THE TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

UNCLE MAX.

CHAPTER XXVI.-C .ntinued.

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"I am really and honestly glad that you and Giles work so well together. He will be a good friend to you, I know, for when he forms a favorable opinion of a person he is slow to change it, and Giles is one who, with all his faults, will go through fire and water for his friends. I like to hear of him in this way, for you always put bim in the best light. and, though you may not believe it after all my had speeches, I am sufficiently proud of my brother to wish him to be properly ap-presisted." And after this I mentioned him less reluctantly.

Max came back about ten days after Jill had left us. I found him waiting for me one evening when I tot hak to the cottage. As nanal, he greeted me most affectionately, only him it is only Gladys's way. Girls are carehe laughed when I made him turn to the light less sometimes. Of course she does not mean that I might see how he looked. that I might see how he looked.

"Well, what is your opinion, Ursula, my dear? I hope you have noticed the gray hairs in my beard. I saw them there this morning."

"You are rather tanned by the cold winds. your eyes have not lost their tired look, Max : you are not a bit rested."

rest would kill me with ennui," stretching willingly, and yet not one word of recogniout his arms with a sort of weary gesture. tion for her own, I may say her only, I walked a great deal at Torquay ; I was out in the air all day; but it did not seem to be what I wanted: I was terribly bored. Tudor is glad to get ms back. The fellow what has gone wrong with him, Ursula?" | worse than useless to speak before Miss Dar-But 1 prudently turned a deaf car to this rell. She would twist my words before my question, and he did not follow it up ; and a face. I never said a word in Gladys's behalf moment afterwards he mentioned that he had | that she did not make me repent it. been at Gladwyn, and that Miss Darrell had given him a good account of Miss Hamilton.

' I had no idea that she was away until this afternoop, Her departure was rather sudden, ar 12 20

I think he was g'ad when I gave him Gladys's message; but he looked rather grave when I told him how much she was enjoying her freedom.

"She seems a different creature; those Mabirleys are ro good to her; they pet her, and yet leave her uncontrolled to follow her own wishes. I am more at rest about her there.

"A girl ought to be happy in her own home," he returned, somewhat moodily. think Miss Hamilton has indulged her sadness long enough. Perhaps there are other reasons for her being better. I suppose she has not heard-----!" And here he stopped rather awkwardly.

"Do you mean whether she has heard any-"hing of Eric? Oh, no, Max."

"No, I was not meaning that," looking at my rather astonished. "Of course we know the poor boy is dead. 1 was only wondering if she had had an Indian letter lately. Well st is none of my affair, and I cannot wait to hear more now. Good-night, little shc-bear; I am off " And he actually was off, in spite I am off " of my calling him quite loudly in the porch, for I wanted him to tell me what he meant. Had Gladys any special correspondent in India? I wondered if I might venture to question Lady Betty.

As it very often happens, she played quite innocently into my han is, for the very next day she came to tell me that she had had a letter from Gla lys.

"It was a very short one," she grumbled. "Only she had an Indian letter to answer, and that took up her time, so that was a pretty good excuse for once.'

"Hus Gladys any special frierd in India ?" "Ouly C aude !- I mean our consin, Claude Hamilton. How strange ! Why, he used to and Gladys were great friends : they correrpond

trouble after your hard work."

Miss Darrell spoke quite civilly, and I do not know why her speech rankled and made

me reply, rather quickly,— "Nurses do not gossip with the doctor, Miss Darrell. Mr. Hamilton has told me no news, 1 assure you. Gladys's letters tell me far more."

I was angry with myself when I said this, for why need. I have answered her at all or taken notice of her remark ? and, above all, why need I have mentioned Gladys's name! Miss Darrell's color rose in a moment. "Dear me i I am glad to hear dear Gladys

writes to you. She does not honor us. Lady Batty gets a note sometimes, but Giles and I are never favored with a word. Giles feels terribly hurt about it sometimes, but I tell word.

"Of course not," rather gravely from Max.

"All the same it is very neglectful on Gladys's part. If you are a real friend, Miss Garston, you will tell her what a mistake it is, -really a fatal mistake, though I do not I suppose Torquay has done you good ; but dare to tell her so. I see Giles's look of dieappointment when the post brings him noou are not a bit rested." (I believe I want more work : too much anxious about her health. He let her go so brother."

