

many poor victims to their downfall. Percy in his heart felt a thorough contempt for his cousins forbearance and affection. Moreover, he was selfish enough to consider him in the light of an interloper—one who had wronged him by abstracting an iota of his lion's share of the world's goods; and yet another cause lurked in his tainted breast for his unnatural antipathy to his good-hearted young relative. Elwyn was the next heir to the title and estates in the event of Percy dying without male issue; and the latter, measuring by his own base heart the secret feeling of another's attributed to his cousin the meanness of harbouring an anxiety for his death, construed Elwyn's kindness and affection into cunning and hypocrisy, and was always thinking how gloriously he should frustrate his hopes.

He frequently told the boy he should never marry, so as to raise his expectations, as he thought, still higher, and used secretly to think how delightful it would be to astonish the expectant heir some day by taking to him a wife.

He might have spared himself a great deal of trouble, for it did not enter into Elwyn's head to anticipate for a moment the probable succession to the title: he never dreamed of such a thing.

No heart could have been more sincere, no mind less covetous, no soul more truthful and unreserved than Elwyn Eswald's.

CHAPTER V.

On a sultry day in the summer following the flight of the gipsy girl, Eola, from the Leighton, a young and delicate looking female, with an infant in her arms, was slowly making her way along the Mitcham road. She paused very frequently, and rested on the green bank skirting the dusty footpath, as if unable to proceed any further; then, with a desperate firmness, and clasping the babe closer to her bosom, she would rise, and hurry onward at a rapid pace, till sheer exhaustion compelled her again to stop, when she would cast one long, earnest glance down the sunny road, another of wild despair and anxiety at her senseless burden, and finally sink again on the grassy bank.

In this way she had proceeded a considerable distance on her weary journey, when the child began a low, piteous wailing, which seemed to touch the tenderest chord of the poor mother's heart and agonize her frame, for staying her faltering steps, she leaned against a stile by the road-side, and with a helpless though wistful glance at the path she could no longer pursue, she moaned out—

'It's useless, useless trying! I cannot walk another step. Oh, Heavens! and must I die thus and leave my little one, to perish on the public road.'

And the unhappy girl burst into a flood of tears, which fell like rain upon the soft cheek of her tiny babe, who, as if in sympathy with its wretched parent, wailed more piteously than ever.

'You are hungry my pretty one, and I have nothing to give you!' wept the poor girl; and as if to prove the veracity of her sad avowal, she pressed her babe to the bosom whence it had hitherto been accustomed to derive its support, but which now, alas! mocked the tiny mouth that eagerly but vainly sought to draw from it some nourishment.

At this juncture a stout old farmer passed by. His attention being attracted by the melancholy sounds of weeping, he stared at the mournful pair in great surprise, evidently struck by the extraordinary beauty of the youthful mother, who, in spite of the ravages which poverty and sorrow had worked in her once faultless features, was still lovely enough to excite the admiration and pity of the good-natured man.

His rough but kind face raised a hope in the young girl's heart. She sprang forward with the energy of despair, and held up her child, saying—

'Oh, sir! for the love of God—of Him who never intended his creatures to perish from want—give me something for my baby. See it is dying.'

And she turned to the man its puny little face, which was, in fact, literally fading away.

The farmer looked from the girl to the infant, and from the infant to the girl, as if weighing something of importance in his honest mind, and then he said—

'Are you its mother?'

'Yes, yes!' cried the young creature, with an impatient gesture.

'And its father?' was the next enquiry.

The girl blushed deeply, then drawing back with a reproachful glance, she exclaimed—

'Oh, sir! I ask you for nourishment to save the life of my little one, which is fast dying out, and you stand asking me questions while it is perishing in my arms. Oh, God! are all men heartless?'

With this bitter exclamation, the wretched creature was turning away, when the old man grasped her shoulder.

'Forgive me, child—forgive me!' he said, kindly, 'I did not think your case was so urgent as this. Why, I believe you are dying yourself. How pale you look! But my house is close handy, and you shall soon have something to eat, trust me. There, there, my

poor girl; give me the bawling, and lean on my arm. I will see to you.'

