James would be useless; they can well be imagined.—He had loved Kate for three years and a half, and had suffered deep anxieties throughout the courtship. He often felt during those three years that success was next to impossible. He had been on the very threshold of eternity, and seemed to be snatched as if by a miracle from the arms of the destroying angel—Death. Beggary and ruin had threatened him, till he could barely endure his miseries. Now now different was his position! He was at last married to the girl of his choice—his beloved, Kate. Mr. Ashwood now received him with open arms; and

he could not but appreciate his long-trying love for his daughter.

Kate and Fitz-James returned as soon as possible to Shanganahah. Fitz-James had a pleasant surprise prepared for her; he had had the place nicely arranged; the gardens were put into order; the house repaired, and in part newly furnished. Wealth had poured in on him during the few months of Kate's absence. Houses and homesteads were in course of erection for the tenants, who came forth to meet her dressed in their best; and they cheered the newly-married pair. Arches were erected at the entrance to Shanganahah.

Kate begged Fitz-James to drive her by the mines ere she entered Shanganahah Castle. She was delighted with all she saw; rows of houses were springing up for the miners. Few would have thought they were in the midst of poor Ireland. The miners gave a hearty cheer in their turn for the bride and bridegroom; and harnessing themselves to the carriage, they drew it to the castle. Fitz-James thanked them earnestly for the kind reception they had given him and his bride; and a good feeling was cemented between himself and those around him.

Little now remains to be told. Edward, for whom our sympathy has been at times aroused, never saw his ardent wishes accomplished. He died in the West Indies shortly after his arrival. Mr. Ashwood lived to be an old man, and had the pleasure of seeing his grandchildren growing up around him, virtuous and happy. Maria never married, but remained with her father as long as he lived.

The Powers did not return to Power Court, but lived partly in England and partly on the Continent. The Ashwoods have never revisited Warrenstown, save for the purpose of managing the property; and at such times they stayed with Fanny Merton at Brushwood.—Warrenstown House still remains, looking as gloomy and dilapidated and deserted as when we first introduced our readers to the history of its former inmates. But though our friends never returned to their former wealth, all were satisfied and contented, and perhaps felt more real happiness in their moderate independence than they had enjoyed whilst in the midst of wealth and luxury. When they had money in abundance Mr. Ashwood was cold and reserved with his family, and selfish. The trials he had undergone had purified him from all worldliness, and broken down the barriers that impeded the perfect enjoyment of the communion which should exist between parent and children.

THE END.

LIFE IN THE CLOISTER; OR, FAITHFUL AND TRUE.

By the Author of "The World and the Cloister," &c., &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.—AN ENGLISH HOME.

Some eight years since, before the commencement of the panic occasioned by the disastrous cotton famine, which has shaken the greatest of our commercial towns to its centre, there lived in the pretty suburb of Bowden, in the environs of Manchester, a gentleman named Craig, with his two daughters, Lillian and Marion.

This gentleman, as his name will denote, was Scotch by extraction, and his family had always been members of the Episcopal Church; as to his own religious belief, he could not be said to have possessed any, save a few speculative opinions of his own; holding, indeed, the greatest fundamental doctrines of Christianity, but then diverging off into a species of practical atheism; the particular creed of Archibald Craig being, as he was wont facetiously to express himself, to injure no man; but, on the contrary, help his neighbor whenever it was in his power so to do.

Mr. Craig was one of the merchant princes of the cotton district. The Laurels, as the mansion was termed in which he resided, was one of the handsomest and best kept for miles around; his horses were of the finest breed; his carriages unexceptionable; and lastly, though by no means the least, for they ought to have been mentioned first, his daughters were true Lancashire witches, or, to speak to the point, two of the loveliest young women one might ever chance to meet with.

A word, though, en passant. Surely this term of Lancashire witches, taken in the sense in which it is generally used, is not a fair one; for the palm of beauty, if applied collectively, can by no rule of justice be given, or said to be, the distinctive mark of the ladies of Lancashire above the female sex in the other counties of England; on an average, we fancy, from what we have seen of its maids and matrons during a residence of some years amongst them, that there are about the same number of pretty faces to be met with there, neither more

nor less, as in any other county in the British Isles.