Max was looking so exceedingly grave by this time that I longed to change the subject. I would say a word in defence of Gladys actually seems dull. Have you any idea when we were alore, he and I. It would be said, "Well, Ursula ?" but there was no in-what has gone wrong with him, Ursula ?" worse than useless to speak before Miss Day. terest in his tone. The next moment, however, she had started

on a different tack. "Oh, do you know, Mr. Cunliffe," she said,

carelessly, as she crossed the hearth-rug to ring the bell, "we have heard again from O ptain Hamilton?"

Max raised his head quickly. "Indeed I hope he is quite well. By the bye, I re-member you told me he had a touch of fever; but I trust he has got the better of that "

"We hope so," in a very impressive tone; "but it was a sharp attack, and no doubt home-sickness and worry of mind accelerated the mischief. Poor Claude ! I fear he has suffered much; not that he says so himself : he is far too proud to complain. But he is likely to come home on sick-leave ; next mail will settle the quesi on, but I believe we may expect him about the end of July."

"Indeed ! That is good news for all of you ;" but the poker that Max had taken up fell with a little crash among the fire-irons. Miss Darrell gave a faint scream, and then laughed at her foolish nervousness.

"It was very clamsy on my part," stam-mered Max. Could it he my fancy, or had he turned suddenly pale, as though something had startled him too?

"Oh, no, it was only my poor nerves," replied Miss Dacrell, with her brightest smile. 'What was I saying ? Oh, yes, I remember now,-about Claude : he wrote to Gladys to ask if he might come, and sha sa'd yes Ah, here comes tea, and I believe I heard Giles's ring at the bell."

I cannot tell which of the two revealed it to me,-whether it was the sudden pallor on Max's face, or the curious watchful look that I detected in Miss Darrell's eves : it was only there for a moment, but it reminded me of the look with which the cat eyes the mouse she has just drawn within her claws. I saw it all then within a quick flash of intuition. I had partly guessed it before, but now I was sure of it.

"My poor Max, so brave and cheery and stay with us for months at a time, and be | patient! But she should not torment him any longer in my presence. If he had to He is Captain Hamilton now; his suffer, -and the cause of that suffering was regiment was ordered to India just at the still a mystery to me,-she should not spy time poor dear Eric disappeared; he was cut his weakness. He had turned his face awfully shocked about that, I remember. saide with a quick look of pain as he spoke, Etta wrote and told him all about it; he was and the next moment I had mounted the great favorite of hers. We none of us breach and was begging Miss Darrall to assist meant efforts to comfort me." me in the case of a poor family,-old hospital acquaintances of mine, who were emigrating to New Zealand. My importunity seemed to surprise her. My sudden loquacity was an interruption; but I would not be repressed or silenced. I took the chair beside her, and made her look at me. I fixed her wandering attention and pressed her until she grew irritable with impatience. 1 saw Max was recovering himself : by and by he gave a forced laugh. "You will have to give in, Miss Darrell. Ursula always gets her own way. How much do you want, child ? You must be merciful to a poor vicar. Will that satisfy you?" offering me a sovereign, and Miss Darrell, after a moment's hesitation, produced the same sum from her purse. I took her money coolly, but I would not resign the reins of the conversation any more into her hands. When Mr. Hamilton en tered the room he stopped and locked at me with visible asionishment : he had never heard me so fluent before; but somehow my eloquence died a natural death after his entrance. I was still a little shy with Mr. Hamilton. His manner was unusually genial this afternoon. I was sure he was delighted to see us both there again. He spoke to Max in a jesting tone, and then looked benignly at his cousin, who was superintending the tea-table. She certainly looked uncommonly well that day; her dress of dark maroon cashmere and velvet fitted her ine figure exquisitely ; her white, well-shaped hands were, as usual, loaded with brilliant rings. She was a woman who needed ornaments: they would have looked lavish on any one else, they suited her admirably. Once I caught her looking with marked disfavor on my black serge dress: the pearl hoop that had been my mother's keeper was my sole adornment. I dars say she thought me extremely dowdy. I once heard her say, in a pointed manner, that "her cousin Giles liked to see his women-folk well dressed ; he was very fastidious on that point, and exceedingly hard to please."

seeing Giles once or twice a day, you heard all our news, so we did not expect you to toil up here: that would have been unnecessary np here: that would have been unnecessary no here: that would hav To my great relief, however, he left us as soon as we reached the vicarage, so I wished him good night quite amiably, and of course "Wait a moment, Max; I m

Max walked on with me to the cottage. He was actually leaving me at the gate without a word except "Good-night, Ursula,"

"You must come in, Max. I want to speak to you."

