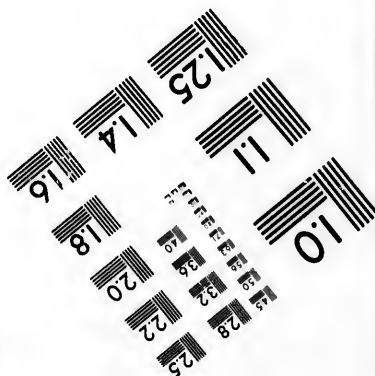
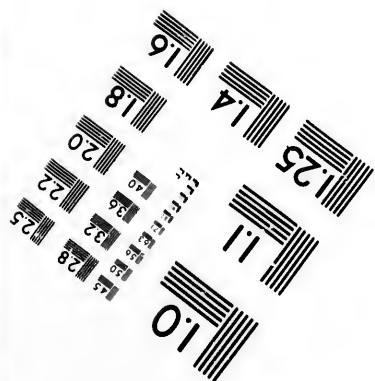
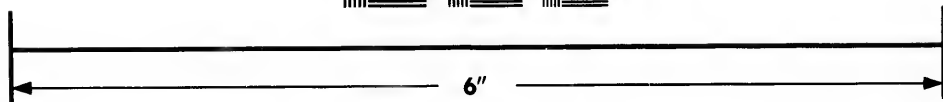
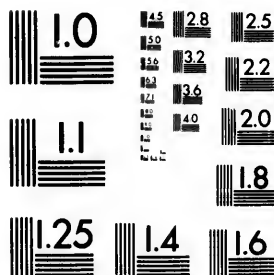


**IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)**



**Photographic
Sciences
Corporation**

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

**CIHM/ICMH
Microfiche
Series.**

**CIHM/ICMH
Collection de
microfiches.**



Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques

© 1983

Technical and Bibliographic Notes/Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming, are checked below.

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- Coloured covers/
Couverture de couleur
- Covers damaged/
Couverture endommagée
- Covers restored and/or laminated/
Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- Cover title missing/^r
Le titre de couverture manque
- Coloured maps/
Cartes géographiques en couleur
- Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black)/
Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- Coloured plates and/or illustrations/
Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- Sound with other material/
Relié avec d'autres documents
- Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion
along interior margin/
La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la
distortion le long de la marge intérieure
- Blank leaves added during restoration may
appear within the text. Whenever possible, these
have been omitted from filming/
Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées
lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte,
mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont
pas été filmées.
- Additional comments:/
Commentaires supplémentaires:

- Coloured pages/
Pages de couleur
- Pages damaged/
Pages endommagées
- Pages restored and/or laminated/
Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- Pages discoloured, stained or foxed/
Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- Pages detached/
Pages détachées
- Showthrough/
Transparence
- Quality of print varies/
Qualité inégale de l'impression
- Includes supplementary material/
Comprend du matériel supplémentaire
- Only edition available/
Seule édition disponible
- Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata
slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to
ensure the best possible image/
Les pages totalement ou partiellement
obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure,
etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à
obtenir la meilleure image possible.

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below/
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

10X	14X	18X	22X	26X	30X
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12X	16X	20X	24X	28X	32X

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

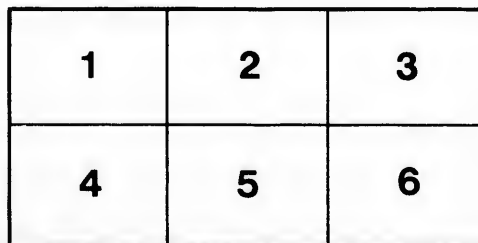
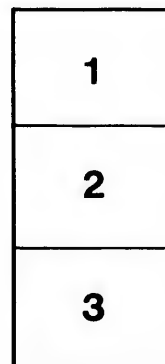
Ralph Pickard Bell Library
Mount Allison University

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol \rightarrow (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ∇ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

Ralph Pickard Bell Library
Mount Allison University

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole \rightarrow signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ∇ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.

SELECT LIBRARY No. 214

GUY EARLSCOURT'S WIFE



By

MAYAGNES FLEMING



STREET & SMITH, LONDON
PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK

MOUNT ALLISON
UNIVERSITY
RALPH PICKARD BELL LIBRARY



19

2461

L4

G13

J. D. L. 1

103138

1250
BOOKS OF QUALITY

SELECT LIBRARY

Big, Popular Standards

Price, Fifteen Cents



This line is truly named. It is Select because each title in it has been selected with great care from among hundreds of books by well-known authors.

A glance over the following list will show the names of Mary J. Holmes, Marie Corelli, Rider Haggard, "The Duchess," R. D. Blackmore, and translations of some of the more famous French authors like Victor Hugo, and Alphonse Daudet.

If you are looking for books which will add to your knowledge of literature, a complete set of the Select Library which is so reasonably priced will do more for you than a like amount expended on ordinary fiction between cloth covers.

ALL TITLES ALWAYS IN PRINT

-
-
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1—Cousin Maude | By Mary J. Holmes |
| 2—Rosamond Leyton | By Mary J. Holmes |
| 6—Beulah | By Augusta J. Evans |
| 10—The Homestead on the Hillside..... | By Mary J. Holmes |
| 14—East Lynne | By Mrs. Henry Wood |
| 16—A Romance of Two Worlds..... | By Marie Corelli |
| 17—Cleopatra | By H. Rider Haggard |
| 18—Maggie Miller | By Mary J. Holmes |
| 27—Under Two Flags..... | By "Ouida" |
| 28—Dora Deane | By Mary J. Holmes |
| 29—Ardath. Vol. I..... | By Marie Corelli |
| 30—Ardath. Vol. II..... | By Marie Corelli |
| 31—The Light That Failed..... | By Rudyard Kipling |
| 32—Tempest and Sunshine | By Mary J. Holmes |
| 35—Inez..... | By Augusta J. Evans |

SELECT LIBRARY

- 36—PhyllisBy "The Duchess"
 42—Vendetta.....By Marie Corelli
 43—Sapho.....By Alphonse Daudet
 44—Lena RiversBy Mary J. Holmes
 48—MeadowbrookBy Mary J. Holmes
 50—Won by Waiting.....By Edna Lyall
 51—CamilleBy Alexandre Dumas
 53—Uncle Tom's Cabin.....By Harriet Beecher Stowe
 54—The English OrphansBy Mary J. Holmes
 57—Ethelyn's Mistake.....By Mary J. Holmes
 58—Treasure Island.....By Robert Louis Stevenson
 59—Mildred TrevanionBy "The Duchess"
 60—Dead Man's Rock.....By "Q." (A. T. Quiller-Couch)
 61—The Iron Pirate.....By Max Pemberton
 62—Molly BawnBy "The Duchess"
 63—Lorna Doone.....By R. D. Blackmore
 66—Airy Fairy LilianBy "The Duchess"
 67—The Cruise of the "Cachalot".....By Frank T. Bullen
 69—The Last Days of Pompeii.....By Sir Bulwer Lytton
 71—The DuchessBy "The Duchess"
 72—Plain Tales From the Hills.....By Rudyard Kipling
 75—SheBy H. Rider Haggard
 76—BeatriceBy H. Rider Haggard
 77—Eric Brighteyes.....By H. Rider Haggard
 78—Beyond the City.....By A. Conan Doyle
 79—RossmoyneBy "The Duchess"
 80—King Solomon's Mines.....By H. Rider Haggard
 81—She's All the World to Me.....By Hall Caine
 83—Kidnaped.....By Robert Louis Stevenson
 84—UndercurrentsBy "The Duchess"
 87—The House on the Marsh.....By Florence Warden
 88—The Witch's Head.....By H. Rider Haggard
 89—A Perilous Secret.....By Charles Reade
 93—Beauty's DaughtersBy "The Duchess"
 100—Led Astray.....By Octave Feuillet
 102—MarvelBy "The Duchess"
 107—The Visits of Elizabeth.....By Elinor Glyn
 108—Allan Quatermain.....By H. Rider Haggard
 110—Soldiers Three.....By Rudyard Kipling
 113—A Living Lie.....By Paul Bourget
 114—PortiaBy "The Duchess"
 117—John Halifax, Gentleman.....By Miss Mulock
 118—The Tragedy in the Rue de la Paix.....By Adolphe Belot
 119—A Princess of Thule.....By William Black
 122—DorisBy "The Duchess"
 123—Carmen and Colomba.....By Prosper Merimee
 125—The Master of Ballantrae.....By Robert Louis Stevenson
 126—The Toilers of the Sea.....By Victor Hugo
 127—Mrs. GeoffreyBy "The Duchess"
 128—Jack's Courtship.....By W. Clark Russell

Guy Earls court's Wife

OR,

Wedded Yet No Wife

BY

MAY AGNES FLEMING

AUTHOR OF

"A Wonderful Woman," "Silent and True," "Norine's Revenge,"
"Carried by Storm," and many other ideal romances
of American life.



STREET & SMITH CORPORATION

PUBLISHERS

79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York

Copyright, 1872
By G. W. Carleton & Co.

Copyright, 1900
By Maude A. Fleming
Guy Earls court's Wife

(Printed in the United States of America)

GUY EARLSCOURT'S WIFE.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

DUKE MASON'S ADVENTURE.

Duke Mason had lost his way.

There could be no doubt about it. As he paused in perplexity and gazed around him, five struck sharply from the distant Speckhaven churches, clearly heard through the still, frosty air, and at five-ten the express train from London left Speckhaven station. Only ten minutes to spare, and completely lost and bewildered, a stranger in Lincolnshire, and with not a notion of whereabouts he might be now.

Mr. Mason paused with a face of disgust at his own stupidity and looked about him. Westward lay the fens and marshes, melting drearily away into the low, gray sky; eastward spread the wide sea, a bleak blast sweeping icily up, with all the chill of the German Ocean in its breath; and north and south, the dismal waste land stretched away treeless, houseless, unspeakably forlorn and deserted.

The month was March, the day the twenty-fifth. Was Duke Mason likely to forget the date of that memorable day, when he lost his way, and the romance of his life began?

For seven and twenty years his life had gone on, as flat, as dull, as uneventful as those flat marshes that lay on every side of him, as gray and colorless as yonder cold gray sea, and on this twenty-fifth of March, wending his way at his leisure, to catch the express train for London, and mistaking the road, an adventure so singular and romantic befell him as to almost atone for those hopelessly stupid and respectable seven-and-twenty years.

The short March day was darkening already. The yellow wintry sun had dropped out of sight down there behind the fens and sand hills; sky and sea were both of the same cold

gray, except where one long, yellow line westward marked the sombre sunset.

"It reminds one of Byron's poetry," thought Mr. Mason, who, being an artist in a very small way, had an eye for atmospheric effects; "lead-colored sea, melting into lead-colored sky—dull yellow glimmer westward. Flat marshes and wet fens, sea fog creeping up, and a solitary individual in foreground, gazing moodily at the creeping gloom. I've seen worse things on the line, in the academy, and hundreds of people agape with admiration, only, unhappily, this sort of thing is much more attractive in oil or water colors than in reality, at five o'clock of a cold March evening, without a house or a soul near, and just too late for the train. I wonder where I am. I'll try on a little way, and find out, if I can, without going round to the town."

Mr. Mason gave up contemplating the general Byronic aspect of the scene, and went forward on his lonely road.

He was mounting the rising ground now, and in ten minutes more stopped again and knew exactly where he was.

"The Grange, by all that's mysterious!" he exclaimed, aloud; "and five miles from the station if an inch. What an ass I must have been, to be sure, to take the wrong turning, when I've been along here fifty times during the last fortnight."

It looked like the end of the world. A high stone wall rose up abruptly, barring all further progress—two massive stone gates frowned darkly on all observers. Within rose the waving trees of a park, and in their midst you caught sight of tall chimneys and the peaked gables of a red-brick mansion.

Duke Mason had come upon the Grange in the spectral twilight of the March day, and the Grange was that most awful habitation, "a haunted house."

It was a weird scene and hour. He was, perhaps, as matter-of-fact and unimaginative a young man as you will easily find, but Duke's skin turned to "goose flesh" as he stood and thought of the awful stories he had heard of vonder solitary mansion among the trees.

It was so deathfully still—it was like the enchanted castle of the Sleeping Beauty, only far more grim, else the handsome young prince had never summoned up courage to enter; it was like a huge mausoleum; no smoke cured up from the great twisted chimneys, no dog barked no sound but the moaning of the wind among the trees, broke the ghastly silence.

"And yet people eat, and drink, and sleep there," mused Mr. Mason; "and it's more dismal and more dead than the

tomb of the Pharaohs. And they say there's a lady shut up there as lovely as all the houris of Mahomet's paradise. If a fellow could only get in there now and see for himself."

The place was known as Lyndith Grange, and like sweet Thomas Hood's "Haunted House," lay

"Under some prodigious ban of excommunication"

Two hundred odd years ago there dwelt in yonder silent mansion a fierce old warrior, who had brought home to the Grange a pale, pensive young bride, as fair as a lily and almost as drooping. Inside those walls the honeymoon had been spent, and then Sir Malise went forth to fight for his king, and the pale bride was left alone. And then the legend ran of a fair-haired, handsome cavalier, who made his way through the ponderous doors, of a servant's betrayal, of a fiery husband returning full of jealous wrath, of a duel to the death in one of those oaken rooms, and of the handsome cavalier falling with a sword thrust through the heart at the frantic lady's feet—of a mad woman shut up to shriek her miserable life away in those same dismal rooms, and of a stern old general who fell at the head of his men. And the fair-haired cavalier, and the lady with the wild, streaming hair and woeful face, haunted (said the legend) Lyndith Grange to the present day. No one lived in the place long, for certain, whether it was the ghosts, or the damp, or the loneliness that drove them away, and things gradually fell to decay, and the Lyndith family left the Grange to the rats and the spectres and its own bad name, for many and many a long year.

But two years before this especial evening upon which Mr. Mason stands and scrutinizes it, the neighborhood town of Speckhaven was thrown into commotion by the news that the Grange was occupied at last.

Furniture had come down from London—two servants—a hard-featured old woman and a stolid boy, had purchased things in the town and brought them to the Grange. And in the silvery dusk of a May evening a tall gentleman—dark and grim—had been driven with a slender lady, closely veiled, to the haunted house from the Speckhaven station.

After that, for three or four weeks, no more was known of those mysterious people or their doings. They were still at the Grange, but no one visited them; their very names were unknown, the great gates were always locked and bolted, and the hard-featured old woman and stolid boy kept their master's secrets well and told no tales.

One stormy June night, as Dr. Worth sat in his parlor in the bosom of his family, slipped and dressing-gowned

thanking his gods that the work of that day was ended, there came such a thundering knock at the front door, and directly after such a peal at the office bell, as made the chief physician of Speekhaven spring to his feet and grin something suspiciously like an oath between his teeth.

"It's a lady took sudden and uncommon bad," his servant announced, "which the gentleman says his carriage is at the door, and you're to come immediate, if you please, sir."

Dr. Worth groaned; the rain was pouring, the night was dark as the regions of Pluto, and his ten o'clock glass of punch stood there untasted, and his bed all ready. In five minutes, coated and hatted, he joined the gentleman waiting in the passage. He had declined to enter.

"Who's the lady, sir?" brusquely demanded Dr. Worth. "No patient of mine, I know. And what's the matter?"

"For Heaven's sake, don't stop to talk now!" exclaimed the gentleman. "We've five miles to go, and the road is beastly. I'll tell you as we drive along."

The doctor hastened after him to the carriage—a handsome landau and pair—and the driver whirled them off directly. Only once during that night drive, through the pouring rain and inky darkness, did the stranger open his lips.

"We are going to Lyndith Grange; and the case is what you medical men call an interesting one, I believe. I have only one request to make; that is, that you will talk of this matter as little as possible. I will double, treble, quadruple your fee." And then silence fell.

They reached the Grange—the ponderous gates flew open—they whirled up a long avenue and stopped. A minute later and the doctor, at the heels of his leader, was traversing draughty corridors and endless suites of dreary rooms. At the door of an apartment, in a long, chill hall, the mysterious gentleman halted.

"Your patient is here, doctor," he said, impressively. "Use all your skill to-night. Remember, the lady must be saved!"

And then he held the door open for the doctor to enter, closing it immediately, and Dr. Worth found himself in a vast room, all oak flooring, oak paneling, massive old furniture, and a huge, curtained bed in the center of the room, big enough and gloomy enough for a sarcophagus. A wood fire burned in one of the tiled fireplaces—a couple of wax candles made specks of light in the darkness, and the hard-featured old woman sat in a chair, sewing on little garments by the wan light.

At half-past ten Dr. Worth entered that room. At half-past two he left it. The old woman held a female infant

this time, in her arms, and during all those hours the Speekhaven doctor had never once seen the face of his patient. The heavy silken curtains shaded her in deepest gloom, and her face had been persistently turned from him and buried in the pillows.

She seemed very young—on the delicate left hand a wedding ring shone, masses of golden hair fell, like a veil, over her—the voice in which once or twice she answered him was sweet and fresh—beyond that all was guesswork.

The man, still hatted and overcoated, was pacing up and down the long hall when the doctor came forth.

"Well?" he asked, in a voice of suppressed intensity.

"Well," replied Dr. Worth, rather shortly, "it is well. The lady's 'as well as can be expected,' and the baby's about the size of a full-grown wax doll."

"And she is sure to live?"

"That depends upon which 'she' you mean. They're both shes. If you mean the lady——"

"The lady, of course!" said the gentleman, angrily and haughtily.

"The lady's all right, then, with common care, but I wouldn't like to stake my reputation upon the baby's existence. I'll return to-morrow, of course, and——"

"And, with all deference to you, sir, you'll do nothing of the sort. You'll return no more. Here's your fee—I think you'll find it ample. My man will drive you back to town, and the less you say of this night's work the better."

In another half hour the Speekhaven doctor was again in the bosom of his family, the richer by fifty guineas for his four hours' work.

And just two weeks later the mysterious inhabitants of the Grange vanished as suddenly and strangely as they had come, and the old house was given over again to the murdered cavalier and mad lady.

For nearly two years, and then again, as unexpectedly as before, a tall gentleman came down by the London train, bringing a slim, veiled lady and same two servants back. The gentleman left the lady and returned by the next train, and who they might be, and whether they were the same, and what they could mean by such unaccountable goings on, all was conjecture in the town of Speekhaven. This was two months before this twenty-fifth of March on which Duke Mason stands and gazes, and no one had penetrated the secret, or seen the lady yet.

As he stood there in the gloaming, he heard, for the first time, voices and footsteps within. His heart gave a leap.

10 What Duke Mason Saw and Heard.

The footsteps were fast approaching, the voices drawing near, carriage wheels ground over the graveled avenue.

The sound of bolts withdrawing, of a key turning slowly in a rusty lock, warned the listener. Duke Mason darted behind one of the huge buttresses of the falling darkness screening him as well. He could see quite plainly, himself unobserved.

A heavy-featured groom drove out in a two-wheeled chaise, and an elderly, thin-faced woman stood looking after him, and swinging a huge key.

"Look here, Joseph," she said, "I wish you'd lock the gate, and take the key with you; I've the master's dinner to get, and you know how particular he is, and it's nigh on a quarter of a mile's walk down here from the house, and it's no good fetchin' me down again when you're coming back. Just lock the gate on the outside, Joseph, will you, and take the key along?"

She inserted the key on the outside, and hurried rapidly up the avenue out of the cold, shutting the gate before she went. Joseph looked stolidly at the closed gate.

"I've left it unlocked afore, and no harm came of it, and I arn't going to get down now. If there never was a lock on this old rat trap, people would run a mile sooner than venture in, and wery right they is. I'll be back in an hour, and arn't goin' to get out to do it, and save your old bones, Mother Grimshaw."

With which Joseph gathered up the reins, and gave the horse his head, and trotted off.

Duke Mason emerged, his breath fairly taken away with surprise and delight.

At last! There stood the gates unlocked and unbolted, and the way to the hidden princess was clear. He drew the key from the keyhole, opened the massive gate cautiously, drew it after him again, and in the chill gray of the March evening stood within the grounds of the Grange.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT DUKE MASON SAW AND HEARD.

