

MOTHER AND STEP MOTHER.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sir Edward was reading when his son entered the dining-room. He was not a man who habitually wasted much of his conversation on his children; and he hardly looked up on Frank's entrance, merely showing his consciousness of his presence, and his satisfaction thereat by a commonplace question about the weather. Having replied to this, and taken a seat on the opposite side of the fire, Frank began to cast about in his mind how to introduce the great subject which engrossed his thoughts. He did not doubt that his father would hear him with indulgence and interest; but it was with considerable difficulty, that he at length stammered out a request that he would give him his serious attention for a few minutes.

"What, again, Frank?" said Sir Edward, laying down his book, with a look of amazement. "You seem very impatient. Not that I blame you. I think travel does a young man good, provided he travels with a purpose, and not merely for the sake of wasting time, and money. I was speaking to your mother about your plan just now. She thinks I ought to have taken time to consider it, before I consented to your undertaking a journey so long and perilous; but, as I proved to her, it's nothing to the Arctic expedition. Notwithstanding the danger of the adventure, I confess I am not sorry you have fixed on the Rocky Mountains as your Ultima Thule; for I shall be glad to have some geological specimens from them; and an authentic account of Mormonism,—one of the most remarkable phenomena of the age. The accounts we have, must be, to a certain extent, partial. Now, you will take a clear head and young eyes with you. All I would warn you against is too strong a leaning to the old-world prejudices, with which our good friend, Birkby, has taken such pains to fortify you."

"I have just parted from Kitty, sir," said Frank, breaking in, at last, with desperate resolution.

"Why didn't you bring her up here? The little puss, I don't wonder she's ashamed to show her face. Your mother is by no means pleased, I can tell you. She never was very fond of poor Kitty. Very strange, though I don't know—perhaps it's natural, after all. I dare say, Perth would have thought Imogen rather milk-and-waterish. I really begin to apprehend that my little friend is putting on her womanhood. Kitty, the sweetest piece of Nature's handiwork that ever gladdened human heart.—It is too bad for her to be having her whimsies and caprices."

Here was a good opening for Frank. These warm expressions of tenderness and affection loosened the powers of speech. He defended Catherine from the charge of caprice. He then, with more difficulty, explained the motive which had led her to refuse Lady Irwin's invitation, and concluded with an earnest avowal of his own passion, and an entreaty that his father would aid him with his countenance.

"So I am to remain in my present benighted ignorance of the real state of the Mormon colony," said Sir Edward, when his son at length ended; "and I shall not be able to enrich my collection with specimens from the Rocky Mountains! Do you think, that Kitty could be persuaded to make it her bridal tour? But seriously, Master Frank, this is a grave matter. You and Kitty are over young to be running your heads into the yoke matrimonial. Kitty is a wife for an emperor; and you'll be a lucky fellow, if you get her. Still, you know it is a matter to be carefully considered for both your sakes."

"Certainly, sir, if you will only give us your countenance, we shall be willing to wait."

"Oh, yes! I dare say! As willing as the hoar-frost when the sun is shining. I wasn't many months older than you, when I married your mother. I was very happy 'bona sub Cynaræ regno.' Kitty is not unlike her in many things. But I'll tell you what, Frank, we must talk to Lady Irwin; she does not like to have things done without her. I wish Kitty hadn't had her pretty fit of prudery just now. Helen does not like to have her invitations refused, especially when she fancies she is conferring a favour in giving them."

When the matter was broached to Lady Irwin, she listened with mingled astonishment and indignation. Her countenance sufficiently expressed her displeasure, though she controlled her utterance, and replied, only in a few cold words of disapprobation, to her husband's kindly representations of the wishes of the lovers. Strange as it may seem, she had never contemplated the probability of Frank's marriage or only as a possible distant evil, to be prevented when it arose. That he would form an attachment to Catherine Birkby, had never once occurred to her. Indeed, she held Kitty's beauty and accomplishments in very low esteem, and hardly thought of her, except as a useful playfellow for Edward—an agreeable domestic animal, whom it was convenient to have about the house. To discover in this softvoiced tender girl the enemy whom she should most ardently have guarded against, was a bitter aggravation of her annoyance.