"Not to-night, my dear," he returned, hurriedly. "I have business letters to write before dinner."

"They must wait, then," I replied, de-dedly, "for I certainly do not intend to cidedly, let you leave me just yet. Don't be stubborn, Max, for you know I always get my own way. Come in. I want to tell you why Gladys never writes to her brother.". And he followed me into the house without a

CHAPTER XXVII.

MAX OPENS HIS HEART. But I did not at once join Max in the

parlor, though he was evidently expecting me to do so: instead of that, I ran up-stairs to take off my walking things. - It would be knew that Edgar had low propensities, and better to leave him alone for a few minutes. When I returned he was leaning back in the easy-chair, with his hands clasped behind his head, evidently absorbed in thought. I was struck by his expression : it was that of a man who was nerving himself to bear some t ouble ; there was a quist, hopeless look on his face that touched me exceedingly. I took the chair opposite him, and waited for him to speak. He did not change his attitude when he saw me, but he looked at me gravely, and

Of course I knew what he meant, but I let that pass, and something seemed to choke

my voice as I tried to answer him : "Never mind that now: we will come to

that presently. I want to tell you that I know it now, Max. I guessed a little of it before, but now I am sure of it."

looked at me. He did not ask me what I travagant, that he defied his brother's aumeant: we understood each other in a mo- thority, that he even forgot himself so far as ment. He only sighed heavily, and said, "I to use bad language in his presence. I be have never told you anything, Ursula, have I ?" but his manner testified no displeasure. He would never have spoken a word to me of his own accord, and yet my sympathy would be a relief to him. I knew Max's nature so well: he was a shy, reticent man; he could | check." not speak easily of his own feelings unless the ice were broken for him.

" Max," I pleaded, and the tears came into my eyes. you would have told her all without reserve." "I should not have needed to tell her: she would have guessed it, Ursula. Poor Emmie ! I never could keep anything from her. I | Miss Hamilton's view of the case, but I canhave often told you you are like her : you re-

mind me of her this afternoon." "Then you must make me your confidante in her stead. Do not refuse me again, Max : I have asked this before. In spite of our strange relationship, we are still like brother and sister. You know how quickly I guessed Charlie's secret : surely you can speak to me, who am her friend, of your affection for Gladys.'

I saw him shrink a little at that, and his honest brown eyes were full of pain.

"My affection for Gladys," he repeated, in a low voice. "Yon are very frank, Ursula; but somehow I do not seem to mind it. I never care for Miss Darrell to speak to me on the subject, although she has been so kind; in fact, no one could have been kinder. We can only act up to our own natures : it is certainly not her fault, but only my misfortune, that her sympathy jurs on me. Max's words gave me acute ; aiu.

"Surely you have not chosen Miss Darrell for your confidante, Max ?"

"I have chosen no one," he returned, with gentle rebuke at my vehemence "Cir un stances made Miss Darrell acquainted with my unlucky attachment. She oid all she followed my advice in everything. When I could to help me, and out of common grati- told her that only work could cure her sore tude I could not refuse to listen to her well- heart, she did not contradict me : in a little

"Wait a moment, Max; I must ask you something. Do you believe that Eric was guilty ?" "I am almost sorry that you have put that

question," he returned, reluctantly. "I never would tell her what I thought. It was all a mystery. Eric might have been and yet my coming pleased her. I though could see I was doubtful. I told her that, for renewing my suit; but it seems that I whether he were sinned against or sinning, | was a blind fool. our only thought should be to bring him back and reconcile him to his brother. God will prove his innocence if he be blackened falsely,' I said to her; and, strange to say,

she lorgave me my doubts." "Oh, Max, I see what you think."

"How can I help it," he replied, "know

ing Eric's character so well? he was so weak he was under bad influences. You will have heard Edgar Brown's name. He was a wild, was always lounging about rublic-houses with a set of loafers like himself. He bas got worse since then, and has nearly broken his mother's heart. Do you think any man with

a sense of responsibility would permit a youth of Eric's age to have such a friend? Yet "One by one she dropped her duties. Tre this was a standing grievance with Eric, and parish knew her no more. She certainly 1 am sorry to say his elster took Edgar's part. Of course she knew no better : innocence is credulous, and Edgar was a sprightly, goodlooking tellow, the sort that women never

fail to pet "Yes, I see. Eric was certainly to blame in this."