Grasping his walking-stick a little tighter, Mr. Mason made his way up the gloomy avenue of firs. It was quite dark now, and the very "blackness of darkness" reigned in this most gloomy drive. There would be a moon presently; pending its rising, the gloom of Tartarus reigned. It was just a quarter of a mile to the house. Five minutes' chary

What Duke Mason Saw and Heard. 11

walking brought him to it, looming up a blacker, bulkier shadow among the shadows. A long, low, irregular mansion, much inclined to run to chimneys and gables and turrets, with small leaden casements, and two lamps burning over the portico entrance.

Through one of the windows Mason saw a picture that haunted him in his sleeping and waking dreams his life long. A long, low room, oak paneled, oak floored, with here and there rich rugs covering its slippery blackness, faded tapestry on the walls, tapestry wrought centuries ago by many a fair Alice and Edith of the Lyndith race, massive furniture, rickety with time, a wood fire blazing cheerily on the hearth, the only cheery thing in the apartment, and a little cottage piano in a corner, standing open, with music upon it, as if the performer had but lately left.

"A very charming bit of still life, after Watteau," thought the spectator; "a very pretty interior, indeed. Now, if the *dramatis personae* would but appear!"

The thought had barely crossed his mind when, as if it had evoked her, the door opened, and a young lady came in. Duke gave a gasp.

Here was the sleeping beauty, the hidden princess, the mysterious houri of the haunted house, herself.

"And, by Jove! a beauty of the first water!" thought Duke, with as near an approach to enthusiasm as was in his nature; "the best-looking young woman I've seen this month & Sundays."

Mr. Mason was right—she was very pretty—very pretty, indeed. A petite figure, slim, youthful, supple, two great, dark eyes, that lit up her small face like dusk stars, a profusion of waving yellow hair, that fell in a shining shower to her waist.

A dress of wine-colored silk trailed behind her, diamonds twinkled in her ears and on her hands, and in the firelight she made a picture so dazzling that Duke gazed breathless, bewitched.

She went up to the mantel, a tall structure of black marble, and leaning lightly against it, looked steadfastly into the red flame. Her clasped hands hung loosely before her, the willowy figure drooped, the straight, black brows were bent, the mouth compressed, the whole attitude, the whole expression, full of weary, hopeless pain.

For nearly ten minutes the young lady stood without moving, still gazing with knit brows into the leaping firelight. Then, with a long, heart-ick sigh, she started, crossed the room once or twice, always lost in deep and painful thought, then suddenly seated herself at the piano and began to sing.

12 What Duke Mason Saw and Heard.

Then, more suddenly than she had sat down, she arose, her whole face working, and held out her arms with a suppressed sob.

"Robert!" she cried, "oh, my Robert! my Robert! come back!"

Just at that instant the rapid roll of wheels outside told Duke the chaise was returning. An instant later, and the gates were flung wide open, and the chaise whirled rapidly up the drive to the house.

"I wonder what he thought when he found the key gone!" reflected Mr. Mason, with a chuckle.

The chaise stopped before the portico entrance, and, by the light of the lamps, the watcher saw a tall man spring out, say a few words rapidly and authoritatively, as one accustomed to command, and disappear into the house. The carriage was driven round to the rear, and silence fell upon Lyndith Grange.

The young lady in the lighted room had heard, and seen, too. When Duke looked again, her whole attitude had changed. She stood erect, her little figure seeming to dilate and grow tall, her head thrown back, her great eyes alight, her small hands tightly clenched.

That moment the door was flung open, and the gentleman entered. A tall gentleman, elderly and stout, and florid and good-looking, with a great profusion of whiskers and iron-gray hair. A gentleman as grim and stern as Lyndith Grange itself, who gave the young lady a cool glance, a cool nod, and a cool greeting.

"How do, Olivia? How do you find yourself to-night? Any change for the better since I saw you last, two weeks ago?"

"I will never go back to town on your terms, Uncle Geoffrey!" she said, her voice trembling with excitement. "Never! never! I can live here—I can die here, if you will, but I'll never yield! I only wish I could die, but I live on, and on, with all that makes life worth living for gone." Her lips trembled, her voice died away.

The man looked at her with a sneering smile.

"Which, translated, means Robert Lisle is gone, and after him the deluge. I wonder you like to allude to him, my dear. Disgrace has rarely come to people of your blood, and such disgrace as you have brought upon us rarely comes to any family. You will not yield. May I ask what you mean to do?"

"Disgrace!" repeated the girl, with sullen anger; "you needn't use that word quite so often, I think. I'll not marry

What Duke Mason Saw and Heard. 13

Sir Vane Charteris, if that's what you mean. I'll not! I'll die first!"

Mr. Lyndith looked at her, as a man might look at a headstrong child resisting with all its small might.

"You'll die first! My poor, little, romantic Livey! It's so easy to say that—so very hard to do. But I don't think you'll kill yourself. Life is very sweet to young persons of nineteen, even though they have lost their Robert——"

The girl started up, goaded to a sort of frenzy.

"Uncle Geoffrey, do you want to drive me mad? Don't go too far! I warn you, it is not safe! Ah, Heaven have pity, for there is none on earth!"

She broke out into such a wild storm of hysterical sobbing that the man she addressed was really a little startled. Only a little, for he knew women very well; and he knew when the tears and the sobs come, they were by no means at their most dangerous.

Geoffrey Lyndith stretched out his hand and touched her. She shook it off as though it had been a viper.

"Don't touch me!" she cried; "don't speak to me! You have been the cruelest guardian, the most unfeeling uncle that ever lived. You say my father was a hard man. Perhaps so; but he never would have broken my heart, and driven me to despair, as you have done!"

"Your father would have broken Robert Lisle's head!" retorted her uncle, coolly. "He would have shot him like a dog, as he was; and instead of bearing with your rebellious humors, as I have done, he would have made you marry Sir Vane Charteris months ago. Take care, Olivia, that you do not weary even my patience and forbearance! Take care I do not force you to obey!"

"You cannot!"

"That remains to be seen. What is to hinder my fetching Sir Vane and a clergyman down here, and marrying you out of hand?"

"No clergyman would perform such a marriage."

"The Rev. George Lottus would. He owes me his living, and he understands this case exactly, and knows I am but obeying your late father's instructions. I give you one more week, Olivia. If your reason has not returned by that time, we will try what a little wholesome coercion will do. Once married, these whims and vapors of yours will end. You will like Sir Vane—women always like their husbands after marriage, you know, and I dare say you'll be a very sensible wife, as wives go, yet. I'm going down to dinner now." He pulled out his watch. "Will you take my arm, Miss Lyndith?"

"No, I want no dinner."

"As you please. Think matters over, my dear, and, for pity's sake, do try to be calm, and drop melodrama. Give me your promise, and I will fetch you back to town to-morrow. We Lyndiths always keep our word."

He left the room as he spoke. The girl crossed to the window, wringing her hands in frantic, helpless, despairing appeal.

"Oh!" she cried, "is there no help in all heaven and earth for me?"

She was standing close by one of the windows, and the passionate prayer was scarcely uttered before it was answered.

A man's face looked at her through the glass—a man's voice spoke.

"Don't be alarmed," said the voice, as the man pulled off his hat. "I'll help you, if you'll only tell me how!"

CHAPTER III.

MR. MASON ELOPES.

The young girl recoiled, as she very well might, from so unexpected an apparition, and gazed at the stranger with large, frightened eyes.

"Don't be alarmed, madam," Mr. Mason repeated, with the greatest respect; "I am a friend, if you will permit me to say so. An hour ago, chancing to pass your gates, and finding them, for a wonder, unlocked, curiosity prompted me to enter. I concealed myself in yonder tree—quite unpardonable on my part, I know; but, again, strong curiosity must plead my excuse. And in that tree I must own I played eavesdropper. I have overheard every word of your conversation with the gentleman who has just left this room. It looks rather suspicious, apparently, I own; but really the conversation, the whole occurrence has been so strange, so out of the usual course, that singularity must plead my pardon. As I said before—now that I am here—if I can be of the slightest use to you, madam, pray command me."

And Mr. Mason paused for breath. He was not long-winded as a rule, didn't in the least shine in conversation, and lo! here he was breaking forth, an orator. Dire necessities demand stringent measures.

Mr. Mason rose with the occasion, and was eloquent!

The young lady listened and looked at him, still surprised, still doubtful.

"I am a stranger here," pursued Duke. "I came from London two weeks ago, to visit an old friend residing in Speckhaven. To-night I was to have returned home, and thinking of something else, took the wrong turning at the crossroads, and found myself here. I am an intruder, I know, and have no business whatever on the premises, but again I repeat: Being here, if I can be of any use to you——"

She drew near, her lips apart, her eyes shining, her hands clasped.

"You will help me! I want to escape. I am a prisoner here. Oh! surely you are not deceiving me! You are not an emissary of Mr. Lyndith or Sir Vane Quarteris!"

"Madam, until within the last half hour, I never knew those two gentlemen were in existence. I will help you in any way you may please to name."

There was no doubting the sincerity of his tone. Still, the mysterious young lady gazed at him, as if to read his heart in his face. Poor Duke! it wasn't at all a handsome face. His eyes were of the palest, most insipid sky-blue—his nose was a decided snub, his whiskers were sparse, and wont to crop up in a variety of pale-yellow and dull-red stubble, that surprised even himself. The most sentimental schoolgirl could not for the life of her make a hero of Marmaduke Mason, but the silliest schoolgirl of them all might have trusted him, as she could have dared to trust few of his sex.

It was an honest face, and the clear eyes searching it knew they might trust him. She leaned forward to him through the half-open window. The moon, rising, now gleamed forth from a bank of jagged clouds, and silvered the sweet, pale face.

"Will you help me to escape?" she whispered, earnestly. "I am a prisoner here—I have been for the last two months. My uncle is my guardian, and he wants me to marry a man I hate—I hate!" She set her little teeth, and the big, black eyes flashed. "I will run away to-night, if you will help me."

"I will help you. Tell me what I am to do?"

"How did you say you got in? The gates are always locked and bolted."

"They were not this evening. The servant who drove to the station thought it too much trouble to descend and lock them after him. It appears he is in the habit of leaving them unfastened, and no harm has ever come of it. I was in hiding; the moment he left I drew the key from the

lock—here it is—and came in. I don't know what he said or did, I'm sure, when he came back and found it gone."

"Then there is nothing to prevent my escaping. Oh, thank Heaven! I believe I should go mad if kept another week here. But it is so much to ask of you, a stranger, to do what I want."

"Not one whit too much. Please don't think of me. What am I to do?"

The girl glanced anxiously over her shoulder.

"If you are seen, I don't know what may happen. Mr. Lyndith is—oh! an awful man! and he will return here directly. He is going to stay all night, and the doors and windows will be made fast in an hour. If I get away at all it will be midnight fully before I dare venture. And in the meantime——" She looked at him more anxiously.

"Yes, Miss Lyndith. I beg your pardon, but I heard him call you that, you know."

"My name is Olivia Lyndith. But between this and midnight—and it is only seven o'clock now—oh, Mr. ——"

"Mason, Miss Lyndith."

"Mr. Mason, how will you manage? These March nights are so cold, and five long, lonely, freezing hours! No, it is too much!"

She clasped her hands and looked at him in despair. Duke smiled.

"Please don't think of me, Miss Lyndith. I will wait with all the pleasure in life. I don't mind it—upon my word and honor, I don't! I like it—yes I do—it's an adventure, you see, and I never had an adventure before in the whole course of my existence. I will go back to my friend, the elm tree, and wait for midnight and you. May I ask how you propose getting out?"

"Through this window. Oh! how kind, how good you are, sir, and I am quite friendless and alone here! These windows are secured by bolts on the inside. I can easily draw them, lift the window, and jump out. Oh, Mr. Mason, go—quick, for pity's sake. My uncle is here!"

She sprang back from the window. Duke made for his tree. Just as he regained his roost the door opened, and Mr. Lyndith, looking less grim and more humanized, as the most savage of men, I notice, are apt to do after dinner, came in.

The young lady had flung herself into his armchair before the fire. She arose sullenly at his entrance.

"One moment, Miss Lyndith," he said. "Will you return with me to-morrow to London?"

"Yes, decidedly."

As the promised wife of Sir Vane Charteris?"

"No!"

"Then you prefer remaining a prisoner indefinitely?"

"I prefer anything to marrying Sir Vane Charteris. Good-night, Uncle Geoffrey."

"But, Olivia——"

"Good-night!" Olivia said, with a flash of her great, black eyes; and with the words she was gone.

And Duke waited outside. One by one the minutes told off on his dial-plate; slowly the crystal moon swam up the purple sky; brightly burned the frosty stars, and slowly, from head to foot, the watcher grew benumbed. Most lugubrious, most unearthly, wailed and moaned the wind through the trees; in the dead silence he could hear the dull roar of the surf six miles away. Would midnight, would Miss Lyndith, never come?

Yes. At half-past eleven exactly he heard the cautious withdrawal of the window bolts. With an inward thanksgiving, and all cramped and stiff, Duke got down from the tree, and approached. Yes; there she stood, the moonlight shining on her pale face and starry eyes. She wore a cloak and hood, and held a veil in her hand. She motioned him to silence, opened the window, and drew herself carefully through the narrow aperture. The distance was not five feet, but Duke lifted her gently down before she could spring. Her teeth were chattering, partly with cold, partly with nervous terror.

"Come on!"

He drew her hand within his arm—it was no time for ceremony, no time for standing on degree—and hurried with her down the avenue. They never spoke. The gates were secured by massive bolts. Duke shot them back easily, and she stood on the moonlit highroad—free.

"Thank Heaven!" he heard her whisper, as she glanced back, with a shudder, at the gloomy pile. "I will never go back alive."

She took his arm again, and they hastened rapidly on. Excitement lent them strength and speed—perhaps neither had ever walked in their lives as they did that night. They were dead silent by the way—both were breathless.

They reached the town as the Speckhaven clocks were striking the quarter after midnight. It lay still in the moonlight—solemnly still—white and cold. They hurried through its quiet streets, not meeting half-a-dozen people until they had left it behind.

The station stood, as it is in the nature of stations to stand, in a dreary track of waste land, on the outskirts of

the town. At half-past twelve they reached it. One or two officials, with blue noses and sleepy eyes, stared at them stolidly. The next train for London was a slow train; and it would pass at two-fifteen. Nearly two hours to wait! She sank down in a seat, exhausted—white as a spirit. Duke left her by the fire, and went in search of refreshments; but at that hour there was nothing to be had. He returned to tell her so, with a disappointed face, and, to his surprise, she looked up at him with great tears shining in the dusky eyes, and took his hand in both her own.

"How good you are?" she said. "How good! how good! How can I ever thank you, Mr. Mason?"

Mr. Mason had, like all his sex—devoid of little weaknesses of any sort, themselves—a strong aversion to scenes. He turned very red, and drew his hand away, as if those soft fingers burned him—muttering something incoherent about "not mentioning it—taking a little nap in her chair before the train came."

"Wait a minute," she said; "we don't know what may happen! I may be followed, and brought back in spite of you; and some day I may need a kind friend's help again. Take this ring; it is worth a great deal. Oh, you must—and keep it for my sake. Give me your London address, now that we have time, and whether we get safe to Paris or not. Some day I may seek your help again; and if I ever need you, you will come?"

"I will come," he said, simply.

He gave her the address, No. 50 Half-Moon Terrace, Bloomsbury, and she wrote it in a little pocketbook. The ring she had forced upon him blazed in his hand like a glowing coal. It was an opal, curiously set in dead gold—most sinister and beautiful of stones.

"Thank you, Mr. Mason," she repeated, looking gratefully up with those wonderful black eyes. "I will never forget your kindness while I live. And now I will try to rest until the train comes."

She sank down in her chair before the fire, shading her face with one hand, and Duke left her, and paced up and down the platform. How the moments lagged—it was worse than waiting in the tree. Once in motion, and Speckhaven in the distance, he could feel almost safe—not before.

"Poor little thing!" he thought; "poor little, pretty, young lady! What a brute that uncle must be to persecute and imprison such a helpless, tender creature, and what a lucky fellow that Robert is!"

One! pealed from the station clock. An hour and fifteen minutes yet to wait, and every second precious. Half-past

one!—two!—Duke's heart was beating thick and fast with suspense. Fifteen minutes more—he would go and see if she slept—poor child. He turned to go—stopped short—his heart stopped, too, for carriage wheels were flying through the silent streets, straight along to the station. Nearer, nearer! A sudden stop—a man leaped out and strode straight to the waiting-room. He heard a low, wordless cry within that told him all. Then, with clenched fists and a ferocious feeling in his usually peaceful breast, he made for the waiting-room, and looming up black—stern—grim—awful—he confronted Mr. Geoffrey Lyndith.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE WAITING-ROOM.

It was a decidedly striking scene—that sudden appearance of Mr. Geoffrey Lyndith in the waiting-room of the Speckhaven station.

Duke, regarding it from the doorway, thought so. Mr. Mason, by profession, was a scene-painter to the Royal Waterloo Britannia Theatre, and, viewing the tableau in a purely professional light, he decided it would be rather a strong finish for a scene on the boards.

The young lady had arisen, and stood facing her guardian. Her small, dark face, always colorless, was blanched to a dull, dead white now, but the large, dauntless, dark eyes met his full—defiant. She gave one swift, sidelong glance to where Duke stood, and made a rapid and almost imperceptible motion for him to remain there.

Mr. Lyndith from his entrance never noticed him, though his glance scanned the bleak apartment in search of any one who might be his runaway niece's companion. He came up close to her, grim as an Egyptian death's-head.

"What does this mean, Olivia?"

She looked at him and laughed, a hard, bitter laugh enough.

"I think it is pretty plain, Uncle Geoffrey. I am trying to run away. In fifteen minutes more I should have succeeded, too. Why have you followed me, Mr. Lyndith?"

"Rather an insolent question, I think, and an unnecessary one, too."

"For its insolence I don't know—of its necessity I am very sure. Why have you taken the trouble to follow me? You certainly don't expect I shall go back?"

They were strikingly like each other, as they stood there,

a red, sullen glow of anger burning deep in their eyes, the young girl's handsome, resolute lips compressed. The man knew her well, and knew that the hour had come when he must play his last card. He did not answer her last defiant remark; he asked a question, very quietly:

"Are you alone, Olivia?"

"Who is likely to be my companion?" she answered, recklessly. "What friend have I—thanks to you—who is there in the world to be my companion in any of my rebellious flights? I stand here as I stand on earth—alone—Heaven help me!"

Her voice broke a little. With a passionate gesture she turned away and looked into the fire. Mr. Lyndith regarded her in stony calm.

"May I ask your present intentions, Olivia? It would be a pity for us to misunderstand each other in the least."

"I am going to Paris," she answered, her reckless manner returning. "Madame la Comtesse de Florial was my mother's friend. She will protect and shelter me."

"She will not defy your guardian. A Frenchwoman brought up as Madame de Florial has been would be the very last on earth to countenance a young, unmarried girl in such insubordination as yours, Olivia; and if it were otherwise, I have law and right on my side. Remember, I am your guardian!"

"You are my tyrant—my jailer! I will never go back to the Grange—never, so help me Heaven!"

She raised her arm with a gesture worthy Rachel herself. Mr. Mason, in the doorway, contemplated her admiringly.

"There is a court of appeal for such as I, even in England. To that orphan's tribunal I will go, and we will see whether you are to be an Eastern despot, and I your slave, or not. In fifteen minutes the London train will be here; in fifteen minutes I leave Speckhaven forever. I will not go back, Geoffrey Lyndith!"

He drew out his watch and looked at it, replaced it, and came closer to his niece.

"Very well, Olivia, it shall be as you say; only I cannot permit you to travel alone; I will at least accompany you, and, instead of flying to Paris, you shall return with me to Park lane. Such an escapade as that you propose is something more than preposterous—a young lady of your position, my dear, running about England and France alone! You will come home with me, and you will listen to reason, and marry Sir Vane Charteris in April, and go back with him to Vienna. Hear me out, please. You once told me you would, on one condition. That condition at the time I re-

fused to comply with. I withdraw my refusal to-night. Promise to marry Sir Vane, and I will take you straight to-night to—it!"

She started up, with the gesture Duke had seen before—her hands clasped, her eyes dilating and lighting, her lips breathless and apart.

"Uncle Geoffrey—you will?"

"I will."

"It still lives, then, and—is well—happy?"

Mr. Lyndith smiled grimly.

