

Jove, I thought I was a man, but you will make a child of me if you go on like this."

I could do no more, so I left him and returned home, to solitude and my books.

The next day I saw my fair patient, Clara Mansfield. She was still in the same low, despondent state, and seemed incapable of making any exertion. Her wealthy old lover had been showering in presents, which, while she loathed, she had not sufficient energy to refuse. It really seemed as if, in legal phraseology, she would "let judgment go by default." Although she had no more fainting-fits, she informed me she had several times been very near one. From various symptoms, I was almost inclined to fear disease of the heart, but my utmost skill could not detect anything wrong by auscultation. That it was not altogether fancy and worry of mind, I felt convinced. Sometimes, in conversation, her face would suddenly flush and then instantaneously assume a deadly pallor, and this almost without her knowledge, for she would declare at these times that she felt no particular inconvenience. She seemed to resign herself, helplessly and entirely, to her mother's guidance, and appeared to be floating down the stream to her fate, whatever it might be, without a struggle.

"It is useless, Doctor," she would say, while her soft blue eyes filled with tears; "It is my destiny, I suppose, to be Lady Burley. He could save me, and he only; but I insulted him, and he is too proud to forgive."

And so she seemed to resign herself to her fate.

The quiet way in which she accepted what she considered an inevitable evil, was the more incomprehensible to me, from what I knew of her disposition and character. She was wont to be, if anything, rather too headstrong and passionate; now, no lamb could be led more quietly to the slaughter than was Clara Mansfield to her marriage with the Baronet.

During the following week I saw her day by day. Still the same gentle melancholy; still the same uncomplaining submission. I observed that on first entering the room she looked up anxiously, almost hopefully, in my face. I well knew what the look meant. It said, as plainly as words could speak, "Have you no news from him? Will he not save me from my fate?" Alas! I had not seen him. He had disappeared without leaving even a note behind him.

It wanted but a fortnight to the appointed day for the marriage of Sir Richard Burley, Bart., of Burley Hall, &c., with Clara Mansfield, when my young friend, Selby, again appeared. He called on me in the evening, about half past eight o'clock. Haggard, pale, and thin, he seemed fast relapsing into the state from which I had rescued him. When I attempted to feel his pulse, he withdrew his hand almost rudely: neither would he answer any question about his health.

"Never mind my body, Doctor; pain I have plenty, Heaven knows, but it is not that that troubles me now." Then after a silence, during which he leant his head upon his hands, concealing his face from my view, he said—

"Clara Mansfield will have ten thousand pounds in her own right—will she not?"

"I have reason to believe so," I said, surprised at the question.

"And if I married her without settlement, it would be mine—would it not?"

"Assuredly," I said, in still greater astonishment. Could I have been mista-

ken? Was George Selby really mercenary? It certainly seemed like it.

"Do you think there is any chance of her being happy with this man?" he asked.

"I should be sorry to say there was no chance," I replied; "but I must confess that I see very little. Setting aside his age and all other objections, I fear he is not calculated to make a kind or loving husband. They say he ill-used his first wife dreadfully—even struck her; and he has far, very far from a good character."

"Then I'll do it," he exclaimed, starting to his feet; "she shan't be sacrificed to the old ruffian."

"Do what?"

"Carry her off to-morrow, if she'll come. Do you think she will?"

Now, although I was quite certain that she would go to the end of the world with but the faintest encouragement from him, I could not quite say so.

"I think it's very likely," I replied; "really you must know her better than I do."

"Do you think she would put up with moderate means; soldier's fare and that sort of thing for a year or two?"

"I am sure she would, gladly. But you have no necessity to inflict poverty on her; with your income, your pay, and the interest of her fortune, you will have some seven hundred a year; surely you can exist on that without quite being obliged to live in a cottage."

"Her fortune! Don't speak of it. As soon as it comes into my possession (with her previous consent, of course) I mean to take it round to Eaton Square in a cab—all in gold—and fling the money bags into the hall. Then they would see whether I married my darling Clara for her fortune. An original idea—isn't it, Doctor?" and he laughed with something of his old spirits.