And the kind old fellow tenderly took the child from its parent's sinking arms, and supported her steps to a neat and pretty house, standing a little back from the high road, and surrounded with fields and orchards.

A good-looking young woman, whom the farmer addressed as his daughter, met them on the threshold. She manifested great surprise on perceiving her worthy father's burthen, and the fragile form that hung upon his arm; but he prevented her pending exclamations, by bidding her go directly to prepare a cup of warm milk for the infant, and some refreshments for its starving parent, which order the girl immediately obeyed; while the farmer carefully deposited the infant in an adjoining parlour, and placed the trembling mother by its side.

The wretched creature passionately pressed his brown hand to her lips in a mute blessing for his hospitality; and when relinquished, it was wet with tears of grateful joy.

'Poor, poor child!' thought the good man, looking anxiously on her pallid countenance; 'how young to be the victim of such bitter grief!'

His daughter now appeared with the requisite refreshments. The wanderer eagerly stretched forth her thin hand for the milk destined for her infant's meal, but, at a gesture from the farmer, the daughter took the little one from her arms, and motioned to the girl to attend to her own wants, commenced feeding it herself with a tenderness and care that did credit to her woman's heart.

The half-famished child sucked in its genial draught eagerly, but its parent could only swallow a few morsels of dry bread and a little wine; and even that appeared to be accomplished with much difficulty. In vain the kind-hearted people urged her to eat; she thanked them fervently; but nature had been exhausted too long to regain its faculties at once; and they were obliged to be consoled for the want of appetite in the mother, by the fair progress made by the little babe.

When the meal was over, the girl appeared very eager to be gone; and though the farmer earnestly pressed her to rest a little longer, she seemed so desirous to take her departure, that he soon ceased to oppose it.

'I have not much further to go,' she said, 'and I am so anxious to reach my friends for her sake,' and she pointed to the child, whose tiny face was now beaming with contentment.

'Blessings—blessings on you!' she continued, fervently. 'Oh! you do not know how an act of kindness sinks into the wretched heart! how long it is remembered! May God, who put in your hearts the kind feelings you have this day shown, always keep you in his mercy and protection.'

And so saying, the wanderer turned from the hospitable roof, and continued her journey.

About a mile from Croydon, on the Mitcham Road, are four lanes, called the Cross Roads.

Down one of these the youthful female turned; and after proceeding in a straight direction for about a quarter of a mile, she struck across a meadow on the left side, leading to a small copse.

Beside this copse were pitched several tents, and near them in various groups were gathered a number of gipsies, some of whom were engaged in cooking over a camp-fire; others (the men chiefly) were lying on the grass smoking, and round them a numerous family of ragged, dark-eyed urchins gambolled in the sunshine.

As she approached the tents the young girl walked slower, and a crimson flush dyed her pale face. Once or twice she paused and looked back, as if meditating a retrograde movement; then a glance at the infant on her breast seemed to inspire her with fresh courage, and she continued her course. Suddenly a thought appeared to strike her. She stopped, looked around, and retreating toward a hedge on her left hand, crept through it, and continued her walk along a road adjoining, till reaching a narrow lane, down which she turned, she entered the adjacent copse, and approached the encampment from the opposite and less exposed side.

As she neared the back of one of the tents, a tall stalwart man crossed her path. She uttered a wild shriek, and fell grovelling at his feet. He stepped back a pace or two, as if in horror, then sprang forward and raised her.

'Eola!' he ejaculated, holding her at arm's length, and gazing terror-struck in her death-like face.

She turned her sad dark eyes humbly and supplicatingly up to his, a wild shudder convulsed her attenuated frame, and a fearful change came over her wasted features.

'I have come back to die,' she whispered hoarsely. 'Oh, Ralph!'—and the name came forth with a bitter moan of shame and anguish—'in this dying moment will you take pity on the lost one?'

'I will—I will—I do!' said the gipsy, in an agitated tone, and with a fond but mournful look of pity at that once beautiful face. 'Oh, Eola! Eola! if you had not left me—had not deceived me—this would never have been!'