"It still lives; it is well, I believe, and as happy as young persons of one year and nine months usually are. You shall have it, to do with it as you please, only I hope, for the honor of the family, Miss Lyndith," he laid strong emphasis on the name, "that you will still continue to keep its maternity a secret. Upon my word, I don't know what Sir Vane would say or do if——"

Olivia Lyndith's black eyes flashed upon him with an almost savage light.

"Leave his name out of the question, if you please. This is your last card, I am aware; you have played it. Now suppose I still refuse?"

There was a whole world of scorn and defiance in the handsome, mutinous face of this girl of eighteen. She was trembling all over, partly with cold, partly with nervous excitement. Geoffrey Lyndith met her blazing eyes steadily, with a gaze cold, hard, inflexible.

"In that case you shall never see it, alive or dead. It shall be taken from the comfortable home in which it is now, and given over to the poorest kind I can discover. It shall be brought up in squalid poverty and vice, a creature, which, when it attains womanhood, you will be the first to shrink with horror from. That is all."

A more pallid hue came over the girl's pallid face—her very lips whitened to ashes.

"It will be a fate good enough for Robert Lisie's child. For you, Olivia—you are but eighteen—for three years more do as you will, say as you will, the law makes me your master. Your talk is nothing but talk—the only thing you can bring against me is that I try to carry out the conditions of your late father's will, and see you Lady Charteris upon your eighteenth birthday. You refuse—I have reason to fear you will run away and go to the bad, and, to prevent it, I fetch you down to my country-house and leave you there with two trusty servants. Your orphan's court will tell you I am doing my duty. And should you make **any such appeal**"—his face grew black and rigid as iron—

"I will tell to the world the whole story of the shameful past—how you, a child, scarce sixteen, ran away to Scotland with a yeoman's son—a thief, Miss Lyndith, caught in the very act—a fellow drowned, as he deserved to be, in his flight to America. The world shall know this charming story, though the honor of all the Lyndiths that ever lived go with it. You are very young, Olivia; you are very handsome—you are proud, and came of a proud race—how will it be with you then?"

All her high courage—only a frantic woman's courage at best—had given way under the lash of his scorpion tongue, under his resolute man's strength. She had covered her face with both hands—dry, hysterical sobs shook her. The excitement of the night, the cold, the desolation, were telling on her, as such things tell on her sex. Duke Mason's fists clenched—the desire to go and punch Mr. Lyndith's head was growing too great for human strength to bear.

"I am sorry to distress you, Olivia," her uncle said, after a very brief pause; "but, my poor, impulsive, headstrong child, it is for your own good. You must obey your dead father. You must marry the man he chose for you—you must submit to the inevitable. Let the disgraceful past be blotted out, become the wife of an honorable gentleman, and behave like a rational being. You can't suppose I want to drag the story of that dead boor's villainy, and your folly—to call it by no harsher term—before the light? I am your best friend, Olivia, though you may not think so. I don't want to ill-treat the little one, to visit the sins of her parents on her. She has been well treated and cared for since her birth, on my honor she has, and I will give her to you, to do with as you please, as soon as we return to town. I promise you this if you will promise to marry Sir Vane Charteris. There are eight minutes still before the train comes, I give you five of them to decide. Robert Lisle lies at the bottom of the Atlantic, and you must marry some time. Try and consider that, Olivia."

He turned and left her. Her hands dropped from before her face; she walked over to one of the windows, and looked out. There was a whole world of despair in the large, melancholy eyes; her arms hung listlessly by her side; she stood there alone, a very figure of desolation.

The brilliant midnight moon shone down with its ivory light; the dark, sandy waste glimmered in its beams. The wind of the cold March morning sighed eerily around the lonely building—without the dreariness, suiting the utter misery within. She sighed a long, shuddering, heart-sick sigh.

"He is right," she thought; "it is inevitable. Ah, Robert, my love, my husband, if I were only with you, under the dark Atlantic waves. But I must have your child—my baby—my darling, at any cost to myself. What does it matter what becomes of such a wretch as I am? If I must marry some one as he says, as well Sir Vane as another. I will go to St. George's in lace and orange blossoms, and be congratulated, and smile, and play the dreary play out. Oh, me, what a farce it all is, at the best, and I am so young, and life is so long—so long!"

She leaned against the window, and her thoughts went back to just such moonlight nights gone never to come again. Nights when he had been by her side, down in the leafy arcades of Lyndith Court, in far-away Staffordshire, and life had seemed more beautiful and blissful than a fairy tale, or an Arabian legend. Again she could see him, tall, strong, beautiful, with man's best beauty; again his arm was about her—again his voice in her ear.

"Be true to me, Olivia; trust me through all things—for better, for worse; and, as surely as heaven shines above us, I will come back to claim you."

And she had promised and——

"The five minutes have expired, Olivia," say the pitiless tones of Geoffrey Lyndith, close beside her; "is it to be yes or no?"

She turned around and lifted in the gaslight a face so deathlike, eyes so dim and lifeless, that even he shrank away.

"It is yes, Uncle Geoffrey, and may Heaven forgive you. I never will."

"You are hysterical, Olivia—I pardon your wild words. You promise, if I restore to you your child, to marry Sir Vane Charteris?"

"I promise!"

The words dropped like ice from her lips. He held out his hand, looking at her uneasily.

"It is a compact between us—you will keep your word, Olivia?"

She drew back from his extended hand with a gesture of indescribable repulsion.

"I will never shake hands with you again as long as I live, and will keep my word. Have you not said we Lyndiths always do that. I could tell you of a promise I made two years ago that I am breaking now, but you would say rash promises made to yeomen's sons are better broken than kept. Are you quite sure, Mr. Lyndith, you will keep your pledge to me?"

"On my sacred honor. And now I must send Joseph back to the Grange, and there will be barely time to get our tickets before the train comes."

He hastened out. Miss Lyndith at once crossed the waiting-room to where Duke Mason still stood unseen.

"I am going with my uncle," she said, hurriedly; "there is no alternative. Whatever happens, with all my heart I thank you."

She took his hand in both her own, and looked steadily up in his honest, homely face.

"You have a home, a wife, mother, sister, perhaps? Tell me."

"I have a home, such as it is, and a sister to keep it—yes."

The large, dark eyes still searched his face, the soft, patrician fingers still clasped his own.

"You have a good face, an honest face, and a kind, loyal heart, I know. If it is ever in your power, Mr. Mason, I wonder if you would aid me again?"

"As freely as I have aided you to-night, madam."

"Then—I have your address, you know—if I ever send for you—if I send for you soon—will you come to me, no matter how strange it may seem?"

"I will come!"

She lifted his hand and kissed it. Mr. Marmaduke Mason blushed crimson under his sallow skin, and absolutely tried to draw it away.

"Good gracious!" he thought, "if Rosanna could only see this."

"Don't let him see you; he may suspect, and I thank you with all my soul."

She left him. Mr. Lyndith strode in and went to the ticket-office, and on the instant the train came shrieking in.

"Come, Olivia."

He drew her rapidly with him into a first-class compartment. Duke modestly traveled second-class, and took his place, too.

There was a shriek, a clanging bell, and away the "resonant steam eagle" rushed through the blue English night, and Speckhaven lay like a place in a dream behind them. It was all over, and he was going back to London to the Royal Waterloo Britannia, to Bloomsbury, and Rosanna and his old, humdrum, commonplace life, and only the yellow gleam of the opal on his finger was left to remind him that his strange adventure of this night was not all a dream.

CHAPTER V.

ROBERT HAWKSLEY.

On the first of April, in the year of grace 1847, the steamship *Land of Columbia* sailed from New York to Liverpool, bearing many passengers to the British shores. The run was an uncommonly swift and pleasant one—not a single storm came to disturb them, or bring the demon of seasickness into their midst, from the time they steamed out of New York Bay, until they sighted the cliffs of Albion.

"You are the only 'heavy swell' we have had, my lord," the captain said to one of his passengers. "We have made the best run of the year. We will weigh anchor this evening in the Mersey."

"Well," the gentleman addressed made answer, "I am sorry to hear it. I never feel so much in my element as I do at sea. I believe an All-Wise Providence originally cut me out for an old salt, and by some mistake I was born Baron Montalien instead. It's the old story, captain; the round pegs go into the square holes, and *vice versa*. As a first-class seaman, I might have been of some use in my generation—as it is——" His lordship shrugged his shoulders, and sauntered away.

Nugent Horatio Earls court, Baron Montalien, had been making an American tour *incognito* as "Mr. Earls court" for the past nine months, and had almost enjoyed himself. He had hunted buffaloes, and had a shot or two at hostile bands of Indians, and found life a good deal less of a bore than he had done any time these last twenty years. He was fifty years old now, and there were many silver threads in his dark hair; he was unutterably patrician-looking, with the broad brow, the handsome, classical nose, the determined mouth, hereditary in his race.

Lord Montalien had drawn near a solitary figure, leaning against the bulwarks, and gazing with an intensity quite remarkable in the direction whence England lay, gazing so absorbed that he never heard the approaching footsteps.

"Here's that fellow Hawksley, now," the peer thought, with a sudden sense of injury; "how thoroughly in earnest he seems, how intensely anxious to get home! I suppose England is his home."

"Hawksley!" he laid his small, shapely hand—like a woman's—on the shoulder of the man who stood gazing at the sunlit sea and sky.

The man started. He was a young man, some five-and-twenty, perhaps, very tall, very fair, very good-looking. More than good-looking, with brilliant blue eyes, sapphire blue to their very depths; luxuriant chestnut beard and hair, and a fair English skin, tanned golden brown.

Among all his fellow-passengers across, the only one in whom Lord Montalien had deigned to take the slightest interest was this young man.

This young man, who wore a rough, shabby coat, a felt hat, and who was too poor to travel in the first cabin.

His name on the passenger list was Robert Hawksley; he was a returned Englishman, who had spent the last two years in roughing it in the Western States; and who, judging by appearances, had not made his fortune. Since he had come on board at New York, an intense, a sickening longing to reach England possessed him. He seemed unable either to eat or sleep. At night, when the midnight stars shone over the purple sea, he paced the deck, hour after hour, ever gazing toward where England lay, with a burning hunger of impatience in his eyes. He was a self-contained man, who said little to those about him, and this very reticence and quietude first drew the nobleman toward him. He sought to make no acquaintances—he was modest and unassuming to an unusual degree, and Lord Montalien, who kept sundry very wealthy fellow-passengers at a safe distance, and who knew every sailor on board by name, was on the most friendly footing with Robert Hawksley. If he had sought to force his confidence or companionship upon him, his lordship would have sent him to coventry in three minutes, but he never did. He talked to my lord, when my lord desired it, and if he were passed by unnoticed, he did not seem to care one whit. He was so thoroughly independent, and manly, and simple, that his grave dignity always commanded respect.

"Well, Mr. Hawksley," his lordship said, "we are almost there at last."

"At last!" The young man drew a long breath, a long, eager sigh.

"You say that as though we had been a month out, and yet we have had a remarkably speedy passage. You are very anxious to arrive?"

"Very anxious; the passage has been intolerably slow to me, and yet—and yet—perhaps, I had much better not have come at all."

"That depends. You have numbers of friends, no doubt, who will rejoice to greet you after two years' absence."

The young man looked at him with those wonderful blue eyes, and then away at the golden light on the sea.

"I have no friends, my lord—none. There is but one in all England who cares for me, and she must be either more or less than a friend."

"Oh! I see!—a 'lady in the case,' as they say in Irish duels. Then you come home for a bride; that is the cause of all this burning-impatience. My lad, I congratulate you—I remember being young once myself, and it was very nice. And, no doubt, the young lady counts the hours even more impatiently than you do."

"No!" said Robert Hawksley; "she does not even know I am coming."

"What! You did not write and tell her? You wish to give her a melodramatic surprise, I suppose?"

"I have never written to her, my lord. During the two years I have been roughing it out there on the prairies I have never had a line from her, nor from any one in England. She does not even know that I am alive. She is far above me, Lord Montalien, in rank, but two years ago she loved me."

"And you are going back, and you expect to find her unchanged," the nobleman said, with a compassionate smile.

Robert Hawksley looked at him with an angry flash of his blue eyes.

"She was my wife," he said, haughtily.

"Oh! your wife. Well, that's different, you see. A man may expect fidelity from his wife, with some show of reason. And you have never written to her in two years. Hasn't that been a little oversight on your part, my dear boy?"

"It would have been useless. I have told you, my lord, she is far above me in station, and her uncle, her guardian, would permit no letters of mine to reach her. I know him well enough for that."

"Indeed! Yours was a clandestine marriage, then. I take it?"

"It was. Poor child—I did wrong, I suppose—she was only sixteen, I twenty-two; she an heiress, and of as proud a family as any in England, and I—a nobody! But we loved each other, and for four months were happy—were in heaven."

"Then I don't say you have done so very badly with your life, after all," Lord Montalien remarked. "There are some of us who go through the world, and don't find four days—four hours of perfect bliss. And the flinty-hearted uncle wouldn't be reasonable, and accept the inevitable? He tore

his niece away, and you became an exile? And now you are going back—may I ask—why?”

“To claim my wife, in spite of him—to fetch her to America, if she will come. I can give her a home there—not such as she has been accustomed to, but if she loves me as she did, she will be happier with me in a cottage than without me in a palace.”

“If!” Lord Montalien repeated, half cynically, half sadly; “if she loves you as she did, Robert Hawksley. And she has had two years to forget you! Well, well. She is your wife; I will not say a word, and I hope—yes, my lad, I hope you will find her an exception to her sex, and true, and tender, and ready to fly with you to the uttermost ends of the earth. But, remember this, my boy,” his hand fell kindly on the young man’s shoulder—“if you ever need a friend, and I can help you, come to me. I never forget any one whom I once fancy, and I fancy you. Come to me, and command me in any way you please.”

He gave him a card, with his title, and “Montalien Priory, Lincolnshire, and Gaunt street, London,” engraved upon it, and sauntered away.

Early next day the passengers of the *Land of Columbia* were safely in Liverpool. Lord Montalien shook hands with Robert Hawksley on the quay, without one tinge of condescension or patronage.

“Remember, Hawksley, if I can ever be of service to you, come to me. I will help you if I can.”

And Mr. Hawksley had said, “Thank you, my lord; I will remember.” And so they had parted, and how was either to dream that that promise involved the future lives of the two dearest to them both?

There was an hour to spare before the train by which the young man meant to travel to London would start. He turned into a coffeehouse, ordered his breakfast, and while he waited, took up a greasy paper, lying on the table. It was a copy of the *London Morning Post* three days old, but the returned Englishman, to whom English papers were as rare as angels’ visits, read it with avidity. He was reading the fashionable intelligence, who were party-going, party-giving, who was presented at the last drawing-room, who were being married, and to whom. And in this list he came upon the following paragraph:

“The marriage of Sir Vane Charteris, secretary of legation to Vienna, to Miss Olivia Lyndith, of Lyndith Court, Staffordshire, niece of Geoffrey Lyndith, Esq., so long postponed on account of the young lady’s ill-health, is positively fixed

for the fourteenth of the present month. Immediately after the honeymoon, which is to be spent in Italy, Sir Vane and Lady Charteris depart for the brilliant Viennese Court."

Robert Hawksley read this paragraph, and read it again—slowly, painfully, with a face from which every drop of blood surely receded. He held the paper before him, his eyes dilating, his face, his lips turning to the hue of ashes. No word, no exclamation escaped him; he sat as rigid as a man turning to stone. The waiter brought him his breakfast, and stared at him aghast. He spoke to him—he did not hear; he touched him, and a pair of sightless eyes looked up from the paper.

"Ere's your brekwist, sir—hanythink helse, sir?" But the words fell on dull ears. "Blessed if I don't think he's going to 'ave a fit!" thought the waiter, and left him.

Robert Hawksley sat there, and read again, and again, that brief, commonplace paragraph in the *Morning Post*. Waiters and customers stared alike in wonder at the young man, who sat with his untasted breakfast before him, and with that rigid, awfully corpse-like face.

He rose at last, and laid down the paper. The waiter approached, and he demanded his bill. He had touched nothing, but he paid it at once, and without a word walked out of the house.

The bright April sun was shining, the streets were alive with people, but Robert Hawksley, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, walked blindly on like a man in a dream.

"Married!" The word tolled through his brain like a bell. "Married on the fourteenth. And this is the thirteenth. To-night I will be in London, and to-morrow is her wedding day!" He laughed aloud in an insane sort of way, rather to the surprise of the passers-by. "And two years and a half ago she was my wife. Lord Montalien, was right then, after all. I suppose it will be at St. George's, Hanover Square. Well, I am not invited, nor expected, nor, I dare say, wanted, but still, Sir Vane Charteris, I shall go to your wedding."

An hour later, and the express train was flying homeward, and Robert Hawksley sat gazing straight before him at the flying landscape and blue English sky, with that fierce hunger in his eyes, and his teeth clenched hard behind his auburn beard.

"Married!" That bell in his brain seemed still tolling. "Married to-morrow, to Sir Vane Charteris. Well—when to-morrow comes, we will see!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE DAWN OF THE FOURTEENTH OF APRIL.

It was the thirteenth of April, and late in the afternoon, Sunshine flooded the quiet streets of Bloomsbury, and the windows of Half-Moon Terrace, happening to face westward, were all aflame with the golden light of the sky, a sky as blue as though Half-Moon Terrace were in Venice instead of the parish of Bloomsbury, London. It was an arc of dreary brick boxes, and had only one side of the way, the other being mews. And in the particular brick box where Mr. Duke Mason had set up his household gods, he had a chimney-sweep for neighbor in the attic, and a lame cobbler, who kept a shop on the first floor. Mr. Mason's domicile consisted of four diminutive rooms, a kitchen, with a bedroom off for his sister and housekeeper, a parlor, with ditto for himself, and a dreary, unplastered apartment, also opening off the parlor, which served him as a studio; for Duke was an artist, as you have been told—scenic artist, his little sign over the door informed you—assistant scene-painter to the Royal Waterloo Britannia. He was also second violinist, he likewise went on, and played a witch in Macbeth, Second Grave-Digger, etc., and such powerful casts. Being an adept in the French language, he, moreover, adapted the plays of that nation, diluting them with insular virtue, and straining the French morality a good deal, in order to suit British stomachs. He also painted portraits when he got them to paint, so that you perceive Mr. Mason was a gentleman of brilliant parts and great versatility of talent.

He stands in his painting-room this sunny April afternoon, hard at work on a huge square that occupies all one side of the room, and he is standing on a ladder, putting in skies and backgrounds. Close, it looks one huge chaos of rubies and purples, and ultramarine and gold leaf—from the doorway it looks like a grotto set in golden sands, and in a strong lime light will, no doubt, come out in dazzling splendor to the eyes of the frequenters of the Britannia.

In the parlor adjoining, the shabbiest and most spotlessly neat of parlors, sits sewing Miss Rosanna Mason. She is a lady of that age which is delicately mentioned as uncertain: she is fifteen years the Duke's senior, and Duke is five-and-twenty. She is tall and spare, as maiden ladies usually are; she has high cheek bones, and thin lips, and deep-set eyes, and a Roman nose, and a tremendous frontal development;

The Dawn of the Fourteenth of April. 31

and her hair, which is of the hue called sandy, is tightly pinned in a little knot at the back of her head. Her dress, old and faded, is daintily clean, as is, indeed, everything about her, except, perhaps, Duke, whom she loves, and prays for, and tyrannizes over as some women do over the men they like best.

The afternoon sun dropped low—Miss Mason glancing out at the crimson, golden radiance yonder in the west, opined that it was almost time to go and get tea. Duke must depart for the "regions of darkness," as she always thought of the Britannia, at half-past six, and the pantaloons were done. She glanced at their wearer, and her grim face grew a shade more grim.

"At it again," thought Miss Mason; "he's growing worse every day."

Duke was not doing anything very wrong—in fact, he was not doing anything at all. He sat perched on the top of the ladder, his brushes and palette unused, staring very hard at nothing, and whistling a pensive accompaniment to his thoughts. It was quite a new habit of his, this day-dreaming, a habit contracted since his late visit to Lincolnshire. That was over three weeks ago now, and, as his sister said to herself, he grew worse every day. He had not said a word, as you may suppose, of the adventure of the night of the twenty-fifth of March—very few people felt tempted to pour the story of their follies into the vestal ear of Rosanna, and he had hidden the opal ring deep in the recesses of his pocketbook. He had told nobody of that strange adventure, and he had contracted a custom of thinking about it a great deal. Just at present he was wondering how the young lady's escape had come to be discovered so speedily—it was the missing key did it, no doubt.