"He was faulty on many more points. I am afraid, Ursula, you have been somewhat biassed by Miss Hamilton. You must remember that she idolized Eric, --- that she was blind to many of his faults ; she made excuses for him whenever it was possible to do so. I had roused him effectually. A sort of but with all her weak partiality she could not dusky red came to his face as he sat up and deny that he was thriftless, idle, and exlieve, once, he even struck him; only Hamilton declared he had been drinking, so he merely turned him out of the room.'

I looked at Max andly. "This may be all true; but I cannot believe that he took that "The circumstantial evidence against him

is very strong," he replied, quietly. "You do not know what power a sudden tempta-"if my dear mother were living tion has over these weak natures: he was hard pressed, remember that; he had gamoling debts, thanks to Edgar. Fancy gam-bling debts at twenty ! I have tried to take not bring myself to believe in his innocence. Most likely he repeated the moment he had done it, poor boy. Eric was no hardened sinner. I sometimes fear-at least, the terrible thought has crossed my mind, and I know Hamilton has had it too-that in his despair he might have made away with him-

> Belf. "Uh, Max, this is too horrible !" And shuddered as I thought of the beautiful young face so like Gladys's, with its bright frank look that seem d to appeal to one's heart "Weil, well we need not speak of it ; but It is a sad time for us all; and yet in some ways it was a happy time to me. It was such a comfort to feel that I was necessary to them all; that they looked for me daily; that they could not do without me. I used to be with Hamilton every evening; and when Gladys was very ill they sent for me, because they said no one knew how to soothe her to well.

"Do you wonder, Ursula, that, seeing her in her weakness and sorrow, she grew daily into my life, that my one thought was how could help and comfort her ?

"She was very gentle and submissive, and

while I had to check her feverian activity.

"I thought I had prepared her sufficiently

law than any other man.

her again at some future time.

to this ordeal.' But I think her firmness was

a little shaken, and she looked at me rather

me too well.

"I saw her daily, and after the first awk wardness had passed we were good friends. But her manner changed insensibly. She was less frank with me; at times she was almost thy. I saw her change color when 1 looked at her. She was quiet in my presence, tempted; it was not for me to say. She it would be well with me when the time came

"I had put down the exact date, May 7. It was last year, Ursula. I meant to adhere to the very day and hour; but before Feb-ruary closed my hopes had suffered solipse.

"All at once Miss Hamilton's manner became cold and constrained, as you see it now. Her soft shyness, that had been so favorable a sign, disappeared entirely. She avoided and impulsive, so easily led astray, and then me on every occasion. She seemed to fear to be alone with me a moment. Her nervousness was so visible and so distressing that I dissipated fellow, and Hamilton had a right often left her in anger. A barrier-vague, to forbid the acquaintance; both he and I and yet substantial-seemed built up between

us. "She began to nagleot her work, and then to make excuses. She was overdone, and dimness and blight had crept over her. I suffered from headache. The school-work tired her. You have heard it all, Ursula : I need not repeat it.

"One by one she dropped her duties. Tre her melancholy increased. looked ill. Something was evidently preying on her mind.

all this time. But now she was the bearer of bad news. "She came to me in the study, while I

was waiting for Hamilton. She looked very mark, but at last he said, — pale and discomposed, and asked if she might "I am afraid I believe it, Ursula, and that speak to me. She was very unhappy about me, but she did not think it right to let it go on, Gladys wanted me to know. And then

all came out. "It could never be as I wished. Miss Hamilton had been trying all this time to like me, and once or twice she thought she message—for I suppose it was a message— had succeeded, but the feeling hat never was my final answer. She did not wish me lasted for many days. I was not the right to speak to her again." person This was the substance of Miss Darrell's explanation.

"You know Gladys,' she went on, 'how sensitive and affectionate her nature is; how answered, rather irritably. "What have she hates to inflict pain. She is working her-self up into a fever at the thought that you You must not let personal dislike influence

will speak to her again. "'It was too terrible last time, Etta,' she said to me, bursting into tears. "I cannot endure it again. How am I to tell him not doubt her for a moment." about Claude ?"'

" About Claude !' I almost shouted. Miss Darrell looked frightened at my violence. swear by her." For I felt-heaven forgive She shrank back. and turned still paler. I me !--almost a hatred of this woman, unnoticed her hands trembled.

""Oh, have you not noticed?' she re-turned, feebly. 'Oh, what a cruel task this is ! and you are so good, -so good.'