'Ralph, the past will not come back; but oh! have mercy on my babe! I have no other friend on earth.' She pointed, with a wild,

appealing gesture to her infant, who lay upon the soft grass at their feet; then suddenly a purple shade seemed to pass over her face, and she shudderingly closed her eyes.

'Oh, Heavens! she is dying!' cried Ralph, bending wildly over her powerless form. 'Eola, Eola!—one word, for pity's sake! Who—who was it?'

He bent his ear almost close to her lips to catch the reply. A convulsive twitching of the muscles around the mouth, a faint quiver of the eyelids, and like a low sigh came forth the accursed name—'Eswald!'

It was the last effort of exhausted nature: one more convulsive motion of the mouth, one strong electric quiver through the entire body, and life had fled forever. The gipsy still clasped her in his arms.

His hot, scalding tears were falling thick and fast upon her face, and old memories came crowding on his mind. The extraordinary sounds had drawn several of the tribe to the spot. Foremost among them came an old woman and a young one, leading between them a little child.

The old woman picked up the infant, who had now begun to cry, and advanced towards her son and his sad burthen.

Ralph told her that the girl was dead, and softly laid the corpse upon the turf, kneeling beside it.

The hag glanced unfeelingly at the lifeless countenance, and turning to the younger woman, said—

'She's managed to bring her blessed brat here. It's a pity she didn't live to take it back again, for go it shall. We have quite enough to do to keep our own, without being burdened with another hussy's love-child.'

The man rose from beside the dead body, and sternly confronted the heartless speaker. 'What is it you are saying, mother?' he asked, with a reproachful scowl.

'Oh,' responded the daughter, pointing to the babe, 'we were only wondering whether it would be best to send Eswald his precious child, or cut the matter shorter by dispatching it to its mother.'

'Shame, Linda!' cried the gipsy. 'Are you a mother yourself, and speak in this heartless way? Give me the little one,' he continued, taking it from the withered arm of the old woman. 'I'll teach you your duty. She has done wrong, and she has suffered. Let punishment fall where due, but the innocent child shan't suffer for its parent's fault. I will protect it.'

'Silly fool!' exclaimed Linda, turning scornfully away. 'I only hope he'll be able to feed it.'

CHAPTER VI.

Twelve long years have rolled their steady course since the events related in the previous chapter took place. Few changes are visible among the tenants of the tent excepting those which Time always leaves behind, in his ceaseless flight.

It is a bright day in September.

Two children are gathering blackberries in a pleasant lane, near the borders of—shire. One is a dark-eyed, dark-haired beauty, of some thirteen years, the other a lovely little blue-eyed creature, of about twelve, with hair like threads of gold. Though both engaged in the same task, and apparently both of the same family, they do not seem on very friendly terms with each other. A continual grumbling is kept up as they fill their baskets. When one fixes her eyes on a well-covered branch of the purple fruit, the other is sure to forestall her in gathering it, or purloin her other berries while she plucks it; and then the brewing storm bursts forth, and rages for a few minutes furiously. But in each tempest the dark-eyed child is generally the first to begin and the last to leave off.

The attire of these little disputants is of a strange and fanciful character; and though rather soiled, and torn in several places, is not unbecoming to their pretty, graceful forms.

Each wears a scarlet frock, reaching just below the knee, a black velvet jacket, and a small straw hat trimmed with scarlet ribbons, beneath which long glossy ringlets fall almost to the waist.

Suddenly one of them (the darker one) throws down her basket, and climbs, with the agility of a cat, to the top of a high gate, leading into an adjacent field.

'I hear horses coming, I am sure,' she cries, gazing along the lane. 'Yes, here comes two gentlemen. Put down your basket, Oly, and let's see if we can't get something out of them.'

'No, I shan't,' returned the other, with a defiant look. 'I was told to gather blackberries, and I'll gather blackberries, and won't do nothing else.'

'Then I'll tell old granny of you,' said the elder, with a threatening gesture.

'And I'll tell who stole the apples,' retorted the younger.

The dark-haired girl shook her fist vigorously; the fair-haired one gave back a look of defiance—a challenge which, though mute, seemed perfectly intelligible to both.

But now the two horsemen approached, and the quarrel was suspended. The elder child sprang erect on the top bar of the gate, and, clapping her hands, shouted—

'Gents, I will sing you a pretty song for sixpence.'