It had been the missing key. Mrs. Grimshaw had found herself unable to sleep that night on account of it. Had the spirit of the slain cavalier whisked it off, or had Miss Lyndith anything to do with it? After tossing several hours, Mrs. Grimshaw grew desperate—got up—stole to the young lady's chamber to see that all was safe. The door was unlocked, the bed unslept in, the young lady gone. Half an hour after, Mr. Lyndith was tearing along to the station in search of his ward.

"If J. J. Quill got hold of the story he'd work it up in a five-act melodrama, and make his fortune," thought Duke. "J. J. has done all the dramas they've played at the Britannia for the last fourteen years, except what I've cooked over from the French. She said if she ever needed me, she would send for me again; I hope she won't. Rosanna might

32 The Dawn of the Fourteenth of April

find it out, but, then, I would like to see her once more. How handsome she looked, standing up there, and defying that old Turk, her uncle!"

Mr. Mason unconsciously assumed a defiant attitude himself, as he thought it. Miss Mason saw him and laid down her work.

"Duke," his sister said, in a deep bass.

Duke started to his usual position, and laid hold of his brushes in some trepidation. It wasn't likely his sister could read his thoughts, but Duke wouldn't be very much surprised to find that she could.

"Duke!" repeated Miss Mason, in her deepest tones, "let there be an end of this. Tell me what it means."

"And end of what, Rosanna? Do you mean this scene? Well, I'm bringing it to an end as fast as I can. I suppose those big fellows do make a mess, but there's no help for it. As to what it means, it's the Grotto of the Venus Aphrodite, and the piece it's for is a new thing, and will make Tinsel & Spangle, if anything will."

Mr. Mason dashed in his skies and clouds energetically, feeling guiltily, all the while, that his accusing angel in the parlor was about to bring him to book.

"I don't want to hear about your Coral Caves and your Venus thingamies, Duke Mason," his sister retorted, sternly; "it is bad enough to know such sinful things exist, and that my own brother is risking his eternal welfare among them. I want to know what you mean by that odious habit you have contracted of sitting for hours and staring at nothing, like an idiot. It means something—don't tell me, sir—I know better!"

"Then I suppose it means laziness, Rosanna," Duke answered, good-humoredly.

"It means more than laziness, though that's bad enough. You know what the pious and wise Dr. Watts says: 'In works of labor and of—'"

"Oh, dear! Yes, Rosanna, I know; don't repeat it," groaned Duke.

"But it isn't laziness; it's worse, Duke!" in her cruellest voice. "Don't prevaricate to me. You have fallen in love."

If Miss Mason had said, and truthfully, "you have committed a murder," her brother could hardly have looked more alarmed and guilty. Was it love, to be haunted by day and by night by one beautiful face, to wear an opal ring in a pocketbook, and have a secret hidden from an only sister? Guilt was there, and guilt told.

"I see I am right," Rosanna said, after a thrilling pause. "Duke, who is the young woman?"

"Upon my word, Rosanna, there is no young woman. That is, there isn't—she doesn't—I mean——"

Rosanna shook her head bitterly.

"That sounds very plausible, no doubt, brother Duke, but it doesn't deceive me. 'There isn't, she doesn't,' indeed! Oh, Duke, have I brought you up to this time of day, and instilled the catechism into you, only to see you come to this? The theatre was bad enough, but to fall in love! And next you will want to get married! Duke! I command you—who is the hussy?"

"There's no hussy in the case, and I'm not in love, and I don't want to get married. Good gracious! Rosanna, what crime will you suspect a fellow of next? Upon my word and Honor," cried Duke, in a paroxysm of torture, "I haven't a notion of getting married now, or ever—oh! there's the postman. Don't mind, Rosanna, I'll go."

Duke bounced off his ladder and rushed to the door. The postman handed him two letters, both addressed to himself. Rosanna Mason had never been guilty of epistolary follies, any more than other follies, in her life. One was from Tinsel & Spangle, reproving him sharply for recent unpunctuality, and commanding an early attendance in the orchestra that evening, on pain of a heavy fine. Duke flung this to the farthest corner of the room, and glanced at the other. Slippery white satin paper, a faint odor of perfume, a delicate, spidery female hand, a blue wax seal, with crest and a motto. All the blood in Mr. Mason's arteries rushed into his face; and there stood Rosanna—that frigid, vestal virgin, with piercing eyes fixed on that furiously blushing face. She saw his look, and answered it with stinging sarcasm.

"Oh! don't mind me. Read your letter, by all means, and then tell me, when I ask you who it's from, that 'there isn't—she doesn't'—that 'there's no lady in the case'—and that you've 'no notion of being married.' Don't mind adding a few more falsehoods to your already overburdened conscience. Read your letter, unhappy young man, and tell me it's from those play-actor men, who employ you in their godless work, if you dare!"

One glance of scorn and sorrow combined, and Miss Mason stalked out to the kitchen. With a sort of groan the badgered scene-painter opened the dainty missive, and read:

You promised to come to me if I should ever want you. The time has come when it remains for you to keep that promise. If you have any pity for an unhappy, friendless girl, you will come, at three o'clock to-morrow morning, to the address be-

34 The Dawn of the Fourteenth of April.

low. Be at the area gate at that time, and you will confer a deathless obligation on her whom you once so generously served.
O. L.

There was an address at the bottom of this note—the number of a house in Park lane. And the blood left Duke's face, and a cold thrill ran through him, as he thought of the dreadful possibilities involved. Did she want him to run away with her again? Wasn't it a penal offense to elope with an heiress?

He rose, and paced softly up and down the parlor, feeling like the wretched conspirator he was. He could hear Rosanna bustling about the kitchen, the clatter of cups and saucers, and the general preparation for tea.

"I'll have to stay out all night," mused Duke. "I couldn't sleep if I went to bed. What can she want? I thought she promised to marry Sir Vane Charteris. It was bad enough to run away with a young lady. It would be worse to run away with a baronet's wife."

"Come to supper," called Rosanna, and Duke went out to the kitchen, which was also the dining-room, meekly, and with all his wrongdoing palpable in his face. How was he to drink weak tea, and eat slices off a stale quartern, with that secret on his mind, and that letter buried in his pocket? He rose after two or three gulps, swallowed spasmodically. Rosanna, eating with the powerful appetite of strong virtue that can relish weak tea and stale bread, saw all his confusion.

"You needn't sit up for me, Rosanna," the artist said, with nervous hurry. "I shan't be home to-night. Tinsel & Spangle have been blowing me up for laziness, and I shall work double tides to make up for it. I shall work at the Britannia until three or four this morning, and—ah—good-evening, Rosanna."

Lies were not at all in Duke Mason's way—this was a mild one, but still it nearly choked him. And, of course, Rosanna did not believe one word. She listened and ate on in ominous silence, making no response to the fraternal good-night; and Duke drew a long breath as he closed the street door behind him, and hurried on his way. A blue, silvery haze filled the streets, through which the gas lamps twinkled. One or two early stars shone up in the blue, and a cloudless sunset irradiated the town. Duke took an omnibus, and reached the Royal Britannia at an earlier hour than he had done for weeks, and Tinsel & Spangle congratulated themselves that their blowing up had done their second violinist good.

will confer a
so generously
O. L.

this note—the
od left Duke's
thought of the
t him to run
e to elope with

parlor, feeling
e could hear
r of cups and

"I couldn't
I thought she
s bad enough
worse to run

e went out to
eekly, and
How was he
quartern, with
in his pocket?
spasmodically.
strong virtue
all his confu-

tist said, with
irsel & Span-
I shall work
the Britannia
good-evening,

—this was a
d, of course,
d and ate on
aternal good-
sed the street
blue, silvery
nps twinkled.
d a cloudless
mnibus, and
than he had
ulated them-
ond violinist

All through the five acts of the melodrama that night, Duke's thoughts were away in Park lane, and he played false notes, and sometimes forgot to play altogether. It was an unutterable relief when the curtain fell and the audience poured out into the starlit night, and he was free to think as he pleased. He turned away from the theatre, and his feet half unconsciously took him to Park lane.

Two! by the numberless city steeples. Duke lit a cigar, and seated himself in an open square, where the trees made long shadows in the moonlit grass, and the lamps waxed dim in its silvery rays. What a strange, long night it was! Would he ever forget it—and how was it going to end!

Half-past two! He started up. He was a couple of miles away from Park lane—it would be three when he reached it. Still smoking, he hastened on. The big, black house in Park lane loomed up before him as the clocks tolled three. All was dark and quiet now. The string of carriages had vanished—the party three doors off had broken up early. He leaned against the area railings, looking up at the dismal, unlighted mansion, when a cold hand was suddenly and swiftly laid on his. He started, and barely suppressed an exclamation; he had heard no sound, yet here by his side stood a woman.

"Hush!" said a voice; "not a sound. You are Duke Mason?"

"I am."

"Tell me the name of her who sent for you?"

"Olivia Lyndith."

"Thank Heaven! Come down—tread softly."

He descended the area steps, and stood beside her. She was a tall young woman, but she was not Miss Lyndith.

"I am the child's nurse," the girl said, answering that look. "Take off your shoes. The least noise may betray us."

Duke obeyed. Her description of herself was rather unintelligible, though. The child's nurse! and what had he to do with children? Miss Lyndith wasn't a child, by any means. What did she mean?

There was no time to ask questions. He removed his shoes, and followed her into the basement regions, up a flight of steps, and found himself in a lofty-domed and carpeted hall. The moon's rays shone brightly, and tall marble statues gleamed like ghosts in its light. A great staircase, carved and gilded, went up in majestic sweeps to the regions above. A thick, soft carpet muffled the tread as Duke followed her to a second stately hall, hung with pictures, and lighted by a large Maltese window. Many doors were on either side; one of these she opened, motioning the wonder-

46 The Dawn of the Fourteenth of April.

ing Duke to follow, and he found himself in a spacious and elegant ante-chamber, dimly lighted by two wax candles—an apartment more luxurious and beautiful than any the scene-painter had ever beheld.

"The Coral Caves of the Dismal Deep are very dazzling abodes, no doubt," he thought, "but for permanence give me a big, black house in Park lane."

"Wait here," the girl said, laconically. A second after, lifting a heavy crimson curtain that draped an arch, she let it fall, and disappeared.

Again the curtain was lifted by the servant, and this time Miss Olivia Lyndith herself appeared; Duke rose. She wore a flowing, white dressing-gown, her abundant hair hung loose over her shoulders, her large eyes looked bigger and blacker than ever in her small, pale face. Again she took his hand in both her own, as on that memorable night, when they had parted, and looked at him with her dark, solemn eyes.

"I knew you would come," she said. "I knew I might trust you. I have sent for you on a matter of life and death to me. To-morrow—day, to-day—is my wedding day."

"Oh, indeed!" Mr. Mason responded, feeling that politeness required him to say something, and wondering if young ladies generally regarded their wedding days as matters of life and death, and what she could possibly want of him in this state of affairs.

"I am surrounded by enemies, who call themselves my friends, and in whose power I am. I am going to marry a man whom I neither love nor respect—a man whom I fear. For myself, it does not so much matter. I don't care what becomes of me"—there was a desperate recklessness in her tone and look that suited her words—"but there is one in this house whom I do love, whom I wish to save from the men who have made my life miserable. It is a child. To obtain possession of her, I have promised to marry the man of my guardian's choice. This very day, immediately after the ceremony, I start for Italy, and she remains behind in the power of Geoffrey Lyndith. I cannot trust him—I will not trust him. Her life would be blighted, as her mother's has been. She must be removed out of their knowledge and out of their power. That is why I have sent for you; I have not a friend I dare trust—they are all my uncle's friends, and her birth is a dead secret. Will you take her away with you to-night? Will you keep her, and bring her up as your own?—you and your sister. You shall be well paid, and, if it is ever in my power, I will claim her. Don't refuse; have pity on me, her most wretched mother; have pity on her, a

spacious and
x candles—an
ny the scene-

very dazzling
ence give me

second after,
arch, she let

and this time
se. She wore
t hair hung
d bigger and
gain she took
e night, when
dark, solemn

new I might
life and death
g day."

hat politeness
ing if young
as matters of
ant of him in

themselves' my
g to marry a
whom I fear.
n't care what
ssness in her
ere is one in
ave from the
a child. To
arry the man
mediately after
ns behind in
e him—I will
her mother's
nowledge and
r you; I have
ele's friends,
er away with
r up as your
paid, and, if
refuse; have
ity on her, a

helpless babe. You have a kind heart—you helped me before. Help me now, and may Heaven reward you!"

She clung to his arm—passionate tears stood in her proud eyes. Duke stood absolutely transfixed.

"You shall be well rewarded. See! here is this pocket-book; it contains one hundred pounds, all I have now, but I will send you more. Take it, take it. You will not refuse—you cannot. Wait one instant, and I will fetch her."

She darted away. Duke stood looking blankly at the Russian leather pocketbook in his hand. A child—her child!—his head was in an utter whirl.

She came back in a moment, holding a bundle wrapped in a shawl in her arms. She flung this wrap back, as she came close to Duke, and he saw the cherub face of a sleeping child.

"She has been drugged to keep her quiet—she will not awake for an hour. See what a lovely little angel she is! Oh, my darling! my darling! my darling!"

She covered the baby face with passionate kisses. With her wild, loose hair, her wilder eyes, her frantic manner, she seemed like a creature half distraught. On the instant, far away in the house, they all heard the sound of an opening door. The servant appeared in alarm.

"Miss Olivia, do you hear that? He must go. Mr. Lyndith has the ears of a cat, and the eyes, I believe. Give him the child, and let him go, for pity's sake!"

She absolutely took the child from the arms that pressed it so convulsively, wrapped the shawl closer around it, and caught Duke's hand.

"Come!" she said; "there's not a moment to lose."

"Be good to it! be good to it!" Miss Lyndith cried; "as you hope for salvation, be good to my child."

She sank down in a great carved and gilded chair—a small, white figure, and, burying her face in her hands, her suppressed sobbing filled the room. So Duke's last glance saw her as he quitted it. Beyond that "Oh, indeed!" he had not spoken a word—he had not been five minutes in the house altogether. Like one in a dreamy swoon, he followed the nurse, through halls and stairways, until once more they stood under the stars.

"Put on your shoes," the girl said; "you will find a cabstand over in that direction. The baby will not awake until you get home."

She pressed the child upon him. He took it mechanically—mechanically descended the area steps, looked back, and found the girl gone.

What was he to do? It would never do to stand there and

38 At St. George's, Hanover Square.

le discovered by a passing policeman, with a suspicious bundle in his arms. Still, like a man in a dream, he started forward in the direction the girl had pointed out, found the cabstand, and in five minutes more was rattling over the stony streets, Bloomsburyward. Then he opened the shawl. Day was brightly breaking, and the first little pink ray stole in and kissed the lovely sleeping face, framed in tiny flaxen curls.

A baby! and he was taking it home: This was how the adventure of this night had ended. And he had said he would be painting at the Royal Britannia, until daylight.

"Powers above!" thought Mr. Mason, his very heart seeming to die within him. "What will Rosanna say?"

CHAPTER VII.

AT ST. GEORGE'S, HANOVER SQUARE.

The sun was just rising as the hansom tore through the quiet streets of Bloomsbury, waking the peaceful rate-paying, respectable, third-class inhabitants from their slumbers.

He reached Half-Moon Terrace—he paid and dismissed the cab.

Duke opened the kitchen door, stalked in, and confronted his sister.

"Duke!"

Only one word, but the tone! In some such voice of anguish may the great Napoleon, at St. Helena, looking back at one disastrous day, have exclaimed, "Waterloo!"

"It's not mine, Rosanna—I swear it's not!" Duke cried out, as he held out the infant imploringly. "I never set eyes on it until within the last two hours!"

"Not on it, perhaps—but its mother——"

"Nor its mother either—so help me! until three weeks ago! Good gracious, Rosanna! what a mind you must have to suspect a fellow in this way, without giving him a chance to explain! I never saw the child until it was given to me—no, forced upon me, by Jove! two hours ago; and its mother, if she be its mother, I met, for the first time, three weeks ago down in Lincolnshire."

"And yet you fetch the child home! Misguided young man! Do you expect me to believe such a story as this?"

"I expect you to believe the truth. Don't stare at me in that uncomfortable way, Rosanna, as if you were the Gorgon's head. If you'll take the child, I'll shut the door, and

tell you the whole story. I don't know what to do with it, and here, it's waking up."

Miss Mason took the baby. Even Achilles had a vulnerable spot somewhere in his heel, and Miss Mason had one in her heart; a child always found its way there at once. She took it with wonderful tenderness, and removed the shawl altogether, a real India shawl, she saw to her great amaze. The little one opened its eyes—two big, blue eyes, and looked with a baby stare of wonder up in her face. It was the prettiest little thing conceivable—a child of a year and a half or more, with little, chiseled features, a rose-bud mouth, and beautiful, blue eyes, crystal clear. A baby girl with dainty embroidered underclothing, a little blue silk dress, the hue of her eyes, and a gold chain and locket round her neck. Curiosity overcame every other feeling, even virtuous maiden indignation, in the breast of Miss Rosanna.

"For Heaven's sake, Duké, what does it mean, and who is this child?"

"That's more than I know. I don't know her name, nor her age, any more than the dead. All I do know I'll tell you now. But first you may keep those things." He drew forth the pocketbook. "There's a hundred pounds here, which her mother gave me, and here's a ring, also given me by her mother. Now don't look like that, Rosanna! Miss Lyndith's a great lady, whose very flunkies, I dare say, would look down on me."

"Miss Lyndith! I thought you were speaking of this child's mother, Duke?" Rosanna said, in a spectral voice.

"So I am. If there's anything wrong it's not my fault. It's a very queer affair from first to last, and much more like one of the five-act dramas at the Britannia than the events of real life."

And then, while the little one lay in Miss Mason's arms, and gazed about her with solemn, baby eyes, Duke went back to the twenty-fifth of March, and told the story of that night—all he had seen, all he had heard. This was the cause of his dreaminess, his absence of mind, the change she had noticed in him. Then he produced the note of the previous afternoon, and gave it to her to read, and related all that had befallen him from three o'clock until now.

His sister listened breathlessly. She had never read a novel, nor witnessed a play in her life. She had never been in love, she had no data to fall back upon that might help her to realize this story. It was like hearing Greek to her. All she knew was that Miss Lyndith, be she never so rich, was a young woman no better than she ought to be, and that this child in her lap was doubtless the offspring of— But she

looked down, and the angelic face broke into the beautiful smile of babyhood, and the two little fat hands held themselves up.

"Polly want her bek-fas."

The little silver voice went straight to that vulnerable spot in Miss Mason's chain-mail armor. Perhaps if Nature had never meant her for a wife, it had meant her for a mother. A glow came actually into her tallow complexion; she raised the child, and pressed it to her vestal bosom.

"You're the prettiest little thing I ever saw in my life. My little pet, tell me your name."

"Polly," whispered the child. "Polly want Dozy."

"What?"

"Dozy."

Rosanna looked helplessly at Duke. Duke sat astounded to hear the midget speak at all.

"Perhaps it's her nurse," he suggested. "I think now, I heard Miss Lyndith call the name 'Rosie,' in the inner room."

"Dozy, Dozy," repeated the child, impatiently. "Polly want Dozy! Polly want her bek-fas. Polly want to get down."

"Polly, put the kettle on," Duke murmured, abstractedly; "put Polly down, Rosanna. Let's see if she can walk."

Polly could walk very well. In her blue silk dress and flaxen curls, her gold chain and locket, her glimmering bronze boots, and silk stockings, Polly looked a thorough baby aristocrat from top to toe.

"Like a small duchess, by George!" said Duke, admiringly; "a fellow might make his fortune if he could paint her. She looks like Miss Lyndith, too, about the nose and chin."

"Duke," his sister said, sternly, "never let me hear the name of that young person from your lips again. We will keep the child;" her hard face softened as she looked at the tiny beauty in blue silk; "but speak no more of a creature who tells you this is her wedding day, who is called Miss Lyndith, and who owns this child to be hers. She has reason to be thankful, poor babe, that she has been snatched from that sink of corruption, the fashionable world, at so early an age."

The poor babe did not seem particularly thankful.