"'Tell me what you mean !' I replied, angrily, for 1 felt so savage at that moment that a word of sympathy was more than I could bear. You would not have known me at that moment, Ursula. I am rot easily roused, as you know, but the blow was too sudden. I must have forgotten myself to have spoken to Miss Darrell in that tone. When I looked at her, her mouth was quivering like a frightened child's, and there were tears in her eyes.

"'I scarcely know that it is you,' sue faltered. 'Aro men all like that when their wills are crossed ? It is not my fault that you are hurt in this way. And it is not me capable of persecuting the woman I Gladys's either. She has tried-I am sure love"

always regulate her own heart.' "'You have mentioned Captain Hamilton's name,' I returned, coldly, for her words lase by repetition: she may have added to seemed only to aggravate and widen the sore. or diminished her words. A third person Perhaps you will kindly explain what he

sito do with the matter?' "She hesitated, and looked at me in a pleading manner. I saw that she **aia no** wish to speak; but for once I was inexorble. "'1 must rely upon your honor, then, not to repeat my words either to Giles or Gladys. Your doing so would bring Gladys into trouble; and, after all, there is nothing definitely settled." I nodded assent to this, and she went on rather reluctantly : "Yes, Max," for he paused, as though " 'Claude was always fond of Gladys, but we never knew how much he admired her tion.' until he went away. They are only half-cousins. Gladys's father was step-brother to "I loved her more each day, but I re-Claude's. Giles has always been averse to cousins marrying, but we thought this would make a difference. "They are engaged, then ?' I asked, in a loud voice, that seemed to startle Miss on the match. He told me more than once Darrell. that he would rather have me as a brother-in-"'Oh, no, no," she returned, esgerly; there is no engagement at all. Claude writes to her, and she answers him, and I but it seems that she was very much startled think he is making way with her : she has owned as much to me. Gladys is not one to by my proposal. Her trouble had so en-grossed her that she had been perfectly blind talk of her feelings, especially on this subto my meaning. It was all in vain, Ursula, ect ; but it is easy to see how absorbed she for she did not love me, -- at least not in the s in those Indian letters; she is always r ght way. She told me so with tears, accusrighter and more like herself when she has ing herself of unkindness. She liked, most heard from Claude.' certainly she liked me, but perhaps she knew "'I am to deduce from all this that you believe Captain Hamilton has a better chance "She was so unhappy at the thought of of winning her affections than I?' giving me pain, so sweet and gentle in her "Again she hesitated, then drew a foreign letter slowly from her pocket. 'I think I efforts to console me and heal the wound she had inflicted, that I could not lose hope. must read you a sentence from his last letter : She told me that, though she had trusted me he often writes to me as well as to Gladys. Yes, here it is : "Your last letter has been a entirely as her friend, she had never thought of me as her lover, and the idea was strange great comfort to me, my dear Etta : it was to her. This thought gave me courage, and more than a poor fellow had a right to ex-E begged that I might be allowed to speak to I do believe that this long absence has pect. served my purpose, and the scratch I got at Singapore. Girls are curious creatures; one "She wanted to refuse, and said hurriedly that she never intended to marry. But I took these words as meaning nothing. A girl will tell you this and believe it as she never can tell how to tackle them, and my special cousin knows how to keep one at a distance, but I begin to feel 1 am making way says it. I suprose I pressed her hard to at last. She wrote to me very sweetly last mail. I carry that letter everywhere; there leave me this margin of hope, for after reflecting a few minutes she looked at me was a sweetness about it that gave me hope. gravely and said it should be as I wished. In a year's time I might speak to her again, and carry the breach boldly. I shall first "I pleaded for a shorter ordeal, though show her my wound and my medal, and then secretly I was overjoyed at this orumb of throw myself at her pretty little feet. Gladys-" No, I must not read any more; you see how it is, Mr. Canliffe ?' consolation vouchsafed to me. But she was inexorable, though perfectly gentle in her " Yes, I see how it is,' I returned, slowly. Forgive me if I have been impatient or unone else, Mr. Cunliffe,' she said, with a melancholy smile, 'for I can give you so mindful of your kindness.' And then I took up my hat and left the room, and it was weeks before I set foot in Gladwyn again." little satisfaction. I feel so confused and "Oh, Max ! my poor Max !" I returned. stroking his hand softly. He did not take it away: he only looked at me with his kind "I was glad to hear her say this, for at least I should have the happiness of seeing smile. "That was Emmle's way,-her favorite little caress. Wait a moment, Ursula, my "'In a year's time,' sne went on, 'my heart may feel a little less heavy, and I shall dear; I am going, out for a breath of air.' And he stood in the porch for a few minutes, have had an opportunity to reflect over your words. I cannot tell you what my answer looking up at the winter sky seamed with stars, and then came back to me quietly, and may be, but if you are wise you will not hope. waited for me to speak. If you do not come to me then, I shall know that you have changed, and shall not blame