"Original, certainly," I replied. "I can't very much see the prudence of it, however."

"And now I'm off to reconnoitre," he said, shaking my hand. "Bribing ladies' maids, inventing disguises, and all the sort of thing you see in farces and comedies. 'None but the brave deserve the fair.' Adieu, Doctor."

"The young scamp will win yet, I do believe," I muttered as he left me, "in spite of his poverty and one arm!"

*L'homme propose, mais Dieu dispose.* I was picturing to myself the rage and chagrin of Mansfield mere, when she should discover the elopement of Clara with the one-armed Lieutenant, and chuckling to myself on the probability of the young people being made happy, when a double knock and a violent ring came to the door, and in stalked George Selby as pale and ghastly-looking as a corpse.

"Good heavens! what is the matter with you? Has the pain come on again severely? Let me mix you a cordial." I was proceeding to do so when he motioned me to desist, and said—

"It's all over, Doctor. They're gone."

"Gone."

"Yes, gone on the Continent for a fortnight's trip, and won't be back till the day before the wedding. That hoary old scoundrel has gone with them. I've a great mind to follow them and put a bullet through his head," he said savagely.

I saw it all now. Mrs. Mansfield had set her heart on the match; and fearing, false mother as she was, Clara's love for George, she had feared they might meet and be reconciled. In that case he knew full well, notwithstanding Clara's gentleness and docility, that no rock would be firmer. Clara

seldom said "no," but when she meant it.

And so they took the poor girl with the breaking heart to Paris, and only brought her back the night before the wedding. Determined to leave no stone unturned, I called on the evening of their return to town. I was unable to see Clara alone, but she gave me a look which I shall never forget. A look of earnest inquiry. A look which said plainly, "It is not yet too late; have you come for him?" Alas! he had again disappeared as before. Could I have found him that evening all might have been well. I could not, would not have allowed the poor girl to doom herself to misery. At the risk of my professional reputation, I myself would have enacted the part of the stage Abigail, and been the medium of communication. But it was not to be so. Poor Clara saw no hope in my face. Her look of eager inquiry changed to one of reproach, and at last faded into such an expression of hopeless despair that I could scarcely command my voice as I asked the few ordinary professional questions necessary.

My former suspicions received confirmation, and when I left I requested to speak to Mrs. Mansfield alone.

"Madam, I hear your daughter is to be married to-morrow. Allow me strongly to counsel, at least, the postponement of the ceremony."

"Impossible, Doctor," she said; "all the arrangements have been made, the deeds signed—everything is ready. Besides, dear Clara seems rather better to-day than usual."

"I regret to say that I have to-day observed unfavourable symptoms. I fear—I am almost certain that there is organic disease. Not, I believe, incurable, or, even with ordinary care, dangerous; but still I should most strongly counsel a postponement—its excitement might be fatal. In this case there is especial danger, too. I have reason to believe that your daughter is exceedingly averse to the marriage—"

Mrs. Mansfield coloured with shame and anger.

"Averse to the marriage!—ridiculous!" she said. "I am sure our dear girls feels the highest respect and admiration for Sir Richard."

Respect and admiration for that *bad*, bloated old man! What a mockery!

"I have done my duty, Mrs. Mansfield; I have told you that to marry your daughter to-morrow is injudicious, and even dangerous. If you choose to act against deliberate advice, I have no power to prevent your so acting. On your head be the consequences of your conduct."

I could see that the worldly woman was somewhat staggered by these words. However, mammon prevailed, and, as far as she was concerned, I felt certain that the marriage would take place as originally fixed.

The morning arrived—the morning of that day which was to make Clara Mansfield Lady Burley. Notwithstanding my loathing and hatred of the mockery about to be enacted, I resolved to attend, not from any consideration for the vain worldly mother, but to be at hand in case of sudden illness of my meek patient. As I walked slowly down Regent Street, intending to turn into Hanover Square, a hand was laid on my shoulder. I turned, and beheld George Selby—but now worn and haggard. He was enveloped in a long military cloak, which however, could not hide the emaciation of his frame. He looked even worse than when he first came to consult me.

"A relapse?"