After calling for "Dozy" two or three times in vain, Polly opened her cherub mouth, and set up such a howl as made Rosanna's blood curdle with new terror.

"Polly shall have bread and milk," Miss Mason said, soothingly; "only do be quiet, dear. I suppose we must fabricate a story for the neighbors, Duke; and may the Lord forgive us. One can't touch pitch without being defiled. We can't have

to do with the wicked ones of the earth without sharing in their wickedness."

"And as I've been up all night, Rosanna, I'll turn in until breakfast time," Duke answered; "roué me out at half after eight. I am going to strike work this morning, and go to St. George's, Hanover Square, and mingle with the bloated aristocracy, and see this young lady's mamma married. Beg your pardon, Rosanna, for alluding to her—I won't do it again. What a dickens of a temper the little angel has!"

Duke went to bed; Rosanna pacified Polly, with some trouble, and more bread and milk. For once in a way, she was almost excited. A child to dress, and scold, and love, and a hundred pounds in her pocket.

At half-past eight precisely she summoned Duke to breakfast. The young man found his sister in better and gentler mood than he had ever known her in his life at this early hour.

Polly had gorged herself, like a small boa-constrictor, with bread and milk, and now, standing on one of the parlor chairs, looking out of the window at the busy scene in the mews opposite, was wailing in a plaintive minor key for "Dozy." She never called for her mamma, Rosanna noticed, as most babies do—always "Dozy."

Duke ate his breakfast, started off at a rapid pace for the aristocratic portals of St. George's, Hanover Square. There would be no end of a row, he thought, at the scene-room of the Britannia in consequence of his non-appearance, and Tinsel & Spangle would fine him, very likely; but a man who is the happy possessor of a hundred pounds can afford to defy the minions of the theatre.

"I'll see Miss L. turned off," thought Duke, elegantly, "and then have at thee, Spangle; and cursed be he who first cries hold! enough!"

It was high noon when the scene-painter reached his destination—high noon on a sunny April day, warm as mid-June. A stately procession of elegant private carriages filled the street—half the turnouts in Mayfair, it seemed to the simple denizen of Half-Moon Terrace—and a mob of idlers on the lookout to see the quality.

Duke, in his haste, turning sharp round the angles of one of these white-favored vehicles, ran violently against a gentleman coming in equal haste from the opposite direction.

"Beg your pardon, sir. Didn't mean anything offensive, you know!" Duke said, politely. "I hope I haven't hurt you."

The gentleman made no reply. He did not even seem to hear him. His eyes were fixed upon the church with a hungry, strained intensity of gaze.

42 At St. George's, Hanover Square.

"Queer customer!" Mr. Mason thought. "That young man has evidently something on his mind. He is a gentleman, I take it, in spite of his rough shooting-jacket and foreign hat. He has something the look of a sailor."

On the instant, the object of his thoughts turned round with a suddenness quite disconcerting, and addressed him:

"Can you tell me who is being married here this morning?"

"Well, I shouldn't like to swear to it, but I think Sir Vane Charteris."

"Ah!" The stranger ground out that little word between his teeth in a way familiar to Mr. Mason on the boards of the Britannia. "And to whom?"

"Well, I think to Miss Olivia Lyndith. But as it is only supposition on my part, suppose we step in and ascertain?"

"I will follow you," the stranger said, falling back a step. "For Heaven's sake, hurry!"

Duke hastened in, a little surprised, but not much.

"If this mysterious young man, with the auburn beard, and remarkably handsome face, should be 'Robert' now," he thought; "and she should recognize him, and shrieking, 'It is he!' fall swooning at his feet, it would be quite a lively scene for St. George's."

These sort of *recontres* were very common on the stage, and Duke saw no reason why they should not be in everyday life as well.

He led the way into the church. It was almost filled with elegantly-dressed people. Two weddings were going on, and the altar was quite a bewildering spectacle, with snow-white and azure-robed ladies, and solemnly black gentlemen. One of the pew-openers gave them a place near the door, as became their shabby coats and clumping boots.

The stranger, as he removed his hat, Duke saw was a very fair man, despite the golden bronze of his skin; and the fixed, rigid pallor of his face, the wild intensity of his blue eyes, betrayed that his interest in what was going on was no ordinary one.

"They're coming!" Duke said. "We've missed the wedding, after all. The thing's all over."

He was right. The newly-wedded pairs had signed the register, and were sweeping down the aisle. The first bride was a Junoesque lady, with high color and modestly downcast eyes. They barely glanced at her. She and her train sailed by. The second bridal party came—the bride this time—there was no doubt about it—the late Miss Olivia Lyndith.

It is proper, of course, for brides to look pale at this extreme hour of their lives. This bride was pale beyond all else.

at young man
gentleman, I
t and foreign

turned round
ressed him:
re this morn-

think Sir Vane

word between
boards of the

as it is only
d ascertain?"
g back a step.

much.

rn beard, and
rt' now," he
rieking, 'It is
a lively scene

the stage, and
everyday life

ost filled with
going on, and
h snow-white
tlemen. One
e door, as be-

w was a very
and the fixed,
blue eyes, be-
was no ordi-

sed the wea-

ened the reg-
st bride was
ly downess
train sailed
this time--
a Lyndith,
e at this cr-
eyond all or-

dinary pallor of bridehood. Her face was ghastly; her great, dark eyes looked blankly straight before her, with a fixed, sightless stare; her very lips were ashen. The bridegroom, on the contrary—a portly, undersized, florid, good-looking man—was flushed, excited, exultant. His restless black eyes moved about ceaselessly in a quick, nervous sort of way, and as he drew near, the stranger sitting beside Duke suddenly rose up.

It was impossible not to look at him. The stony bride never looked, certainly; but the smiling bridegroom did; and the smile froze, and the florid color died on his face, and an awful look of fear transfixed it. A wordless cry appeared to rise and die upon his lips. He seemed for an instant rooted to the spot. Then the crowd, pushing on, bore him with it, and Mr. Mason was alone with his extraordinary companion. The stranger still stood in that rigid attitude, like a man slowly petrifying.

"Gad!" thought the scene-painter. "I didn't think any human being except the First Murderer of the Britannia could glare in that blood-freezing way. I suppose old Quill knows what he is about, after all, when he writes melodramas. This must be Robert. I'll ask him, by George!"

"I beg your pardon," he said, "for a seemingly impertinent question, but might your name be Robert?"

"Robert? Yes," the stranger answered, mechanically. He did not seem surprised at the question; all feeling was stupefied within him.

"Oh, it is! Perhaps, also, it may be Lisle!"

This time the young man in the rough jacket did turn round, and looked at his questioner.

"What do you know of Robert Lisle?" he demanded.

"Well, not much, only I have heard the name, and if you were Mr. Lisle. I think I could understand better your very evident interest in the lady who has just gone by."

The young man, whose name was Robert, laid his hand heavily on Duke's shoulder.

"You know her, then?" he exclaimed. "You!"

"Well," replied Mr. Mason, "slightly. I have had the honor of doing her some little service in by-gone hours, and though she didn't notice me this morning, we have been very friendly and confidential, I assure you, in times past. And if you had been Mr. Robert Lisle, and had called upon her yesterday, I dare say she would have been pleased to see you. Yesterday she was Miss Lyndith, to-day she is Lady Charteris—all the difference in the world, you understand."

"Then she has spoken of me to you? She has not forgotten—she——"

44 At St. George's, Hanover Square.

He stopped, his voice husky, his eyes like live coals.

"She has not forgotten—decidedly not—but at the same time she hasn't spoken of you to me. You are Robert Lisle, then?"

The stranger dropped his hand and turned abruptly away.

"My name is Hawksley," he said, coldly; "and I must see her. Yes, by Heaven!"—he clenched his strong, white teeth—"come what may!"

"I should advise you to hurry, then," suggested Duke, politely. "They start for Italy in an hour's time, I have reason to know, and if you miss her now it's all up! Brides don't generally receive strange gentlemen on their wedding morning, but this seems an exceptional occasion, and she may see you. Shall I order you a cab and tell them where to drive?" said Duke, inwardly burning with curiosity.

Mr. Hawksley nodded and slouched his hat down over his eyes. The last of the aristocratic vehicles had vanished long before. Duke led the way to the nearest cabstand, and entered the hansom after the stranger. Mr. Hawksley might order him out, but he was willing to risk it. Mr. Hawksley did not, however; he sat with his hat over his brow, his arms folded, his lips compressed under that beautiful, tawny beard, the whole way.

"He looks like the Corsair by Medora's deathbed," reflected Duke. "He has a very striking pair of blue eyes. So has little Polly. Now wouldn't it be rather queer if (Mr. Robert Hawksley, I think he said,) should be Polly's father?"

The carriage containing Sir Vane Charteris and his bride reached the mansion of Mr. Geoffrey Lyndith, in Park lane. The silence that reigned in Duke's hansom reigned also in this elegant coach and four. The bride sat like some marble bride, as pale, as cold; almost as lifeless—the bridegroom sat with a leaden face of abject fear.

"Did Lyndith see him, I wonder?" he thought. "He left the church before me. To be balked like this at the last hour, after waiting so long, after risking so much. At the last hour, when the game is all my own, to have him start up as if from the very earth. And I thought—we all thought—him dead two years ago."

He let down the glass and loosened his neckerchief; something in the air seemed to choke him. He glanced at his bride, and a storm of rage at her, at himself, at Geoffrey Lyndith, at that apparition in the church, swept through him.

"She looks more like a dead woman than a bride. What will every one say? Why can't she smile, or rouge, or do something except look like that—death in life? I scarcely know whether I love or hate her most—one day or other she

shall pay for this. And to think there should have been a child, too, and she should spirit it away. She has the cunning of the old fiend when she likes."

The carriage stopped. He descended, and handed his lady out. The other carriages disgorged themselves. The instant he espied Mr. Lyndith, he motioned him apart.

"Come into the library," he said. "I have a word to say to you."

Mr. Lyndith led the way instantly. Something had happened. He read it in Sir Vane's leaden face.

"What is it?" he asked, nervously. "Quick, Charteris; they will wonder at our absence. Let's have it in a word."

"I will. Ruin!"

"What?"

"Robert Lisle is alive!—is here!—I saw him in the church!"

"Charteris, are you mad?"

"Not now! I was when I believed your story of Lisle's death. I tell you the fellow is alive, and here. I saw him in church as we came out."

"But, great Heaven, Charteris! this must be folly—madness! The *Royal Charter* was burned to the water's edge, and every soul on board perished. And he sailed in the *Royal Charter*. I tell you it is impossible!"

"And I tell you I saw Robert Lisle, face to face, as I left the church. She did not, or I think, in my soul, she would have dropped on the spot. He stood up, and gave me a look I'm not likely to forget. Curse it, Lyndith," he cried, in a sudden fury, "do you think I could mistake him of all men? Before we leave the house, Robert Lisle will be here."

"Great Heaven!"

"Ay," the baronet cried, bitterly, "you will believe it when he comes. There will be a lovely scene—a beautiful sensation for Park lane. We know what she will do, if she once catches sight of him. All the story, so long hidden, will come out, and for Geoffrey Lyndith it means simply ruin!"

"He shall not see her. By God, he shall not!"

"Prevent the meeting if you can. He is a desperate man—if ever I saw desperation in human eyes: You will find a different man from the Robert Lisle of two years ago. And now, as you say, we will be missed. We must go up and smile and make speeches, and play our part, until the specter appears at the feast."

He strode out of the library. Mr. Lyndith followed him. There was no help for it—their absence was already commented on by their guests. They took their places at the table, all a-glitter with silver and crystal; and everybody

noted their altered looks. Such a ghastly bride, and such a strange pallor on the faces of their host and Sir Vane. Something was wrong. Everybody waited, deliciously expectant of more to come.

What they waited for came. The breakfast was not quarter over, when a knock thundered at the grand entrance—an ominous and authoritative knock, that thrilled through them all. Sir Vane was raising his glass to his lips, and again the smile seemed to freeze on his face, and the glass remained half-poised in his hand. A dead silence fell. In that silence the sound of an altercation in the hall reached them in that distant apartment. Mr. Lyndith rose abruptly—white and stern—made a hurried apology, and hastened from the room. A moment later and all was still. The disturbance was quelled; but Geoffrey Lyndith did not come back. What did it mean? Even the pale, cold bride lifted her heavy eyes and looked at the leaden face of the man she had married, and waited for what was to come next.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHISTLED DOWN THE WIND."

Geoffrey Lyndith's face was an index of his character—dark, stern, resolute. While he had sat at the head of his table, smiling upon his guests, and eating and drinking mechanically, his ready brain had been at work. Plotting was work that subtle brain was well used to, and his mind, prompt in thought, quick in action, grappled at once with his danger. As Sir Vane Charteris had said, the coming of this man in all likelihood meant ruin—ruin to him, Geoffrey Lyndith, Esquire, of Lyndith Grange and Park lane. He had thought the man dead for certain; he had driven him out of the country over two years ago, and the ship in which he had sailed had been burned in mid-ocean, and no soul left to return, and Robert Lisle was here on Olivia's wedding day. Was Satan himself at work to balk him, he wondered? He had got Robert Lisle in his power two years ago, by a cowardly and infamous plot, worthy the Newgate calendar; that power he still held over him. But who knew? His part in it might come to light after all, and what horrible shame and exposure that would involve! And at the first sound of his voice, at the first sight of his face, his niece would fly to his arms, to cling to him through misery and death, if need were. He was poor, and his niece was rich; her money would aid his enemy. **Ready money was the one great want of this**

d.”

le, and such a
nd Sir Vane.
deliciously ex-

was not quar-
entrance—an
through them
and again the
remained half
at silence the
them in that
y—white and
rom the room.
turbance was
ek. What did
eavy eyes and
married, and

s character—
e head of his
drinking me-
Plotting was
nd his mind,
once with his
oming of this
him, Geoffrey
rk lane. He
d driven him
ship in which
d no soul left
wedding day.
ndered? He
go, by a cow-
alendar; that

His part in
rrible shame
irst sound of
would fly to
eath, if need
money would
want of this

“Whistled Down the Wind.”

47

man's life, and on the day he compelled his niece to marry him, Sir Vane Charteris had promised him a check for ten thousand pounds. Everything had gone on so well; he had been in a glow of triumphant exultation for a few weeks past, and now—and now!

His eyes glowed with a red, evil fire as he descended the staircase, his teeth set behind his black beard. He could confront moral or physical danger with the brute courage of a tiger.

“A man always gains, be his case strong or weak,” he was accustomed to say, “by facing the worst boldly; weakness and vacillation always fail, as they deserve to do.” It was his theory, and he acted upon it, in every crisis of life, and up to this time had found it succeeded. His face looked as if carved in granite, as he descended to the entrance hall, for all trepidation, surprise, anger, fear, or any other human emotion it displayed.

A porter, a butler, two high footmen, all were formed in a body to oppose the enemy—a tall, young man in rough coat and broad-brimmed hat.

“We can't do nothing with him, sir,” the butler explained, in an indignant voice, which he says, like his impudence, as he will see you, Mr. Lyndith, sir.”

The two men looked each other full in the face, one level, powerful gaze. The younger man took off his hat. Good Heaven! what horrible reason Geoffrey Lyndith had to know that handsome, sunburned face.

“I know this person, Edwards,” Mr. Lyndith said, very quietly, “and will see him. Follow me, sir.”

He led the way to the library, a stately apartment filled with books and busts and bronzes, and into which the noon sunlight came, softly tempered through closed venetians. Geoffrey Lyndith turned the key in the door, crossed the room, leaned his elbow upon the crimson-velvet mantel, and faced his opponent. It was a duel to the death; and both knew it, no quarter to be asked or given—one or the other must go down before they left that room.

The gentleman of the Old Guard, otherwise the master of the house, fired first.

“This is an exceedingly unexpected honor, Robert T. Isle. You sailed two years and a half ago in the ship ‘Royal Charter,’ from Southampton. The ‘Royal Charter’ was burned, and all on board perished. May I ask how you came to be alive?”

His tone was perfectly cool; his face admirably calm, his manner as nonchalantly gentlemanlike as though he had been remarking on the fineness of the weather, and the possibility

of rain next week. Yet under all that high-bred composure, what horrible fear he felt of this man!

"I did not sail on the '*Royal Charter*,'" Robert Lisle answered; "I took my passage—you saw my name on the passenger list, very likely. At the last hour I met with an accident—a very trilling one—which made me lose it. I sailed in the '*Western Star*' the following week. Are you satisfied now that I am no wraith?"

"More than satisfied. I congratulate you upon your escape. Providence,"—the sneering emphasis was indescribable—"Providence watched over you, no doubt. You were wise to leave England the following week; it was certainly no place for you. Why have you been so very imprudent as to return to it?"

The flashing eyes of the younger man met the hard, glittering black ones with a fiery light.

"You ask that question, Geoffrey Lyndith?"

"Assuredly, Mr. Lisle—why?"

"I have returned to claim my wife. To expose you and your villainy to the world you delude; be the penalty to myself what it may!"

"When you use that sort of language, Mr. Lisle," the elder man said, with unruffled composure, "you have the advantage of me, of course. Persons in your class generally do resort to vituperation, I believe, when annoyed. You will oblige me by keeping to the language and bearing of a gentleman, if you can, while talking to me. You have returned to claim your wife! Ah! but there is no such person in England, that I am aware of. Out there among the aborigines indeed—"

Robert Lisle strode toward him, a dangerous light in his blue eyes.

"Do you dare to sneer at me—you of all men alive? It is not safe; I warn you, it is not safe!"

"Ah! I wish you would have the politeness to hear me out. If you mean Lady Charteris, she never was your wife—no, not for one poor hour. And if you have come to claim her, you have just come two years and three months too late. She did remember you for two or three months after your very abrupt departure from England, I will own, and then came the natural revulsion. More than she had ever loved—pshaw! fancied she loved the yeoman's son, with his tall, shapely figure, and good-looking face—she hated, abhorred him. Her mad folly, her shame dawned upon her, in its true light. She saw what she had done, how she had fallen, how you had played upon her childish credulity, and dragged her down, and she hated—let us have plain words, Robert

Lisle—she hated your memory with an intensity I never dreamed she possessed. The haunting fear lest her disgraceful secret should be known to the world nearly drove her mad. She buried herself alive down at Lyndith Grange for a time—she went abroad with me. Her secret so preyed upon her, that her health was affected. All this time her plighted husband, the man of her dying father's choice, was by her side, ever tender, ever devoted—and she learned to know the full value of that which she had flung away, and she loved him with a love, all the greater that it was tinged with remorse. Then came the news of the loss of the '*Royal Charter*,' and all on board. She was free! I remember handing her the paper," Mr. Lyndith said, looking dreamily before him, like a man who beholds what he relates; "and pointing out your name among the list of lost. For a moment she grew deadly pale. She had always a tender heart; poor child—and it seemed a horrible fate to be burned alive in the midst of the Atlantic. Then she threw the paper down, flung herself in my arms, and sobbed in wild hysterics: 'Oh, uncle,' she cried, 'is it wicked to be thankful to Heaven for even an enemy's death? And I liked him once, and his fate has been an awful one, and yet my heart has no room for anything but thankfulness that I am free. Now the exposure of a divorce court will be unnecessary—an exposure which I think would kill me. Thank Heaven, without it he has given me back my liberty!' And after this she rallied, and gave Sir Vane her promise to become his wife."

Robert Lisle listened to this lengthy speech, with a smile of cynical scorn on his handsome bearded mouth.

"You were always an orator, Mr. Lyndith," he said, quietly; "spouting was ever your forte, I remember, and graceful fiction quite a striking trait in your character. I see time but embellishes your talents. In plain English, I don't believe one word you have told me. Olivia Lyndith was not the sort of woman to whistle a lost lover down the wind, after any such fashion—much less the husband she loved—Heaven! loved so dearly!"

His face softened; that of Geoffrey Lyndith grew black with suppressed fury.

"You are an insolent boor," he said, "but you were always that. Two years' sojourn among the refuse of the world in transatlantic cities should hardly be likely to improve you. I tell you Olivia Lyndith never was your wife—never! You are alive, but no divorce will be needed. A girl of sixteen runs away to Scotland and goes through some sort of Scotch ceremony, that may pass for marriage beyond the border. It will not hold in England, as you very well know. A minor

contract a legal marriage, forsooth! You are old enough, at least, to know better, my good fellow. The marriage was no marriage, the child illegitimate."