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"It is very strange, -very mysterious. I do not seem to understand it. I cannot find

do not seem to understand it. I cannot and the clue to all this." "There is no clue needed," he returned, impatiently. "Miss Hamilton is in love with her cousin, and is sorry for my disappointment,"

"I do not believe it," I replied, bluntly. And yet, as I said this, Gladys's conduct seemad to me perfectly inexplicable. It was just possible that Max's statement, after all, might be correct, -- that she did not love him well enough to marry him : and this would account for her nervoueness and constraint in his presence: a sensitive girl like Gladys would never be at her ease under such cir. cumstances. But she had promised not to withdraw her friendship: why had she then given up her work and made herself a stranger to his dearest interest? I had seen her struggle with herself when he had begged her to resume her class. A brightness had come to her eyes, her manner had become warm and animated, as though the stirring of new life were in her veins, and then she had refused him very gently, and a certain

had wondered then at her.

No, I could not bring myself to believe that she was indifferent to Max. He was so good, so worthy of her. And yet-and yet, do we women always choose the best? Per. haps, as Max said, she knew him too well for him to influence her fancy. Captain Hamil. ton's scars and medals might cast a glamour "One day Miss Darrell spoke to me. She over her. Gladys was very impulsive and had been very kind, and had fed my hopes enthusiastic; perhaps Max was too quiet and gentle to take her heart by storm.

I had plenty of time for these reflections, for Max sat moodily silent after my blunt re-

is more to the purpose. Miss Darrell has dispelled my last hope."

"You mean that Captain Hamilton's return speaks badly for your chances ?"

"I have no chances," very gloomily. "I am out of the running. Miss Hamilton's

"Are you sure that she sent that mes sage ?"

"Am I sure that I am sitting here ?" he your better judgment. Perhaps Miss Darrell is not to my taste ; I think her sometimes officious and wanting in delioacy; but I do

"That is a pity," 1 returned, dryly, "for she is certainly not true; but all you men reasonable as it seemed; but women have these instincts sometimes, and Max had warned me against Miss Darrell from the first.

"I will be frank with you," I continued. more quietly. "I do not read between the lines : in other words, I do not understand Gladys's behavior. It may be as you say; I do not wish to delude you with false hopes, my poor Max; Gladys may care more for Captain Hamilton than she does for you ; but it seems to me that you acted wrongly on one point, you meant it for the best; but you ought to have spoken to Gladys yourself."

"I wonder that you should say that, Ursula," he returned, in rather a hurt voice. 'I may be weak about Miss flamilton, but I am hardly as weak as that. Do you think

"It would not be persecution," I replied, she has tried her hardess. to bring herein to accede to your wishes. But a woman cannot alwave regulate her own heart.' have misconstrued her meaning: the truth should never be mixed up in a love affair: trouble always comes of it. I think you werewrong, Man: you let yourself be managed by

thought him handsome except Etta; he was a nice-looking fellow, but nothing else."

"And you and Gladys are food of him?" "Oh, yes." But here Lady Betty looked a little queer.

"Gladys writes to him most: she has al-ways been his correspon lent. Now and then get a letter written to me. You see, he has no one else belonging to him, now his mother is dead. Aunt Agnes died about two years ago, and he never had brothers or sisters, so he adopted us."

Uncle Max knew him, of course?"

"To be sure. Mr. Capliffe know all our people. Claude was a favorite of his, too. I think every one liked him; he was so straightforward, and never did anything mean. I think he will make a splendid officer; he has had fever lately, and we rather expect he is coming home on sick-leave. Etta hopes so.

"Gladys has never spoken of her cousin to

me." "That is because you two are always talking about other things, -- poor Eric, for ex-ample. Gladys likes to talk about Claude, of course : he is her own cousin." And Lady Betty's manner was just a little defiant, as though I had accused Gladys of some indisoretion. I heard her mutter, "They find plenty of fault with her about that," but I took no notice. I had satisfied my curiosity, and I knew now why Max fancied an Indian letter would raise Gladys's spirits; but all the same he might have spoken out. Max had no business to be so mysterious with me.