Turn the subject which way she would, she could discover no reasonable hope of averting the evil: Sir Edward had already given a quasi

consent; she knew that, though generally complaisant, he was occasionally capable of firmness; that his affection for his eldest son was strong, his sense of justice strict, and that he had always regarded Kitty herself with peculiar tenderness. But none of these considerations shook her resolution to prevent the marriage, cost what it might; on the contrary, the difficulties that lay in her way rather strengthened her determination, and sharpened her ingenuity.

The sympathetic indignation of Agnes, to whom she disclosed the subject of her uneasiness during her evening toilette, confirmed her in the idea, that Catherine had abused her hospitality, and under the guise of innocence had successfully carried out her wily designs upon the heir. She determined to meet craft with craft, and, by using her great influence with her husband, to retard the union of the lovers, and, while seeming to be only anxious for their welfare, to counteract, and finally to subvert their designs.

The youth of the lovers naturally formed the burden of her objections; she touched slightly on Catherine's want of fortune, and inferior rank; she urged the curtailment of Sir Edward's expenses which would become necessary if two families were to be supported on an income, handsome indeed, but every sixpence of which was annually spent; she dwelt on the injury it would be to Edward, if he were deprived of the advantages of such an education as his brother had enjoyed,—advantages more necessary to him, since his position must depend on his own exertions. She frankly acknowledged she could not comprehend Frank's attachment, and insinuated a doubt of its continuance, urging how often the pretty face and sweet temper, which were sufficient for the youth, palled upon the mature taste of the man. To this Sir Edward replied, that it was not probable that an attachment founded on such intimate knowledge, and so fortified by esteem, would be of a transitory character; he said that for his part he was quite satisfied with little Kitty for a daughter-in-law, but he acknowledged that he had not contemplated the necessity of a separate establishment, and ended by expressing his belief, that the young people were in no hurry, and would make no difficulty of waiting a year or two.

When Frank found that Catherine's apprehensions were, in a measure at least, realized, and that Lady Irwin seemed determined to retard, if not openly to oppose their union, the antagonism of his nature was roused, and he could not altogether control his impatience in replying to her representations. He rejected with indignation the idea, that his feelings might change; he thought the house was large enough for him and Kitty, but if his father and mother thought otherwise, his father had interest to get him some appointment which would enable him to take the burden of his own maintenance, and that of his wife, upon himself; he had no idea of an immediate marriage, but he could see no reason to justify him in submitting Catherine to the anxieties of an engagement of uncertain duration.

In Catherine herself Lady Irwin found the most pliant listener; she was so prepared for anger in the dreaded Lady of the Manor, in the event of her passion becoming known, that when she assailed her with arguments, persuasion, and entreaties, coupled even with caresses, she yielded only too readily, and, grateful for permission to love, assented to any terms, thinking delay scarcely an evil in the greatness of her unhop'd-for happiness.

They were betrothed, and it was an acknowledged fact in the neighbourhood, that Miss Birkby was engaged to Mr. Irwin. One or two sour spinsters and intriguing mammans were highly indignant, but by the community at large, it was regarded as a very natural and desirable arrangement.

Mr. Birkby, when asked for his consent, gave it heartily, telling Frank, with tears of pleasure, that he was glad to show the love he bore him, by giving into his keeping his dearest earthly treasure; he was a little displeas'd at Lady Irwin's desire for the postponement of the marriage, for his affection took alarm at the idea that his child's excellence was not duly appreciated, but a few words from Catherine tranquillised his doubts, and he could not be long angry at what gave him longer possession of her who was so dear, so necessary to him.

As to Miss Birkby, the intelligence threw her into a flutter of delight. She had a happy knack of never seeing what was going on before her eyes, of course she knew that Kitty and Frank liked each other very much, but as to anything more than friendship, the idea had never suggested itself to her. She wished them happy with all her heart, and could see no reason why they should not be happy, since they had always been dear good children, both of them.

And so the matter rested. Lady Irwin, satisfied with having averted the evil for the present, revolved her plans at her leisure, and was content to bide her time. She was not, however, permitted to enjoy much repose, for she was harassed by the mute solicitations of Frank's anxious looks, and by the open remonstrances of her own son.

Edward heard the news at first with displeasure,

and was inclined to feel himself aggrieved because Catherine loved any one better than himself; but when the first emotions of dissatisfaction were over, he entered with spirit into the interests of the lovers, and, having espoused their cause, he supported it with a warmth characteristic of his temperament, and which increased with opposition. Proud of the victory he had gained over himself, and irritated by a suspicion, that his mother was actuated by love to him, he was never weary of urging his brother's claims, till his galling solicitations goaded her to madness, and confirmed her in her resolution.