It is not often that we meet with a face which can be termed correctly beautiful, yet such was that of Lillian, the eldest of Mr. Craig's daughters.

Marion, the youngest sister, also had uncommon pretensions to physical beauty, but her features wanted the regularity which her sister's possessed.

Shall we describe these two young women whose fortunes form the subject of this narrative. We think not—such descriptions are hackneyed, so the reader will please merely imagine the countenances of these two sisters very unlike as to features, and yet like as to expression; the elder, Lillian, with her dazzlingly-fair complexion, dark eyes and hair, somewhat stately as to figure and outward bearing; and her sister, sweet Marion Craig, with sunny locks and violet eyes, her figure more petite than that of her sister, full of all the guileless abandon of a young and innocent woman, her countenance the very soul of animation and good temper. Such were these young ladies of Bowden in the year 1855. But we have to speak of the mental endowment of these girls more than of their natural graces. They were the admiration of all Manchester; the belles of the last London season, their hands were sought in marriage by wealthy men; nay, it was rumored that the stately Lillian might have had a coronet had she chosen to accept it; but the wilful maiden chose to remain still plain Lillian Craig, to her father's intense displeasure.

Beautiful, amiable, and good, what could Mr. Craig desire more? Alas, alas! there is a skeleton in every house; these poor young ladies formed the source of domestic unhappiness to the rich millocrat.

Let us peep in at him as he sits in the library in that stately home at Bowden; he is all alone; the two wilful, wayward girls, on whom all his hopes have rested, have both left him in tears.

Was ever a man so deceived? Was ever a father so troubled? This comes of having a couple of daughters, forsooth—both of them to fly in my face in this way?

Mr. Craig got up and paced up and down the room; his looks had no charms that night, and he was still bewailing his hard lot in having two such perverse daughters, when the sound of carriage wheels struck upon his ear, and a very old friend, a wealthy mill-owner like himself, by name John Gilmour, was shown into the room.

'Glad to see you; 'pon my honor never was I better pleased to see you in my life,' said Mr. Craig, seizing his friend by the hand, and warmly shaking it. 'I want your advice; those girls of mine are the greatest trouble to me, now that I had thought all trouble was over with them. I have ordered them both out of the room; their conduct is unbecomingly to the last degree.'

'Lillian and Marion a trouble to you?' exclaimed his friend; why surely you jest, Craig. I have always thought them models of filial duty.'

'Filiat duty!—a fig for such duty as my precious daughters show to me,' answered the enraged father. 'Tell me, Gilmour, it is not enough to drive any man in his senses mad.—First, you are aware Miss Lillian chose to refuse the offer of Lord Stratmore, as if it were no honor for the daughter of a poor commoner to be raised out of her own rank in life; and at last it turns out, when I insist upon knowing why she has chosen so pertinaciously to refuse another eligible offer, that she has chosen, without consulting me at all about the matter, to want to marry that poor artist, Herbert Leslie, forsooth, who has not a cent to bless himself with. There now,' he added, 'I just ask you if it is not enough to drive a man mad, at the very moment when he thinks his troubles as a father are about to cease by his child's settlement in life, to find that they are all about to begin?'

'My dear fellow,' said Mr. Gilmour, leaving his head on his hand, and looking very grave, 'a man's troubles may only be said to begin when his children are fair grown up, and the question of a settlement for life comes on the tapis. Listen to an old family man, Craig, with five sons and seven daughters, all of whom Providence has willed should 'grow up like olive plants around his table,' as the Psalmist hath it; listen to me, Craig,' he added, placing his folded hands on the table, and assuming a still more serious expression of countenance, 'and believe me when I tell you, it is now, when I look around on all these young men and women, that I feel the full weight of the fearful, nay, the awful nature of the responsibility I incurred when I became a husband and a father. But, however, you're a rich man, Craig; I should advise you to submit, let her have Herbert; my young people are going a widely different road to that I had marked out; but they must make a kirk or a mill of it, Craig. I must yield—can't stand out; too much trouble to stand out, my good fellow.'