I heard Captain Hamilton's name again shortly afterwards. I was calling at Glad-wyn one afterncon. I was loath to do so in Gladys's absence, but I dared not discontinue my visits entirely for fear of Miss Darrell's remarks. To my surprise, I found her tete-atcle with Uncle Max. She welcomed me with a great show of cordiality; but before I had been five minutes in the room I found out that my visit was inopportune, though Max seemed unfeignedly pleased to see me, and she had repeated his words in almost parrot-like fashion. "Oh, yes, I am so glad to see you, Miss Garston ! it is so good of you to call when dear Gladys is away I Of course I know she is the attraction : we all know that, do we not?" emiling sweetly upon me. "She has been away more than five weeks now,dear, dear ! how time flies !-- really five weeks, and this is your first call."

"You know how Miss Looke's illness has engrossed me," I remonstrated. "I never pretend to mere conventional calls."

"No, indeed. You have a code of your own, have you not? Your niece is fortunate. Mr. Canliffe. She mikis her own laws, while we poor inferior mortals are obliged to conform to the world's dictates. I wish I were strong-minded like you. It must be such a pleasure to be free and despise les convenances. People are so artificial, are they not?"

"Ursula is not artificial, at any rate," returned Max, with a benevolent glance. It had struck me as I entered the room that he looked rathered bored and ill at ease, but Miss Darrell was in high spirits, and looked almost handsome. I never saw her better dressed.

"No, indeed, Miss Garston is almost too frank; not that that is a fault. Oh, yes, Miss Locke's illness has been a tedious affair : even Giles got weary of it, and used to grum-"ble at having to go every day. Of course, me for my want of courtesy, he talked to

Mr. Hamilton seemed in the best of humors. I do not think that he remarked how very quiet Max was all tea-time. He pressed us to remain to dinner, and wanted to send off a message to the vicarage ; but we were neither of us to be persuaded, though Miss Darrell joined her entreaties to her cousin's.

I was anxious to leave the house as quickly as possible, and I knew by instinct what Max's feelings must be. I could not enjoy Mr. Hamilton's conversation, amusing as i was. I wanted to be alone with Max; I felt I could keep silence with him no longer. But we could not get rid of Mr. Hamilton; as we rose to take our departure he coolly announced his intention of walking with us.

"The Tylcotes have sent for me again," he said, casually. "I may as well walk down with you now." He looked at me as he spoke, but I am afraid my manner disap-pointed him. For once Mr. Hamilton was decidedly de trop. I am sure he must have noticed my hesitation, but it made no differ ence to his purpose. I had found out by this time that when Mr. Hamilton had made up his mind to do a certain thing, other people' moods did not influence him in the least. He half smiled as he went out to put on his greatcoat, and, as though he intended to punish

I remained silcut from sheer dismay. She had overwhelmed herself with duties; she managed our mothers' meetings with Things were far worse than I had imagined. regan to lose hope from the moment I heard | Miss Darrell's help, taught in our schools, and helped train the choir. I had allotted Miss Darrell had been mixed up in the affair ; her a district, and she worked it admirably. the thought sickened me. I could hardly bear to hear Max speak ; and yet how was I She was my right hand in everything; all the to help him unless he made me acquainted with the real state of the case? poor people worshipped her."

"I suppose I had better tell you all from the beginning," he said, rather dejectedly; overwhelmed with some bitter-sweet recollection. that is, as far as I know myself, for I can spected her sorrow, and tried to hide my feelings from her. It was more than a year hardly tell you when I began to love Gladys. I call her Gladys to myself," with a faint smile, "and it comes naturally to me. I after Eric's disappearance before I ventured to speak, and then it was by Hamilton's advice that I did so. He had set his heart

ought to have said Miss Hamilton." "But not to me, Max," I returned.

eagerly. "What does it matter what I call her? She will never take the only name I want to give her !" was the melancholy reply to this. "I only know one thing, Ursula, that for three years-ay, and longer than that-she has been the one woman in the world to me, and that as long as she and I live no other woman shall ever cross the threshold of the vicarage as its mistress."

"Has it gone so deep as that, my poor Max ?'

"Yes," he returned, briefly. "But we need not enter into that part of the subject ; a man had best keep his own counsel in such matters. I want to tell you bare facts, Ursula; we may as well leave feelings alone. If you can help me to understand one or two points that are still misty to my comprehension, you will do me good service." "I will try my very best for you both."

"Thank you, but we cannot both be helped in the same way; our paths do not lie to-gether. Miss Hamilton has refused to become my wife.