He stopped short—he had betrayed himself in his momentary burst of anger. The young man started, and a dark flush passed over his tanned face.

"The child!" he said; "there was a child?"

It was too late to draw back—the truth, neatly glossed over with falsehood, must be told.

"Yes, a child, who died two days after its birth, thank Heaven. That makes no difference—Sir Vane knows. What was she but a child herself, poor little Livey, when you led her astray. Little wonder she abhors your very memory. And now, to add one last outrage, you come here to cover her with shame, to take up from the dead past the story she believes buried in oblivion, which she would die rather than have the world know. Robert Lisle, you are less than man to blight the life of an innocent girl."

The face of the young man turned white, a cold moisture broke out upon his forehead. Was this true, after all? Had Lord Montalien been right? Was he forgotten—abhorred?

"I will see her, at least," he cried, hoarsely. "From her lips alone will I take my death warrant. If she tells me to go, I will obey her—yes, though I should hang myself within the hour. But I know you of old, Geoffrey Lyndith—a man without heart, or truth, or honor! Oh, don't think I am afraid of you! This is no time for fine words. Bring her here—let her tell me she hates me, let her bid me go, and I will go, and never trouble her more in this world."

Geoffrey Lyndith looked at him, the dull, red glow more visible than ever in his evil, black eyes.

"Bring her here?" he repeated; "I would see her dead first! Do you know what you ask? She does not know whether her first marriage was binding or not—like all girls, she thinks it was. She believed you dead—she thought herself a widow, and has married again—a man whom she loves, as in her wildest fancy she never cared for you. Do you now what the consequence of bringing her here will be? It will kill her, I think—just that! The exposure, the scandal, the loss of the husband she loves. She would never hold up her head again. If you ever loved her, Robert Lisle, you should spare her now."

"Loved her! Oh, Heaven!"

He flung himself into a chair, and buried his face in his hands. Was Geoffrey Lyndith not right? She had been proud and sensitive of old, and now the wife of two men.

parted from both, and the first a— He shuddered through all his frame, as he sat there.

The elder man saw his advantage, and followed it up pitilessly.

"You insist upon seeing Lady Charteris? Well, if you are determined upon it, of course you can. Would you like to hear the result? She is torn from the arms of her bridegroom—the story of her folly is given to the world—she is known as the wife of two men, until at least it is proven that the first was no marriage at all. If the blow does not kill her, she is in time reunited to Sir Vane, but the scandal follows her her life long. Supposing the first marriage to have been legal, even, a divorce can be procured, and she is still free. In any case, all you can do to Sir Vane is to separate him for a few months from his bride, to whom finally (always-supposing the exposure does not kill her) he will be again united. And now for yourself. In the hour you stand face to face with Olivia Charteris, you shall be given over to the hands of the law. For her sake I spared you two years ago—for her sake you shall be branded as the thief you are, then. Do you know what your sentence will be? One-and-twenty years, at least, on Norfolk Island. You will have broken her heart, driven her into her grave, in all probability, and yourself in a felon's cell. Now, choose! The way lies yonder. Go up to the room above, you will find her there, happy, by her bridegroom's side. Go up, I will not lift a finger to hinder you, and on the instant you set your foot upon the first stair, my servant shall summon the police. Take your choice, Robert Lisle, and quickly."

He drew out his watch; in fifteen minutes more the newly wedded pair were to start on the first stage of their wedding journey. The self-command of Geoffrey Lyndith was great, but his lips were gray now, and drops of moisture stood on his face. He touched the young man on the shoulder, cold with inward fear.

"You have your choice," he said, "decide! Go up and demn-yourself to a felon's cell for life, or go out of yonder kill the woman you pretend to love, by the sight of you, con-door, and never return. Quick!"

Robert Lisle arose, and turned to his torturer. To his dying day, that ghastly face haunted Geoffrey Lyndith. In that instant he felt as though he had stabbed him to the heart.

"I have decided," he said, hoarsely, "and may the God above judge you for it! You are as much a murderer as though my blood reddened your hand. Her life shall never be blighted by me; her proud head brought low in shame

through act of mine. She loved me once—aye, say as you will, liar and traitor!—as she never can love the man by whose side she will spend her life. I go, and as you have dealt by us both, Geoffrey Lyndith, may Heaven deal with you!”

He raised his arm, and the man before him recoiled. He was not superstitious, nor cowardly in any way, but his heart stood still for a second, and that cold dew shone in great drops on his face.

“I have conquered,” he thought, “and another such victory would drive me mad!”

He heard the door open and shut, and drew a great breath of unutterable relief. His enemy was gone; he was saved!

CHAPTER IX.

AT HALF-MOON TERRACE.

The interview had occupied half an hour precisely; and during that half-hour, Sir Vane Charteris sat amid his wedding guests, and ate, and drank, and laughed, and was serenely courteous to all, while a horrible dread filled him. Except for that one instant, his face never blanched, never altered. Does the old blood tell (the Charteris family had been baronets since James I.), or are they only true to the traditions and codes of their order? The French marquis arranges his necktie, and blows his smiling adieux to his friends, on his way to the guillotine; Sir Vane sat at the head of his wedding breakfast, knowing that the bride he had so hardly won might be torn from him forever in ten minutes, and smiled, and jested, with an unmoved front. But, would Geoffrey Lyndith never come?

He came at last—very, very pale, everybody noticed, but quite calm. He apologized with courtly fluency, for his extraordinary absence at such a time, and resumed his place at his own table. Sir Vane never glanced at him after the first moment; and the nuptial breakfast went on, and came to an end at last. At last! To the bridegroom it seemed an eternity since he had sat down. The bride went upstairs, to put on her traveling dress—then for a few seconds Sir Vane got Mr. Lyndith alone in a recess of one of the windows.

“He is gone?” he asked.

“Gone, and forever,” Geoffrey Lyndith answered. “I have conquered as I did before. Of his own free will, he has left the house, the country, and her forever. If quite convenient, my dear nephew, I will take that promised check.”

The bridegroom smiled grimly as he produced the check already filled out, and handed it to his new relative.

"I have seen Circassians sold in Stamboul, and quadroons in the West Indies, but never Circassian nor quadroon were more surely bought and sold than your haughty little niece. Well, out of such a dot as hers, one can afford even the price of ten thousand pounds."

Half an hour later, and the happy pair were off, and away on the first stage of their Italian honeymoon.

Like a man struck blind and deaf, Robert Lisle passed out of the dim, green light of Mr. Lyndith's stately hall, to the broad, pitiless glare of the April noon. He staggered almost like a drunken man—a red-hot mist swam before his eyes—a surging rush of many waters sounded in his ears—he put his hand as if to ward off the blinding brightness of the noon-day sun. He descended the steps, and passed on; he had forgotten the waiting hackney coach, and his new-found acquaintance still sitting there—he remembered nothing, but that he had lost her—of his own choice, had left her unseen, and forever. He went on, still blind and deaf to the busy life around him.

"Now, then, my man! do you want to find yourself under my horses' feet? By Jove! he is there!"

He was crossing the street; why, he could not have told. A carriage pole struck him on the head, after he was down. The horses were checked immediately; the driver leaped out and drew the fallen man from beneath his phaeton.

"Such infernal stupidity! Is the fellow blind? I called to him, but he wouldn't get out of the way. If he is killed it's no fault of mine"—this to the gathering crowd—"I say, my man, I hope you're not very badly hurt. Gad! I'm afraid he is! Does anybody here know him?"

"I know him," said a voice; and Duke Mason elbowed his way through the throng.

"I wish you swells would mind where you are going, and not knock the brains out of every peaceable citizen who tries to cross the street! Hawksley, my poor fellow! Good Heaven! he's dead!"

He did not look unlike it, truly. The blow, at least, had stunned him; he lay quite white and rigid, his eyes closed, the blood trickling in a ghastly way from a cut near the temple.

"No, he's not," said the young military "swell" whose phaeton had knocked him over; "but he came deucedly near it. He's only stunned. I'm very sorry, and all that, you know; but the fault wasn't mine."

With which the cornet got into his trap again, with rather an injured expression, and droye off.

Duke and another man lifted the rigid form of the prostrate Hawksley, and carried it to the hansom.

He gave the order, "To Half-Moon Terrace!" and sat with feelings by no means to be envied, watching the streets fly by, and the deathlike face of the man before him, until Bloomsbury was reached.

It was a second time that day a hansom cab had startled the inhabitants of Half-Moon Terrace out of their normal state of repose. And this time female heads came to doors and windows, as the driver and Duke carried between them what appeared to these female eyes to be the stark form of a dead man. Rosanna herself flung open the door before they had time to knock, with a face her brother did not choose to look at; and Robert Hawksley was borne into the little dingy parlor, then into the little dingy bedroom adjoining, and laid on Duke's own neat, plump bed.

The driver was paid and dismissed, and the tug of war very near. Duke had to look at his long-suffering sister now, and the expression of that stony face might have frightened a braver man.

"Oh, Rosanna! don't scold. I could not help it, upon my sacred honor, I couldn't!" Duke cried in a sort of frenzy; "if you'll just listen half a minute I'll tell you all about it."

And thereupon, for the second time that day, Duke poured out the story of his adventure into the wondering ears of Rosanna.

"Now, could I help it—could I? I put it to yourself, Rosanna. You wouldn't leave him to die like a dog in the street, would you? And he'll come round in half an hour, or so, and then he will be able to go home himself where he belongs. Poor fellow! It seems a pity to see him like that, doesn't it, Rosanna?"

"Go right round to Mr. Jellup this very minute; tell him it's a case of life and death, and don't stand chattering there like an overgrown magpie," was Rosanna's answer; "that man will die if something is not done for him shortly, and I'm not going to have any dead man on my hands. If Mr. Jellup isn't here in five minutes, Duke Mason——"

But Duke Mason did not wait for the completion of the awful sentence—Rosanna's face completed it. He clapped on his hat, and rushed after his sister's favorite practitioner, and Mr. Jellup was there in five minutes.

It was Sunday morning. Duke had a holiday in spite of Tinsel & Spingle. It was his first treat as he sat up, yawning, to find the little kitchen glorified by a burst of sunshine, the breakfast in a state of preparation, and Rosanna gazing down on him with a face of owl-like solemnity. Was

he in for it already? "Was the justice of the king about to fall?"

"What is it, Rosanna?" he hazarded.

"Duke," responded Rosanna, "I have something very strange to tell you. That child has a locket, with a man's picture and lock of hair, round her neck. Duke, the picture and hair both belong to that sick man."

"Rosanna!"

"It is true. Look for yourself, if you like. It's my opinion he's the child's father!"

"I think it's uncommonly likely," said Duke. "We'll try and find out before he goes, Rosanna. If we're to bring up Mistress Polly, it strikes me I should like to know her name at least."

By Sunday Mr. Hawksley had sufficiently recovered to be able to thank his friends and tell them that he must leave the country without delay.

Duke was filled with curiosity, but deferred making any inquiries till the evening, when the stranger voluntarily told his eventful story.

CHAPTER X.

TOLD IN THE TWILIGHT.

"You wonder, very likely," Mr. Hawksley began, with perfect abruptness, "that I should take a journey all the way across from New York, and only remain three or four days before going back. You will wonder more, when I tell you why I came: I came to find my wife."

"And—you have found her?" ventured Duke, half alarmed at his own temerity.

"Found her, and lost her forever, in the same hour."

"She is dead?" Duke had hazarded again.

"Yes," Hawksley said, in a strange, compressed sort of voice. "Dead—dead. Would you like to hear the history of a life that has been a failure? I feel in the mood to-night—for the first time in two years—for the last time perhaps in my life. A romantic story, my good fellow," with a sort of laugh; "of how the son of a yeoman won and lost 'a lady of high degree,' as the old song has it. A yeoman son, educated far and above his sphere, by an eccentric godfather well-to-do in life, and started to push his fortune at the age of twenty-two, as secretary to a gentleman in the House of Commons. I fulfilled my duties, it appears, so satisfactorily, and was willing to receive such very slender wages, that my

gentleman, who was neither rich nor generous, resolved to retain me as long as he could. And when the house dissolved, he took me with him to his country-seat down to the heart of Staffordshire. I met her there. It is over three years ago now, but in this hour, and to the last of my life, I will see her as plainly as I saw her that first day, standing breast-high amid the waves of barley, her hands full of corn-flowers and poppies, her white dress waving in the sweet summer wind, a golden gray sky over her head, and the rosy light of the July sunset in her face. She was only sixteen, and home from school for a two-months' vacation, an orphan heiress, with a face like one of Raphael's Madonnas, and a heart—a heart as constant, and as true, as the rest of her sex. An orphan heiress, engaged from her tenth year to a baronet, bound to marry him by her father's deathbed injunction—her very fortune depended on it—if she refused, that fortune went to endow and build a Hospital and library.

"I knew nothing of the engagement—it is doubtful whether it would have mattered much if I had; still I think now it would have been more honest on her part, if she had told me. She didn't care for her affianced husband, of course; he was much her senior—she rather disliked him, indeed, in those early days. And she loved me!"

He paused, the smoke from his cigar curled upward, amid Rosanna's lemon geraniums, and hid his pale face in the fading daylight.

"We fell in love with each other, after the most approved three-volume romance fashion, and there were clandestine meetings, and vows of eternal constancy, under the moonlight arcades of the old court. Before a month had elapsed, we had made up our minds, and informed each other, we would assuredly die if separated, and that separation was very near. She was going to spend a fortnight with a bosom friend in Scotland, before going back to school, and after that nothing remained but a broken heart and an early grave. My poor little girl! How pretty she looked in the gloaming, as she clung to my arm and implored me to save her. Salvation seemed very easy just then to me. She was going across to Scotland; what was there to hinder my following, and having our marriage performed there. Private marriage was easy in Scotland—no license, no witness—a quiet ceremony some fine day, and lo! our happiness was secured for life. She was a little frightened at first, at this high-handed proposal, but she consented soon. We said good-by—if any of the household suspected our secret, I think the composure with which we parted must effectually have deceived them. She went to Scotland. Three days after I received a note from her. The

resolved to re-
 ouse dissolved,
 n to the heart
 three years ago
 life, I will see
 anding breast-
 of corn-flowers
 sweet summer
 he rosy light of
 y sixteen, and
 on, an orphan
 adonnas, and a
 rest of her sex.
 ar to a baronet,
 d injunction—
 ed, that fortune
 y.

ubtful whether
 I think now it
 if she had told
 il, of course; he
 aim, indeed, in

I upward, amid
 face in the fad-

most approved
 ere clandestine
 r the moonlight
 had elapsed, we
 other, we would
 i was very near.
 osom friend in
 ter that nothing
 grave. My poor
 loaming, as she
 her. Salvation
 going across to
 ing, and having
 iage was easy in
 ceremony some
 or life. She was
 ed proposal, but
 ay of the house-
 sure with which
 m. She went to
 from her. The

next morning I went to my employer, and asked a holiday. It was the first hypocrisy of my life, and I bungled over the simple request, until he looked at me with wonder, but he granted it. I left the Court ostensibly to visit my godfather, in reality to travel to Scotland at full speed.

"On the very day of my arrival, a pouring September day, our marriage took place. A superannuated old man, who had been a minister, but whose too strong proclivity for the whisky bottle had caused a suspension of his duties, performed the ceremony readily enough, for a few crowns. We were married according to Scotch law, without a single witness, but whether such a marriage contracted by a minor under such circumstances would hold in England, is an open question.

"When her fortnight among her Scottish friends expired, she returned home. I followed her in two days after, and things went on in their old way—the moonlight walks, the secret meetings, the old vows, and talk, and bliss—old as Eden—the sweeter always for being stolen.

"She pleaded so hard not to be sent back to school until after Christmas, that her uncle, indulgent in all minor matters, consented.

"The autumn passed—such a golden autumn! We had been four months married, when our well-guarded secret was discovered. My employer said nothing—he was a man rather to act than to talk—but suddenly, without a word of warning, my wife was spirited away. I was sent early one day on a commission to the neighboring town; when I came back she was gone. That is more than two and a half years ago. I have never seen her but for one moment since, and that was yesterday."

He paused again to light another cigar.

Duke understood him perfectly. He was intensely interested in this story—far more interested than the narrator yet knew.

"There was no scene; the uncle met me even more blandly polite than usual; but I felt he knew all. Two days after, while I was still unresolved what course to pursue, he called me to his study—his valet was busy about the room, I remember, at the time—and locked up in his safe, in my presence, a quantity of unset jewels, and a sum of money in bank notes. It was an old-fashioned safe, with an ordinary lock, by no means the kind in which to intrust three thousand pounds' worth of family diamonds, and six hundred pounds in money. He was dictating a letter to me while he did this, and I saw him put the key of the safe in his pocket.

"I am going to Swansborough this evening. Robert, he

said to me, in his most confidential way, 'and I shall probably not return for two days at least. In my absence the care of this safe is intrusted to you!'

"I looked at him in surprise and distrust.

"'Why leave such valuable jewels in the house? Why not deposit them in the Swansborough Bank?'

"His answer was very careless, and quite ready.

"'Because, immediately upon my return, they are to be taken up to London, to be new set for Olivia. Her marriage with Sir Vane Charteris is to take place in two months, and they are to be set according to her fancy.'

"He looked me straight in the eyes, with a dark, sinister smile, as he said this, and left the house. It was the middle of the afternoon as he rode away. I recollect his turning round, with the same smile on his dark face, as he rode down the avenue.

"'Watch the safe, Robert,' he repeated; 'it will be as secure in your keeping as though in the strong room of a bank.'

"It was the middle of the afternoon. As the dusk of the bleak December evening wore on, the postman brought the mail. There was a note from her, dated London, begging me to come to her at once—to lose not a moment. There was the address of an inn, where I was to stay, and at such an hour she would come to me there. I never doubted that note. What was my employer, and his diamonds and his safe, to me then? I ran to my room, packed my portmanteau, waited until the house was quiet, and that very night, without informing any one, was on my way to London. I reached the inn late the next day. A great part of the journey was performed in stagecoaches. I waited for my wife, but she never came. I waited three days. At the end of that time there came, instead of Olivia, her uncle and an officer of the law, armed with a search-warrant.

"On the night of my departure, my employer, returning rather unexpectedly, found the safe unlocked, the jewels and money gone. I was gone, too. Every inmate of the house was examined, but all proved their innocence triumphantly. I was the guilty party beyond a doubt, and I was followed. After two days' search they found me. I and my baggage were to be examined. I listened with astonishment and anger and scorn! Examine! Let them examine as long as they pleased! They searched me—a degradation I submitted to, afire with rage! They examined my portmanteau. There, carefully sewed up in the lining, the jewels and money were found!

"My late employer dismissed the detective. We were left

I shall probably
ence the care of

ouse? Why not
eady.

they are to be
Her marriage
wo months, and

a dark, sinister
was the middle
ect his turning
as he rode down

t will be as se-
ong room of a

the dusk of the
an brought the
don, begging me

There was the
ut such an hour
bted that note.

his safe, to me
anteau, waited
ght, without in-

I reached the
ourney was per-
e, but she never

that time there
icer of the law.

oyer, returning
the jewels and
ce of the house

e triumphantly.
I was followed.

nd my baggage
ment and an-
as long as they

I submitted to,
anteau. There,
nd money were

alone together. He looked at me more in sorrow than in anger; and I—I sat benumbed. My guilt was plain; there were the jewels and money—the number of the notes all taken and found to correspond. What had I to say for myself that I should not be handed over to the law? I had not a word. I sat stunned, and listened to him while he talked. For my dead parents' sake—poor but honest people—for god-father's sake, he was willing to spare me. On condition that I left the country at once and forever, I should not be given over to the fate I deserved—hard labor and penal servitude, most likely, for life. His niece, who had been greatly shocked by the news, had begged him to hand me a note; he would give me half an hour to decide and to read what she had to say. I tore open the note as he left me, still too stunned to utter a word.

"She knew all," she wrote; 'she begged me for Heaven's sake not to provoke her uncle to prosecute. He was merciless, if once aroused, and everything was against me. She believed in my innocence, would always love me, and be true to me, but I must fly now, and without seeing her. She dared not see me, it would break her heart, it would kill her, if I were arrested and condemned, as I would surely be—hanged, even, perhaps. She felt as though she were going mad—I must fly—I must fly—if I had ever loved her, I would leave England now.'