"Inconsiderate and thankless boy!" she exclaimed one day, thrown off her guard by his importunity; "blind to your own interest, as you are careless of the affections of your mother."

"My interest!" retorted Edward, "how can it affect my interest; except that it must be my interest to see Frank and Kitty happy?"

"And yourself a beggar, and your mother a pensioner on the bounty of a country parson's daughter! Foolish child, how will it be with you when you are but an inmate on sufferance in the house beneath whose roof you were born?"

"Mother, that'll never be! You don't know of what true stuff Kitty's heart is made; if I ever want a home, and she has one, never fear that she'll grudge me share of her's. Besides, have I not hands, arms and wits; can't I hire myself out for so much a day to be shot at, or get a handsome income for wearing a fine coat, and a sword at some foreign court, and writing lying letters about nothing? Frank and Mr. Birkby, both say I've capital abilities, and I'm sure if I take after you, I must be a long-headed fellow with a first-rate genius for politics. Only think now, mother, would it not be more gratifying to be pointed out as the mother of the eminent diplomatist Mr. Edward Irwin, in time Sir Edward and soon my lord vicount, or what not, than to look handsome in your black velvet and diamonds as the maternal relative of Sir Francis?"

"It is because I long to see you crowned with self-won honours, that I am impatient of this preposterous scheme of your brother's. Hampered with him, his wife, and perhaps a host of children—women who bring their husbands no fortune, always have large families—how is your father to give you the necessary start? How is he to put you properly forward in the world? On the next ten years the fortunes of your life must depend."

"Ten years! then Frank and Kitty are to wait ten years? Come, mother, that's too bad—why she'll be quite elderly by that time; just think, you are only five-and-thirty now, and you've been married these sixteen years. Depend upon it, I shall never get on the better for Kitty's fretting herself to fiddle-strings. No, no, mother, it won't do; there's no Romance in a bride over twenty. If I were Frank, I'd carry her off in a chaise and four and bring her home a married wife—I declare it would be splendid—I'd be postillion, and I don't think, you'd have much chance of overtaking us, unless you swept after us in a whirlwind."

The idea of an elopement, and the exciting adventures by which it could not fail to be accompanied, was so agreeable to Edward that, though it had occurred to him as a jest, he did not fail to suggest it seriously to his brother.

"You may look as grave as you please, Frank," he said, impatiently; "I tell you my dear old fellow is as fond of Kitty as she deserves—you'd be gone just a couple of days, and I'd undertake to draw mother off, while you begged pardon, he'd forgive you almost before you could ask him. Mother is splendid for holidays, but you know, we sadly want a little household deity to nurse us when we are ill, and put us in good-humour when we are cross. Mother couldn't say anything, when it was done, or if she did, it wouldn't do much matter."

"She would never forgive us, Edward," returned Frank, with a grave smile; "and we should feel that we had given her reason for her displeasure. Kitty's heart would break under the weight of such a resentment as my mother can feel, and all my love and yours would not support her under it. It is hard, but we must be patient."

"Then I'll tell you what it is, Frank, you'll have plenty of exercise for your patience; you may wait and wait till you are both old and cross. Mother will not give her consent, she'll mock you with vain hope, like that scoundrel Pygmalion and his poor sister Dido in Virgil. She has made up her mind—she says you are too young now, she'll find reasons just as good to keep you asunder, till she can say you are too old, and ought to be thinking of the other world."

"Kitty would never consent," said Frank, not unmoved by the boy's representations. The thought was not new to him, the shadow of such a fear had been darkening on his mind for some time.

"Don't ask her!" cried Edward, with animation; "of course, I know as well as you that she won't, if she can help it; but you know she loves you with all her heart—you know that though she tries to be gay, and deceives her poor old aunt and her father, who is always dreaming about some old Greek lovers instead of minding his own dear little girl; you know that when she thinks go one sees her, the tears come welling up into her eyes, and she is grown so thin that I could almost span her waist, which used to be of a proper natural size. I do not doubt that she

would protest and be very miserable; you are her natural guardian now, and it is your business to take care of her health. Now, if you carry her off, and marry her against her will, she can't blame any one but you and me, and I don't think she can be long angry with either of us."