This frank offer appeared to afford the gentlemen much amusement; and its singularity, combined with the extraordinary ease with which the little speaker kept her footing on the dangerous ledge, caused them to stop and look at her, when she repeated her proposal.

'I should think, by your appearance, you could also dance,' remarked one of them, leaning forward, and patting her sun-burnt cheek. 'Oh! that I can. I will dance you a horn-pipe on your horse's back, if you like.'

And suiting the action to the word, the daring child leaped from the gate on to the animal's neck, while the astonished rider spasmodically clutched at her short skirt, to prevent her falling; but of that there seemed little fear, for the light figure balanced itself on the slippery stand with the ease of a butterfly.

'Why, you're as active as a little monkey,' cried the rider.

'Oh! you might be a trifle more polite, sir, and say a little *faigy*,' returned the bold girl, putting; and she sprang to the ground as if in anger.

The other horseman, who had gazed on this strange scene with the listless air of a man to whom nothing earth could produce would appear wonderful or interesting, now said, 'Oh, she's one of those strolling fair people Elwyn; they can do anything but say their prayers.'

The little madcap threw him a withering glance.

'I can do *that*, too, when I choose,' she said. 'But, sir, assuming a coaxing tone, 'I'd rather dance or sing for you.'

'Hum! But where's your band?'

'Here's my music,' holding up a pair of castanets.

'Shall I do it on your horse's back?'

'On his head, if you like.'

'You are very obliging.'

'You are making fun of me, I know you are. But get off your horse, and let me begin my dance.'

The gentleman was about to comply, when his companion exclaimed—

'Surely, Percy, you would not be so foolish as to suffer that child to risk her neck in that absurd manner.'

But the girl sprang to his side, and whispered—

'Let me do it, I'm not going to dance. I'm only going to serve him a trick.'

'The obliging gentleman,' who was in the act of dismounting, did not notice this aside, and his friend, evidently not averse to a little bit of mischief, did not warn him of the young dancer's mischievous design but coolly awaited its result.

'Just give me a lift, sir' said the forward young lady, and putting out her foot with the utmost sang froid.

Lord Eswald, for it was he, was about to catch her up by the waist, and put her on the saddle, but she pushed aside his hands with a frown, and drew back.

'That's not the way, sir. I've rode at the circus, and they never put a lady on so.'

'Oh, if you've ridden at a circus, young lady, of course you know all about it,' said the nobleman, satirically; and he condescended to mount her as she desired.

But instead of placing herself in a dancing posture, she gathered up the reins with quite a masterly hand, sank lightly down, *a la Turk*, and giving the animal a smart kick with her tiny foot, and a jerk of the bridle, urged him into a canter, and was half way down the lane ere the astonished nobleman could guess her intention. At the same moment a clear silvery laugh struck his ear, and turning round, he perceived the lovely blue-eyed Eola perched on the gate, just where he had first seen her counterpart.

The two gentlemen gazed on the second apparition in mute surprise.

'Hal! hal! laughed the pretty child, pointing with her slender forefinger to the retreating equestrian. 'How silly you were to trust your horse with Zerny! See, she is at the bottom of the lane! Ah, I knew Zerny would only play you a trick, after all her fine promises.'

The speaker descended from her perch, and placing herself before the nobleman, offered to dance for his amusement till her sister came back; evidently thinking that her services would be a fair recompense for the wilful Zerny's caprice.

And as she stood before him, her fair head thrown back, and one little foot advanced, as if about to commence the promised evolutions, Elwyn thought her the prettiest picture of childish coquetry his eye had ever beheld. But Eswald continued to gaze on her with the listless, indifferent expression of a man whose imagination has been feasted to satiety with every description of feminine loveliness, and who had ceased to regard it with the slightest degree of interest.

'Is she not a beautiful little creature' whispered Elwyn, with deep enthusiasm.

'Bah, Elwyn!' responded the worn out *roue*. 'You see a Helen in each girl you meet, as Goethe says. For my part, I like the dark-eyed houri better.'

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

'I don't remember having seen you before,' as the lawyer said to his conscience.