"She gave me an address to which I might write to her, and she would answer me, would fly to join me presently—anything, as that I did not suffer myself to be arrested for robbery now.

"What could I do? What would you have done in such a case? I knew there was a vile conspiracy against me, of her uncle's making, but I never thought he forged those letters. To have been arrested would have been an end to all hope my guilt seemed palpable as the light of noon. In a state of sullen fury I accepted the scoundrel's terms—I left England, flying from the consequences of a crime I had never committed—almost maddened—with no hope, save in her truth and fidelity and love.

"I began my new life in a thriving Western village, rising fast to a populous town. For twelve months luck went steadily against me; then the turn came. I and another started in a business that flourished; we made money—the object of my life was being fast accomplished—a sure and safe competence for the wife I had left behind me. I tell you here only the plain, simple facts of my story—of my sufferings—of my despair, at times, of the hours when I was nearly maddened by failure, and by the loss of all man holds dear—

We were left

I tell you nothing of what sleepless nights and wretched days her silence and my suspense caused me. For she never wrote—no letter came from her to the address in London to be forwarded to me. I wrote again and again to that address—the letters lay uncalled for. It was worse than useless to write to her to the Court; I knew her uncle well enough to be sure they would never reach her. Then I resolved to throw up everything, the tide in my affairs that was leading me slowly along to fortune, and rush back to England, and brave all, and claim her.

“And you found her?” Duke breathlessly cried.

Robert Hawksley made no reply. His last cigar had been smoked out; he sat like a statue of black marble amid the flowers.

“You found her,” Duke repeated, unable to contain himself, “a bride! You found her at the altar, another man’s wife!”

Hawksley, the least excited of the two, turned and looked at him.

“How do you know that?” he asked.

“I know more than you think,” said Duke, still excited. “You found her married, to Sir Vane Charteris. I have heard that you had a singular vision. It needs no interpretation. The lady you saw in your vision was Miss Olivia Lyndith; and on that very night—the twenty-fifth of last month—I saw, and heard in reality what you saw and heard in that singular vision.”

Robert Hawksley was fully aroused now. He had told his story dreamily, as much to himself as to Duke. His tanned face flushed deep red as he rose.

“What are you saying?” he said, hoarsely. “You would not dare to trifle with me——”

“Sit down—sit down!” Duke interrupted. “I’ll tell you the whole affair. It’s the strangest, the most wonderful thing that ever was heard of. Good gracious! what would Rosanna say?”

Then Duke Mason, with breathless volubility, quite unlike himself, poured into the listener’s ear the story of the night of the twenty-fifth of March, every word he had heard, all he had seen, up to the moment of Geoffrey Lyndith’s appearance at the waiting-room of the Speekhaven station.

“And now!” he concluded, out of breath, and glowing with triumph, “what do you think of that? Are you satisfied now that she always loved you—always was true to you?”

The darkness hid the marble pallor that had fallen once more on Hawksley’s face. Only the tremor in his voice betokened what he felt, when he answered:

"I don't think I ever really doubted it--no, not when I saw her at the altar with that man, when I listened to her uncle's falsehoods. May Heaven's blight fall upon him! My darling! my darling!" His voice broke; he put one hand up over his face, even in the darkness. For a moment dead silence fell.

Mr. Mason, not used to this sort of strong emotion off the stage of the Britannia, felt exceedingly uncomfortable.

Hawksley broke the silence, and looked up.

"I beg your pardon," he said, quietly, in his usual tone; "will you tell me what argument her uncle used to induce her to yield, and go with him? You say she defied him at first, and was resolutely bent on going with you."

"She was," Duke said. "It puzzled me for the time, but I think I have hit on a solution of the mystery now. I did not hear what he said to her after the first moment, but there is a sequel to my story of that eventful night, which, to my mind, lights up everything."

Then Duke went backward, and told that little episode of June one year and nine months before, when Dr. Worth had been routed out in the rain, to assist at the birth of a baby girl at Lyndith Grange. Once more Robert Lisle started erect, and eager to listen. He remembered the words Geoffrey Lyndith had let fall, of a child that had died on the day of its birth.

"My opinion is," Duke said, "that old fluke of an uncle abducted the child, and kept it from her all along; and on that night, in the waiting-room, promised to give it up to her if she would consent. She thought you dead; she would sacrifice anything, like most mothers, for her baby, and she consented for its sake. And," continued Duke, in a perfect burst of triumph, "that child is in the next room!"

"In the next room?" Mr. Lisle could but just repeat. "In the next room!" And once again Duke began—there seemed no end to the story-telling—and related the receipt of Olivia's note, and how singularly, on her wedding morning, she had given the child to his care.

"There can be no doubt whatever about it," Duke said; "it is the same child of Dr. Worth's tale, and your wife was the mysterious lady. She told me plainly the child was hers, and to make assurance doubly sure, it has a locket with your picture and hair round its neck. My sister recognized the likeness this morning, and spoke to me about it. You saw the child half a dozen times to-day—yours beyond the shadow of a doubt. Its paternity is written in its eyes."

There was still another pause. Duke got up and lit the lamp—he avoided these blanks in the conversation.

"I'll fetch Polly in, if you like—she calls herself Polly—that is, if she's not asleep."

But Polly was asleep; and not for a regiment of fathers would Rosanna have her disturbed. She was reading "Blair's Sermons" by a solitary dip in the kitchen, and looked about as placable and yielding as a granite Medusa.

"As Mr. Hawksley has waited so long, I dare say he can wait until morning," was her grim reply, as she went back to "Blair's Sermons."

"Your sister is right," Mr. Hawksley said. He was white as marble, and looked almost as cold. "I will see the child to-morrow to say good-by."

"Good-by! Then you mean to leave England—to give up all claim to—"

"Lady Charteris," he spoke the name quite calmly, quite coldly, "is out of England by this time, on the first stage of her bridal tour to Italy. For her sake I once gave up name, character and my native land; for her sake I make a greater sacrifice now. I give up herself. Think, for a moment, of all that is involved in my coming forward and claiming her. I break her heart, I blight her life, and in the moment we meet, we are torn apart. I to stand my trial as a thief. I am innocent; but I cannot prove it. It is the old struggle of might against right. As it is, she may learn to forget; happiness and peace may come to her. I cannot make her the talk of England. I can't drag the story of her girlish indiscretion before the world. She will cease to think of me, and I——" He clenched his hands, and great drops stood on his pallid face. "May God keep me from a suicide's cowardly end!"

His folded arms lay on the table, his head fell forward upon them. So Duke Mason, with bated breath, and a great compassion in his heart, left him.

* * * * *

The morning came, gray and overcast. A London fog had set in, and a sky like brown paper frowned down on the smoky city. But little Polly, in her blue silk dress, bronze boots and her golden locket and flaxen ringlets, looked sunshiny enough to light up the whole parish of Bloomsbury herself.

The strange gentleman with the blue eyes so like her own, and tawny beard, took her in his arms, and looked into her small face; and Polly, who flouted Duke and Rosanna as haughtily as though she had been Czarina of all the Russias, "took to him" in a way that was quite amusing. She

ls herself Polly—

giment of fathers
as reading "Blair's"
and looked about
asa.

I dare say he can
as she went back

id. He was white
will see the child

gland—to give up

uite calmly, quite
n the first stage of
nce gave up name,

he I make a greater
for a moment, of
and claiming her.

in the moment we
trial as a thief. I
the old struggle of

arn to forget; hap-
cannot make her the
f her girlish indis-

to think of me,
great drops stood
e from a suicide's

head fell forward
breath, and a great

* *

st. A London fog
owned down on the
e silk dress, bronze
nglets, looked sun-
ish of Bloomsbury

res so like her own
nd looked into her
e and Rosanna as
na of all the Rus-
ite amusing. She

kissed his bearded lips, let him look at her lockets, told him her name was Polly, and that "Dozy" was "all gone away."

"I suppose her name is Mary," Duke suggested, "and she calls herself Polly for short."

"Her name is Paulina," Mr. Hawksley said, quietly. "I am quite certain of it. Pauline was the name of—of her maternal grandmother, and of her mother's twin sister—an old family name among the Lyndiths. This child's name is Paulina Lisle. I took my mother's name in America, and shall keep it. Let her grow up as Mason; keep her with you always, unless her mother should claim her. Her right is always first, and most sacred."

He kissed the child yearningly, wistfully, and put her down. Half an hour later and he had left Half-Moon Terrace forever.

"*The Land of Columbia* leaves again to-morrow," he said to Duke; "I shall return by her."

They shook hands and parted, with no more words, and the scene-painter went to the Britannia. He was not sentimental nor imaginative in any way, but all that day, and for many days, the pale face and dark eyes of Robert Hawksley haunted him like a ghost. The *Land of Columbia* sailed on Tuesday morning. On Tuesday night there came a letter to Half-Moon Terrace, addressed to Duke. A check for five hundred pounds fell out when he opened it, and he read these lines:

"You spoke of wishing to save enough to purchase for yourself a home in Speekhaven, where you said there was a better opening for you than in London. It is my desire that you should do so at once, for my child's sake. Once a year I will write to you, and you to me, telling me of her progress and welfare. I go to make a fortune for her; please God, my daughter shall be an heiress, before whom those who scorn her now shall yet bow down. Let her grow up as your own—in utter ignorance of her own story. If I live, I may one day return to England, and to her—if I die, be her father in my stead.

ROBERT HAWKSLEY."

And so the first chapter in little Polly's strange history was read and ended.

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER FOURTEEN YEARS.

"And it will be the most splendid thing ever seen in Speckhaven, Rosanna! Figure to yourself yards and yards of Chinese lanterns sparkling through the trees, plashing fountains, and the divine music of Holmesdale's military brass band! Fancy the long tables groaning—that's the word—groaning under the roast beef of old England, and foaming flagons of ale! Fancy flags flying, and bells ringing, and everybody eating and drinking, and making merry, and your little Polly sharing the glories of the hour with the Honorable Guy Paget Earlescourt, second and favorite son of Lord Montalien, of Montalien Priory, Lincolnshire."

"Polly!"

"Well, I mean as the prettiest girl at the feast. And I'm quite determined to go, Rosanna, so iron my white muslin dress, like a dear old love, and say no more about it."

The spirited speaker of this oration stood in the middle of the floor, a tall slip of a girl, with a slim waist, sunburned hands, and a clear, ringing, sweet, young voice. The prettiest sight on earth—a fair, joyous, healthy girl of sixteen.

It was high noon of a delicious June day, and she stood in a burst of sunshine that flooded the little parlor, that flashed in her short, auburn curls, and sparkled back from her joyous eyes. Fourteen years ago you saw her a lovely baby, and now she is an "English miss" of sixteen. And has the fair baby beauty fully kept its promise in the girl? Well, at first glance you might be inclined to say no. Crop the flowing locks of the Venus Anadyomene, give her a sunburned complexion, and a smudge of dirt on her nose, put her in a torn dress, and what becomes of your goddess but a good-looking young woman with a pair of fine eyes? Polly labors under all those disadvantages at present, after her nice, dusty walk through the blazing noonday sun; but in spite of the smudge on her nose, it is a very pretty nose, perfect in shape and chiseling. The mouth may be a trifle larger than a rosebud, perhaps, but it is a handsome mouth, with that square cut at the corners, which makes a mouth at once res-

lute and sweet. She may be tanned; you may see a few freckles under her eyes, but oh, those eyes!—so blue, so radiant, flashing with life, and health, and fun, and mischief, from morning till night! You neither saw freckles nor tan, once their lustre flashed upon you. The auburn hair is short-cropped, and all curling round her head; and standing there in the June sunlight, she looks like a saucy boy, an audaciously saucy boy, ready for anything in the way of fun or frolic, from smoking a cigar to riding an unbroken colt round the paddock without saddle or bridle.

Rosanna sits before her—Rosanna, whom old Time no more dare approach than any other man. Fourteen years have left her absolutely and entirely unchanged—grim of aspect, kindly of heart, sharp of tongue, and a model of all the Christian and domestic virtues, with only one weakness, and that—Polly! Polly, who has been her torment, her plague, her idol, any time those fourteen years; whom she worries about all day, and whose innumerable sins and ill-doings keep her awake all night; whom she scolds, and loves, and spoils, and to whose will she bows in as abject submission as her weak-minded brother himself.

Polly's earliest recollection is of this pleasant eight-roomed house, in the suburbs of Speekhaven, with its little flower garden in front, its kitchen garden and paddock in the rear, its spotless whiteness of wall, and brilliant green of shutters. Of London, and "Dozy," and her baby life, all memory is gone. She believed the story of herself current in the town—a very simple story—that she is the orphan child of dear old Duke's cousin, dead and gone, and left as the sole legacy of the dying man.

"And a precious legacy I have been!" Polly was wont to observe in parenthesis. "Duke don't mind my enormities; indeed, if I murdered somebody, I don't think it would surprise or trouble him any, but that poor Rosanna! I've been bringing her gray hairs (she won't dye), with sorrow to Speekhaven Cemetery, every hour since she got me first."

So Polly had shot up, tall, slim, pretty, healthy, and self-willed. She had persisted in catching every disorder incidental to childhood. She had made Rosanna sit up with her for weeks and weeks together, and she had torn more new dresses, and tumbled off more dizzy heights, than any other child on record. She liked her own way, and insisted on having it, with an energy worthy a better cause, and here she stood at sixteen, the prettiest and wildest made-up in Lincolnshire—a handsome, blue-eyed brunette.

With Robert Hawksley's five hundred pounds, Duke had purchased this pretty cottage, just outside the large, but

town of Speckhaven; and Rosanna's dream was realized of a cottage in the country, with flower garden and poultry yard.

Once every year since then Duke had received a letter, containing fifty pounds, and all of those fifty pounds were safely nestled in Speckhaven Bank for Polly. Mr. Hawksley had gone to California when first the gold fever broke out there, and last Christmas, when his letter came, was there still; but whether making that promised fortune or not, Duke had no means of knowing, and Mr. Hawksley never said. Polly knew him as her godfather, and was very much obliged to him, indeed, for his handsome presents, which constituted such a nice little sum for her in the bank. She wrote him a letter every year since she first learned to write; but beyond this of herself or him she knew nothing. Duke still persevered in his old vocation, and was scene-painter-in-chief to Speckhaven Lyceum, and portrait painter to the town.

The fourteen years had glided on smoothly, uneventfully—from which one eventful month shone out a bright oasis in the desert. He walked to Lyndith Grange sometimes, in the gray of the summer evening, smoking his pipe, and thinking of that cold March night so long ago, when the romance of his life began. Of the actors in that romance he had never seen anything, since the day he had bidden farewell to Robert Hawksley. Of Mr. Geoffrey Lyndith, of Sir Vane and Lady Charteris, he never even heard the names. They might be all dead and buried, so completely had they dropped out of his life. The old Grange was utterly deserted now; the grim gateway would yield to any hand that chose to push it, but few ever chose. Stray artists who thought it picturesque in its decay, made sketches of it when the sun shone, but after nightfall neither artist nor peasant liked to linger in its gloomy precincts. Those visits, and an occasional look at his treasured opal ring, were all that remained to Duke, besides his bright Polly, to keep the memory of that past time alive. Dr. Worth still told the story of that rainy night, when he had been carried off bodily to the Grange; but people were getting tired of hearing it, and were more interested in the great house of the neighborhood, Montalien Priory, where great goings-on were this time taking place. Lord Montalien's second son was just of age, on the third of June, and there was to be a birthday celebration, and that's why Polly stands here flushed, and swinging her gypsy hat by its rosy ribbons, and talking with many gestures and vast interest to Rosanna.

"Dinner at sunset on the lawn, Rosanna," the girl was saying, with her face all alight; "all the tenantry and all the

... people belonging to the Priory, and anybody the bailiff and Mrs. Hamper, the housekeeper, like to invite beside. I have an invitation from both of 'em, and I'm going with Alice Warren. Then after dinner and speech-making, you know, and all that, there's to be a ball in the great entrance hall, among the old chaps in armor, and the antlers, and battle-axes, and boomerangs, and things. A ball, Rosanna—a real out-and-out ball," repeated Polly, with owl like solemnity, and the largest capitals.

"But, Polly, you're not the tenantry, nor the tradespeople," retorted Rosanna, who, having not an atom of pride for herself, had yet heaps for Polly. "You're a young lady, and——"

"Fiddle! I beg your pardon, Rosanna, but I'm not a young lady. I'm Duke Mason, the scene-painter's poor relation, brought up out of charity, and nothing else. A young lady, to my mind, is a person like—like Miss Hutton, now, who never toasted a muffin, nor washed up the tea-things in her life. I know what I am—I wish I was a lady, but I'm not. And I'm going to the dinner and the ball, Rosanna, and as it's my first ball, I intend to dance with everybody who asks me. If one can't be rich and aristocratic themselves, it's pleasant to mix with people that are, and the ladies and gentlemen are going to dance with the common herd, and be sociable for once, in a way."

Polly's grammar might be obscure, but her meaning was clear. She was going to the ball, and would like to see who would stop her.

"Well, Polly, if you insist—but mind, I don't like it——"

"Of course you don't, Rosanna; you never do like fun and frolic, and we're all worms, ain't we? But I'm going though, so please hurry up and iron my new muslin dress, for I promised to call for Alice at four o'clock. And, oh, Rosanna! who knows? perhaps Lord Montalien himself may ask me to dance."

"Stuff and nonsense, child! Lord Montalien is sixty-seven years old, and has the gout. A pretty figure an old sinner like that would cut, dancing with a chit like you. Have the quality come down?"

"Came this morning—Lord Montalien and his two sons, Mr. Francis and Mr. Guy, Sir Vane and Lady Charteris, and their daughter, Miss Maud Charteris, and a Miss Diana Hutton. Sir Vane and Miss Diana are both second cousins of my lord."

Polly pronounced those great names with an unction good to hear.

"There's a Mr. Allan Fane, too, an artist, Mrs. Hamper

ized of a
try yard.
a letter,
nds were
Hawks-
ver broke
ame, was
ne or not,
ley never
ery much
hich con-
nk. She
to write;
g. Duke
ainter-in-
er to the

entfully—
t oasis in
nes, in the
l thinking
omance of
had never
ll to Rob-
Vane and
hey might
opped out
now; the
to push it,
it pictur-
sun shone,
l to linger
ional look
to Duke,
that past
iny night,
; but peo-
interested
en Priory,
ace. Lord
d of June,
hat's why
hat by its
vast inter-

girl wa.
nd all the

told me, who is said to be paying attention to the rich Miss Hautton, and all the gentry in the neighborhood are to be there to-day."

"I should think," said Rosanna, getting the muslin robe ready for the iron, "Lord Montalien would have made all this to-do when his eldest son and heir came of age, instead of this younger one."

"Mr. Guy is his favorite—everybody knows it. Mrs. Hamper told me the story. Lord Montalien," said Polly, intensely interested in her theme, "was married twice—I heard all about it in the peerage, up at the Priory. His first wife was rich, and plain, and ten years older than my lord, and a match of his father's choosing. Lord Montalien was in love with somebody else, but he yielded to his father and married the rich and ugly Miss Huntingdon, and hated her like poison."

"Polly?"

"Well, I don't know, of course—I should think he did—I would in his place! But, fortunately, she died two years after her marriage, leaving Mr. Francis, and there was his lordship free again. Of course he immediately returned to his first love, an Italian lady, and, oh, such a beauty! Her picture's up there in her boudoir, and Mr. Guy is her son. She died before a great while, too, and Lord Montalien has been a sort of Banfyid More Carew ever since, wandering about like Noah's dove, and finding no rest for the sole of his foot."

"Polly—don't be irreverent!"

"And so you see, Rosanna," pursued Polly, paying no attention, "it's clear enough how Mr. Guy comes to be his favorite. He looks like his mother, whom his father loved, and Mr. Francis looks like his mother, whom his father detested. That's logic, isn't it? Mr. Francis is very well-looking, you know, but Mr. Guy—oh, Rosanna! Mr. Guy's an angel!"

With which Polly bounced away before Rosanna's shocked exclamation had time to be uttered.

When Polly gleefully told Duke of her intention to go to the ball, and of the possibility of her being captured by one of the grandees there, something rose in the honest fellow's throat and nearly choked him. Two willy willy arms went round his neck in an instant.

"Why, Duke! Dear old Duke, don't you want me to go? I never knew it—why didn't you say so? I'll take off these things, and sit here with you all the afternoon."