'I pity you, Gilmour; from my very soul I pity you,' said Craig, suddenly pausing in his walk up and down the apartment, a practice Mr. Craig always indulged in when he was at all disturbed. 'I shan't follow your example, Gilmour. These good-for-nothing girls break my rest, and I'll break their hearts, but what I'll break their present resolutions.'

'So much for Lillian, my good fellow,' responded Gilmour, shrugging his shoulders; 'but what about my friend Marion; she is my god-daughter? I have a right, you know, to give advice in that quarter, so out with it, gossip—how has Marion offended you?'

'She is worse than her sister, Gilmour; infinitely worse,' exclaimed Craig, striking his clenched fist violently on the table as he spoke. 'She is for ever whining, and fretting, and pestering me out of my life to let her take herself off into a convent, of all places in the world. I don't admire such fancies, and never did. She goes into no convent I can tell her.'

'A convent,' replied Gilmour, musingly; 'why when was she seized with that fancy?'

'Oh, the blessed effects of a convent education, to be sure. I allowed my poor wife to send both the girls to some one of these Notre Dame convents at Canley Heath, close to London.—You know the place—it ranks rather high amongst the houses of their institute; and this is the precious fruit of my folly. I declare I'm driven mad with their whims and fancies. I don't admire, I never did, the practice of giving stepmothers to grown-up daughters; but I really begin to think that a little wholesome subordination of that kind would have done both of them good. What shall I do Gilmour?' added the poor perplexed old gentleman, leaning his head on his hand, and looking anxiously at his friend.

'Let them go their own gait man; that is my advice,' replied Gilmour. 'Herbert Leslie is poor at present, it is true, but he may rise in his profession, and he is an excellent young man, after all; and as to my pretty godchild, Marion, why, let her be happy in her own way, and go to Banley, if she wishes to do so.'

'Friend Gilmour,' replied Mr. Craig, with more vehemence than he had hitherto spoken, 'it is the old story, the way with almost the whole world—I have asked your advice, and it does not please me, so I mean to follow my own.'

'Bless me, man, I think you have lost your senses,' exclaimed Gilmour, somewhat irritated at the rudeness of his old friend; 'but shake hands, Craig,' he said, extending his hand as he spoke; 'and don't follow my advice unless it seems good to you; I only say what I should do had I wilful lasses.'

'Well, don't go away, Gilmour,' said Craig, 'let's talk about business matters. It will do me good to banish the girls from my mind for a little while; and I'll find some way to punish them both later. Ah, by the way, I have it,' he said, pausing for a moment, as if a happy idea had occurred to him. 'They are both anxious'

'I thought you had decided on dismissing these refractory girls from your mind for the present,' interrupted Gilmour, laughing. 'I was just going to ask if there was any change in the cotton market.'

'All in good time; but I was about to say,' replied the angry father, 'if you'll let me speak without interrupting me, that Lillian has been plaguing me to take her to London, and so has Marion. I told them I would do so; but I see through their plan. Leslie has returned to his family, who are residing at Brixton, I believe. I may say, en passant, that they are as poor as church mice; then, of course, Miss Marion would only be about an hour's walk from the Heath.—Well, my young ladies, instead of going to London, then, I'll punish you both by starting you off Lytham. That sober, quiet little watering-place shall sober you both into your senses and obedience to your father's will, or I'll know the reason why before I have done with you.—Now to the state of the cotton market,' he hurriedly added, as if afraid that his friend should again espouse the cause of the rebellious damsels.

Mr. Craig was naturally as quick tempered as his easy-going friend was the reverse. Mr. Craig glomed when there was a dispute between himself and Mr. Gilmour, which happened not unfrequently to be the case, in being able to show that he had the power as well as the will to punish those who offended him.

We doubt if there be anything more annoying to hasty persons than an unwise recapitulation of real or fancied grievances to those who, perhaps by nature rather than any superior virtue, scarce know what it is to feel an impulse of anger.—Oscott had been the *alma mater* of each of these two men; they had grown up from boyhood together, had become bosom friends, located themselves in the same county, engaged in the same branch of commerce, and had continued