"Oh, Max! not refused, surely." This was another blow,--that he should have tried and failed,--that Gladys with her own lips should have refused him; but perhaps he had written to her, and there was some misunderstanding; but when I hinted this to Max be shook his head.

"We cannot misunderstand a person's and she would know her own mind, words. Oh, yes, I spoke to her, and she answered me; but I must not tell you things in this desultory fashion, or you will never understand. I have told you that I do not know when my attachment to Miss Hamilton commenced. It was gradual and imperceptible manner. "'I wish you had set your heart on some at first, -very real, no doubt, but it had not mastered my reason. I always admired her : how could I help it ?" with some emotion. "Even you, who are not her lover, have weary, as though life afforded me no pleasure. But, indeed, I do all you tell me, and I mean owned to me that she is a beautiful creature. suppose her beauty attracted me first, until to go on with my work.' I saw the sweetness and unselfishness of her nature, and from that moment I lost my heart. her every day.

"The full consciousness came to me at the time of their trouble about Eric. I had been fond of the poor fellow, for his own sake as well as hers, but I never disguised his faults from her. I often told her that I feared for Eric's future; he had no ballast, it wanted a moral earthquake to steady him, and it was no wonder that his caprices and extravagant moods angered his brother. She used to be you in the least. You are free to choose any balf offended with me for my plain speaking, one else. I have so little encouragement to but she was too gentle to resent it, and she give you that I shall not expect you to submit one else. I have so little encouragement to would beg me to use my influence with Hamilton to entreat him not to be so hard on Eric.

timidly when I thanked her very quietly and "When the blow came, I was always up said that at the time appointed I would speak

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CROSSING THE RIVER.

Max waited for me to speak, but I had no words ready for the occasion. My silence somed to perplex him.

"You have heard everything now, Ursula." nothing to fear. 1 will be wise and wary to "Yes, I suppose so. I am very sorry for your sake, and guard your honor sacredit

you or Gladys."

"I could not help it if she came to me." "True, she thrust herself in between you, Well, it is too late to speak of that now. If you will: take my advice, Max," for the thought had come upon me like a flash of inspiration, "you will go down to Bournemouth and speak to Gladys, keeping your own counsel and telling no one of your inten-

I saw Max stare at me as though he thought I had lost my senses, and thon a. sudden light came into his eyes.

"You will go down to Bournemouth," I went on, "and the Maberleys will be glad to see you ;: you are an old friend, and they will ask no questions and think no ill. You will have no difficulty in seeing Gladys alone. Speak to her promptly and frankly; ask her what her behavior has meant, and if she really prefers her cousin. It you must know the worst, it will be better to know it now. and from her own lips. Do go, Max, like a brave man." But even before I finished speaking, the light had died out of his eyes, and his manner had resumed its old sadzess "No, Ursula; you mean well, but it will not do. I cannot persecute her in this way. Captain Hamilton is coming home in July:

she has given him permission to come. I will wait for that. I shall very soon see how matters stand between them. I shall only need to see her with him ;: probably I shall not speak to her at all,"

L could have wrung my hands over Max's obstinacy and quixotism .: he carried his generosity to a fault. Few men would be so Patient and forbearing. How could be stand aside hopelessly and

let another man win his prize? But perhaps he considered. it was alroady won. I pleaded with him again. I even went so far as to contradict my theory about a third person, and offered to sound Gladys about her cousin; but he silenced me peremptorily.

"Promise me that you will do nothing of the kind : give me your word of honor Ursula, that you will respect my confidence. Good heavens ! if I thought that you would betray me, and to her of all people, I should indeed bitterly repent my trust in you."

Max was so agisated, he spoke so angrils, that I hastened to soothe him. Of course his confidence was sasred; how could he think such things of me? I was not like Miss-But here I pulled myself up. He might be as blind and foolish as he liked, he might commit suicide and I would not hinder him; he should enjoy his misery in his own way. And more to that effect.

"Now I have made you cross, little she bear," he said, laying his hand on mine, "and you have been so patient and have given my woes such a comfortable hearing You frightened me for a moment, for I know how quick and impulsive you can be. No no, my dear. I hold you to your own words a third person must not be mixed up in a lov affair ; it only brings trouble."

"You have proved the truth of my words, I remarked, coolly. "Very well, I support I must forgive you; only never do it again on your peril: you know I am to be trusted. To be sure; you are as true as ste Uraula."

* Very well, then : In that case you h