Frank smiled, and loved his brother very dearly for his vehemence. And when he detailed to Catherine his proposal in all its extravagant wildness, there was a touch of sadness in the smile with which he related it, and in that which she listened to—a sadness perhaps inseparable from love so deep as theirs, yet showing that a foreboding of evil was in the heart of each.

Latest News!

EIGHT DAYS LATER FROM EUROPE.

New York, June 28.

The Steamer Baltic arrived at 1 o'clock yesterday morning. There were 200 passengers on board.

The failures of Halsford & Co., Navy Agents, and Hall & Co., Brokers, London, is reported. This arrival brings details of the French capture of the Mamelon and White Towers, after sanguinary fighting, in which 5000 were killed and wounded. The gallant French took 62 guns and about 500 prisoners, and their position enables them to shell the shipping in the harbor of Sebastopol. Simultaneously the English stormed and took Rifle Works in the Quarries, but lost 500 killed and wounded. Since then firing has been slack.

The fleet has achieved new successes in the Sea of Azoff, and has burned stores at Taganrog, Maripol and Genitchi, and a boat expedition is fitting out against Perakop.

Nothing from Tchernaya or the Baltic. The Russians are reported to have evacuated Anapa.

The Emperor of Austria arrived at Cracow yesterday.

The weather was excessively hot at the Crimea. The Vulcan arrived at Dantzic with despatches. The Russians fired on a boat bearing a flag of truce, and 16 English sailors were killed.

No alteration in trade. Corn promises to be an abundant crop. The British ship Shamrock foundered at sea with a valuable cargo. The crew escaped in the boats. Cargo valued at 20,000 dollars.

Gen. Saunna has died of Cholera at Balaklava.

Markets.—Liverpool Cotton.—The Leading Circular reports markets quiet. Breadstuffs dull.—Wheat, Flour and Corn are somewhat cheaper.

London Money Market.—Money is plenty. Bank rate discount reduced to 3 1-2. Consols 91 1-2.

FROM CALIFORNIA.

The steamer Star of the West, from San Juan, arrived at New York on Sunday last, with \$625,000 in specie, and 500 passengers. Her dates are to the 1st inst.

The mining news from the State is of the most encouraging kind, and it is thought that at no previous time in the history of the State has the yield of gold been as great as at present.

The entire block of buildings, bounded by Davis, Front, Commercial, and Sacramento streets, San Francisco, was destroyed by fire. Loss estimated at \$75,000.

40,327 ounces of gold were deposited in the branch of the mint at San Francisco, during eight days, from the eighth of May.

The deficits of Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Banking House amount to \$179,000.

The papers contain accounts of an unusual number of big strikes among the miners, and the usual record of crime in different parts of the State.

LATER.—The steamer George Law arrived at New York on Monday, with California dates to the 2d inst. She brings \$1,052,000 in treasure, and 714 passengers.

The difficulties between the American Consul at San Juan del Sud and the Government, had been settled, without the interference of the U. S. Sloop-of-war St. Mary's.

The great nugget of gold which has been on exhibition at the banking institution of James King, has been melted down, and nets the owner \$829,28.

EUROPEAN NEWS IN SIX DAYS.—We learn from the New York Evening Post that the New York and Newfoundland Telegraph Company have contracted for the removal of the Merlin rock, lying at the entrance of the harbor of St. John's, Newfoundland.

There are now eighteen feet of water lying upon the rock at low tide, and as the Collins steamers draw twenty-three feet when loaded, they cannot enter. When the rock is removed to the depth of twenty-seven feet, as is proposed, St. John's will probably be made a stopping place for European steamers, and the news which they convey be transmitted to Boston by telegraph within six days from the date of the departure of the steamers from Liverpool.

CLEANING

The Turk fanatic. Destroyed by wood, believing for perils as soon when a man house; but this spirit of reforms and decay of the Sultan Mahomed soldiers by speaks to the The Ulanah posed the meloman could touching the was of course at prayer the Sultan Mahomed Prince who caps. We lions to exis radise. Mah that women them admit that the Kor the contr; passage in hint, that n the blessed. once got M has probabl bear repeat strong of a prophets. Schamyl p Islamism. as this wor it is useful of a scrape day a groy the subject the 56th of was very c could not h hard that a sures of a her to be sh he was ver; written, ar in her part ed upon h prophet, s; better do. was one of he told her for though women in novbrthe last first Franc who wome ber of De was neces impossible that ag-

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