He held the hands that would have flung the roses out of her belt.

"No, duchess, go to the ball, and enjoy yourself—and God

bles you, whatever happens. I'll call for you after theatre-time, and fetch you home."

He opened the door for her, while she looked at him wonderingly, to let her pass out.

"But, Duke, you're quite sure you'd just as lief I'd go? Rosanna objects, but then Rosanna says we're all worms, and objects to everything, except eating a cold dinner, and going to church three times on Sunday. But if you would rather I stayed——"

"I had rather you would go—haven't I said so? There! run away, Polly, I must get back to work."

"Good-by, then," Polly said, and the white dress and the short, yellow curls and pink roses vanished down the stairway, and Duke went back to his work.

The sun was low in the west, when the door of the painting-room was flung open, and Rosanna, pale and excited, stood before him.

"Duke," she gasped, "I never thought of it till this minute. I heard the name, and the truth never struck me. Lady Charteris is at Montalien, and Polly has gone there; and Duke! Lady Charteris is our Polly's mother!"

CHAPTER II.

AT MONTALIEN PRIORY.

Montalien Priory was just three miles distant from the cottage; its great boundary wall began almost where their little garden ended. A vast and noble park spread along all the way to the right—to the left little cottages, standing in pretty, trim gardens.

One of these, close to the great entrance gates, Polly entered. Dozens of people, in their Sunday best, with happy faces, were making for the Priory.

"Alice! Alice!" Polly called, as she went up the little garden path, "are you ready?"

"Yes, Polly," a voice from an open window answered, "wait a moment until I find my parasol."

It was the cottage of Mathew Warren, the bailiff, and Mathew Warren's only daughter was Miss Mason's chosen friend and confidante. She came out of the vine-wreathed doorway now—pretty Alice Warren, two years Polly's senior, resplendent in apple-green muslin, and cherry ribbons in her rich, brown hair. There were people who called Alice Warren the prettiest girl in Speckhaven, far prettier than Polly, who at this position age was a trifle too plain, and pale, for

certain tastes. Alice was your very ideal of a rustic beauty—plump—rosy—dimpled—a skin milk white and rose pink—white teeth, light-blue eyes, and abundant, nut-brown tresses.

"How nice your white muslin makes up!" Miss Warren remarked, with an admiring glance. "Rosanna's such a laundress. Oh, Polly!" with a sudden change of tone, "I've got such a secret to tell you! Guess who came home with me from Speckhaven last night?"

"Peter Jenkins," Polly hazarded.

Peter Jenkins was a miller, and a very worthy young man, who had been "keeping company" with Miss Warren during the past twelve months.

"Peter Jenkins!" retorted the bailiff's pretty daughter, with what, in a heroine, would have been a tone of ineffable scorn. "No, indeed! Polly, you'll never tell, now will you?"

Polly protested.

"Well, then, it was Mr. Francis Earls court, the Honorable Francis Earls court!" said Miss Warren, her whole face one glow of triumph.

"Alice! Mr. Francis! But I thought they only came down this morning."

"He came last night, and it was almost dark, you know, Polly; starlight, and that, and I was all alone, and he came up to me and spoke, and I knew him at once, and he remembered me, too, though he hasn't seen me for four years. And, Polly, he offered me his arm, and I was afraid to refuse, and afraid to take it, and he talked all the way, and I declare, I hadn't a word to say."

"What did he talk about? Did he talk like Clive Newcome or Ivanhoe, and, oh, Alice, is he handsome?"

"I don't know what he talked about—my heart was in my mouth, I tell you, Polly. He said it was a beautiful evening, and that he liked the country, and he told me I had grown tall and—and prettier than ever," said Alice, blushing. "And I think him handsome; he's tall and thin, and wears a mustache; and has the softest voice and hands, and——"

"Head, perhaps!" said Polly, irreverently. "I wish I had been in your place, I'd have talked to him, and if my heart got into my mouth I'd have swallowed it! You'll introduce him to me, won't you, Alice? I should like him to ask me to dance."

"Oh, I'm sure I don't know," responded Alice, with a sudden cooling off manner, and a sudden recollection that some people thought Polly Mason quite as good looking as herself. "I shouldn't like to make so free as that, you know. It's all very well if they take notice of us, but it wouldn't do for us

to force ourselves upon them. He asked me if I wouldn't give him as many dances as he wanted to-night; and, Polly, do you know, he said he wouldn't be satisfied unless he got every one. And then, he gave me a look—such a look!"

"I wonder what Peter will say?" suggested Polly, maliciously, and a trifle jealous, as young ladies will be of their best friends on some occasions; "he has given you looks before now, too, hasn't he? There! don't be vexed, Alice; I hope he'll dance with you the whole night long. I only pray I shan't have to sit out many—I should die of vexation if that Eliza Long is asked and I'm left."

They were entering under the great stone arch by this time, with its escutcheon—two mailed hands clasped, and the motto *Semper Fidelis*. This Norman arch, and one part of the Priory, was old as the Conquest itself—erected by the hands of Norman masons. An avenue a mile long led to the Priory—a lofty and noble mansion, gray and ivy-grown, quaint and picturesque. Tall, twisted chimneys reared up against the June sky, its painted windows blazed in the sun, its pointed gables, its lofty turrets, where a huge bell swung, and around which the ivy, many and many a century old, had clung until its girth was pretty nearly that of an oak tree. Velvety glades, stone terraces, where peacocks strutted in the sun, long, leafy arcades, where cool, green, darkness ever reigned, and glimpses, as they drew near the house, of a Norman porch, where woodbine and dog roses clustered, and an open door, revealing a hall with armor on the walls, skins of Canadian wolves, of Polar bears and African lions, on the polished oak floor. A noble hall, with a grained roof, and grand staircase, up which you might drive a coach and four.

"How beautiful it all is!" Polly cried. "How splendid! How grand! Think how, for centuries and centuries, it has descended from father to son, all brave warriors, great statesmen, noble orators. And we have never had a grandfather! How glorious life must be in the world these people live in!"

But Alice was not listening to this outburst—her eyes were wandering in search of some one—some one whom she did not see. It was a pretty sight, too, and well worth looking at. The noble Priory, the sunlit glades, smooth and trim as a lawn, and shadowed by magnificent oaks and beeches, and gathered there nearly three hundred persons, men, women and children, tenantry, farm laborers, servants and tradespeople, with their wives, sweethearts and children. And over all waving trees and sunny, serene sky.

"Look! look, Polly!" exclaimed Alice, **breathlessly**; "there come the gentlefolks now."

Polly lifted her dreamy eyes. Something in the golden beauty of the scene stirred her heart with a feeling akin to pain. She looked up at the terrace to which her friend pointed, and saw a group of ladies and gentlemen looking down at the animated scene below. "Oh, Polly!" breathlessly; "I wonder if he will see us! Look! he is coming down."

A tall young man, in a high hat, dress coat, and white waistcoat, ran down the terrace stairs. Two long tables were spread under the shadow of the trees, laden with substantial viands, and at the head of one of these he took his place. A moment later, and a second young man separated himself from the group on the terrace, and descended the stairs, and took his place at the head of the second table.

"It's Mr. Guy," whispered Alice. "Shall we go over, Polly? They—he hasn't seen us."

Polly looked at Guy Earls court as he came down through the blaze of sunshine, and for years and years after the splendid image she saw then haunted her with remorseful pain. She saw the handsomest man she had ever seen in her life—youth, rather, for was not this his twenty-first birthday? He was tall, like his brother—like his brother, he wore a mustache, as became a newly-fledged guardsman, and a certain air, as he moved, struck you as similar. Beyond that there was no resemblance. Francis Earls court was fair, with pale-gray eyes, and light-brown hair, full, rather large mouth, and a pale, retreating forehead. Guy Earls court still wore his loose velvet morning coat—perhaps he knew nothing could harmonize better with the Rembrandt tints of his clear, olive complexion, and large, lazy brown eyes—eyes that had a golden light and a dreamy smile in them. A straw hat was thrown carelessly on his black curls, a slender chain of yellow gold glimmered across his waistcoat, and Polly clasped her hands as she looked.

"How handsome! How handsome!" she said. "Handsome even than the picture in the crimson drawing-room. Alice, there's no comparing them—Mr. Guy is a thousand times the handsomer of the two."

"Tastes differ," Alice said; "I don't think so. Here's father—shall we go and get a place?"

"Oh, Mr. Warren, tell us first who are the ladies up on the terrace? I know who they are, of course, but I don't know which is which. That little girl is Miss Maud Charteris, I suppose?"

"The little girl in the pink frock is Miss Maud Charteris," said the bailiff, coming up, "and that small, dark lady, with the fair hair and black dress, is her mamma. The tall,

thin young lady is Miss Diana Hautton, the gentleman beside her is Mr. Allan Fane, the short, red-faced, stout gentleman with black whiskers is Sir Vane Charteris—and the tall, elderly gentleman, with white hair, is my lord himself. Now, you girls, if you want to get a seat, come along.”

He led them, to his daughter's intense delight, to the table at which Francis Earls court presided. That gentleman's face lighted into a smile of pleased recognition at sight of Alice's smiles and blushes.

“Here, Warren, where are you going? Miss Alice, I have been looking for you in vain the last half-hour.” (“That's a story to begin with,” thought Polly.) “Here's a seat—I insist upon it—you shall sit here and help me do the honors.”

He made a place for her beside him, looking almost as admiringly at her companion. But there was no room for Polly, who declared she hadn't come to eat and drink, and wasn't hungry, and would wait. The bailiff left her; he had a thousand things to do, and Miss Mason, leaning against a huge chestnut tree at some distance, regarded the people on the terrace with longing, dreamy eyes. She did not know what a pretty picture she made standing there, the slanting sunlight on her face and short, golden hair, or that the group on the terrace saw her.

“What a pretty girl! what a very striking face!” exclaimed Mr. Allan Fane, the artist; “there under the chestnut, Miss Hautton, by herself. See, Lady Charteris, yonder. Like one of Greuze's blue-eyed, dimpled beauties.”

Mr. Allan Fane should have known better, certainly, accustomed to society as he was, than to praise one woman in the presence of another, and that other Miss Diana Hautton. But this was only a peasant child—a pretty model, perhaps—nothing more.

Miss Diana looked rather disdainfully. She was a tall, very thin, very high-bred young lady, with pale features, and an aristocratically aquiline nose—with quite a patrician hook, indeed. She had three thousand a year in her own right, and the best blood in England in her veins, but her hair was getting thin at the parting, and she was not—well, she was not as young as she had been ten years ago, when first presented by her kinswoman, the Duchess of Clauronald. Ten years had gone by, and the Honorable Diana was Miss Hautton still, and the attentions of Mr. Allan Fane had been decidedly marked lately, and now he stood here, and his eyes lighted with the artist's fire as he looked at a wretched little peasant girl as they never lighted while gazing on her.

Miss Hautton raised her eyeglasses, and shot a glance of cruel scorn across at Polly.

"I see a dowdy, village schoolgirl, in a white frock, and hair cropped like a boy's. I confess I never could see goddesses in sunburned, red-cheeked dairymaids."

Miss Hutton dropped her glass, and walked over to her cousin, Lord Montalien. Lord Montalien, with a few more crow's feet under his eyes—a little grayer, a little more bored by life and people—otherwise unaltered since fourteen years ago, when he stood on the deck of the *Land of Columbia*, and talked to Robert Hawksley.

Mr. Fane saw his mistake, and knew his duty was to follow and appease the Honorable Diana. But the Honorable Diana was eight years his senior, and sallow of complexion, and exacting as to temper, and in spite of her blue blood, and her three thousand a year, apt to pall sometimes on the frivolous mind of a beauty-worshipping painter of four-and-twenty. Standing on the terrace there, Mr. Fane looked and admired, and fell in love with Polly on the spot.

A hand placed suddenly on his own awoke him from his trance—a cold hand that made him start—and looking up, he saw Lady Charteris.

"Who is that girl?" she asked.

Fourteen years had done their work on Olivia, Lady Charteris. The dark face Duke Mason had thought so beautiful in the flickering firelight that March night so long ago was worn and aged, as though she had suffered much in her thirty-three years. She was fixedly pale, the large, dark eyes looked almost unnaturally large in her small, colorless face, and the smiles that came and went were rare and cold as starlight on snow. Her summer dress of black grenadine, with gold leaves, heightened her pallor now.

Sir Vane and Lady Charteris, outwardly, were on the politest and most amiable terms, the baronet particularly, who on all public occasions was almost remarkably civil and attentive to his cold, silent, self-contained, handsome wife.

Had Lady Charteris forgotten?—had all those years blotted out the memory of her childhood's romance—of the young husband she had loved and lost, of the child, his child, whom she had given to strangers? She saw a slender girl in white muslin, her profile turned toward her, and the sunshine gilding her face, and her heart, that had lain like a stone for so many years, gave one sudden leap. That profile! that attitude! where had she seen them before? She knew, even as she asked the question, and turned faint and sick for an instant. The next she started up, laid her hand on the young artist's, and asked the question:

"Who is that girl?"

The girl moved on the moment, and her face was turned

tull toward them. The likeness that had struck on the heart of my lady like a blow, vanished. The face she saw now bore no resemblance to that other face over which she believed the waves of the Atlantic to have swept for sixteen dreary years.

"Who is that girl?" she repeated.

Mr. Fane looked rather surprised; it was something very new for my lady to be much interested in anything. She was interested now—her lips were apart—her eyes fixed intently on the fair, childish face that shone like a star under the chestnut.

Mr. Fane did not know, would ascertain, if her ladyship felt the slightest interest in the matter. He was a languid young man, with a delicate, pale face, and slender, white hands, whiter and softer a good deal than Polly's.

"Of course you don't know," Lady Charteris said, as if to herself. "Inquire? No, thanks; it is not worth while. It is a striking style of prettiness for a farmer's daughter—that is all."

Her listless manner returned—her interest in the girl seemed to fade. Not so Mr. Fane's; he ran down the steps to inquire on his own account.

"If I could get her to sit to me for my Rosamond," he thought, "Miss Hautton would do for Eleanor. It is a striking style of beauty for a farmer's daughter, as her ladyship says. From what Arab chieftain did she derive that arched instep, under which water might flow? from what line of 'highly wed, highly fed, highly bred' aristocrats did she inherit that Grecian profile, and that imperial poise of the graceful head? If she had ten thousand a year, instead of the Hon. Diana, or half, or quarter that sum? Shall I go up and address her; she seems quite alone?"

Mr. Fane wasn't aware whether or no it were necessary to be introduced to this class of young persons; still he beckoned Mathew Warren over to him, and signified his gracious pleasure.

"I say, my good fellow, you're the bailiff, I believe, and know all these people, of course. Who's that pretty girl over there? Introduce me."

Mr. Allan Fane was a clever young man, who had made his mark in the academy, and he spoke with a languid drawl of high life, which sits so gracefully on strong young men, six feet high. He was the third son of John Fane, merchant tailor, Bond street, London, who was a son of—well, I suppose the handsome artist must have had a grandfather in reality, but he certainly had none to speak of.

The Honorable Diana Hautton wanted . . . and, no

irock, and
ld see god-

over to her
a few more
more bored
rteen years
lumbia, and

was to fol-
Honorable
complexion,
blue blood,
imes on the
of four-and-
looked and

m from his
oking up, he

livia, Lady
thought so
ight so long
red much in
large, dark
all, colorless
re and cold
grenadine,

e on the po-
ularly, who
ivil and at-
me wife.

ears blotted
the young
child, whom
girl in white
nshine gild-
stone for so
! that atti-
ew, even as
k for an in-
the young

was turned

doubt, and Allan Fane was good-looking, and elegant, beyond doubt, but if she had been aware of this disgraceful fact (of which we have informed the reader in confidence), he would have been sent to the right about, within the hour. Diana Hautton, first cousin of a duchess, and a sister of a peer, marry the son of a merchant tailor! Why, there were dead-and-gone-Hauttons in the great family vault who would have turned with horror in their graves at the desecration. He had taken his degree at Oxford—society received him and made much of him, for his last winter's picture had been a success, and not even Guy Earls court, his Damon just now, knew of the well-to-do tailor of Bond street.

Mr. Mathew Warren performed his part as master of the ceremonies, by saying with a grin:

"Polly Mason, here be Mr. Fane, a-wanting to be introduced to you."

And Polly looked around with a bright smile, and not the least in life abashed.

Abashed! Wasn't Alice Warren, her friend, and Eliza Long, her enemy, both looking at her? Wasn't Mr. Francis Earls court talking to one, and Mr. Guy, the hero of the hour, to the other? And one of these superior beings had taken the trouble to come all the way down from the terrace to be introduced to her.

It was a lovely afternoon, Mr. Fane informed her, and how nice it was to see so many people enjoying themselves so heartily. And how was it Miss Mason had not dined, and how did she happen to be quite alone here?

Miss Mason responded with perfect self-possession and candor. She didn't come for dinner at half-past four in the afternoon. She had had hers at twelve, and she was alone—well, waiting until the dancing began, and some one asked her.

"Then you are disengaged! Miss Mason, will you honor me with the first quadrille?"

Honor him! Honor him! Polly looked to see if he were laughing at her, but Mr. Fane was quite in earnest. Yes, Miss Mason would be very much pleased to do so, thank you.

"But I shall not be satisfied with the first quadrille—I am going to ask you to keep all the round dances for me! I know you dance like a fairy, Miss Mason. I can always tell. Do you know we were wondering who you could be up on the terrace—you look so different, so much superior, if you will pardon me saying so, to the rest. Lady Charteris was quite interested. She asked me if I knew who you were. If you will accept my arm, Miss Mason, we will take a turn under the beeches; it is pleasanter than standing here in the sun."

Polly cast a bright, delighted glance up at the lady on the terrace who deigned to ask about her. And Lady Charteris caught that glance, and again the sharp pang of resemblance smote her to the heart.

Oh, who was this girl? Could it be—— Her face blanched to a gray, chalky pallor, a sudden wild thought crossed her brain. Could it be? She would be about the age of this girl now—this girl so like—yet unlike the only man she had ever loved. Other eyes saw them as they paired off. Lord Montalien put up his glass—Sir Vane Charteris glanced at Miss Hautton with a covert sneer.

"Doosid pretty girl—eh, my lord? Fane's inflammable heart has struck fire again. We'll see no more of him for the rest of the afternoon."

"I say, Guy," Francis Earls court observed to his brother, with a laugh, when the quadrille ended—the brothers left their partners, and chanced to meet—"have you noticed the fierce flirtation Fane's got up with that little girl with the short hair?"

"What little girl? Haven't noticed. As Sir Callahan O'Brallahan observes, 'There's so much going on everywhere, there's no knowing what's going on anywhere.' I had a pretty girl myself, but she was tongue-tied, and lisped, and never opened her lips except to say yeth thir, and no thir, pleathe, through the whole dance."

"Fane's partner seems to have enough to say for herself. Hear her laugh now. Her name's Polly Mason, poor child; but what's in a name. Still, I don't believe we would pity the late Mr. Romeo Montague quite so much if the lady who swallowed the poison had been Polly Capulet."

Guy Earls court looked lazily. The nonchalance affected by Mr. Fane was real enough in him, and honestly inherited from his father. His Italian mother had given him her splendid eyes, her black silken curls, and the dusky Southern beauty of his olive face. If she had given him her Southern fire and passion it all lay latent now, under the languid grace of his creed and his order. At one-and-twenty this handsome, indolent young guardsman fancied he had outlived every phase of human emotion, love, jealousy, ambition, and that life held nothing worth living for, save prime Latakia, good cigars, a waltz with a pretty girl, and a well-made betting-book. He looked with his habitual lazy indifference at his friend, and his friend's flirtée.

"Ah, yaas, she is pretty, deuced pretty, too pretty, by Jove, for Fane to have things all his own way. I shall make him introduce me presently, and go in, and cut him out."

Mr. Fane left his partner on a rustic seat under a tree, and

went for an ice, and when he returned, five minutes after, there stood Guy Earls court leaning over the back of the chair, and Polly listening, and blushing, and smiling, with timid, downcast eyes, and cheeks flushed like the June roses in her sash.

Mr. Fane looked at Mr. Earls court—Damon looked at Pythias with an absolute scowl.

“What the deuce brings you here? You needn’t trouble yourself to say it, Fane,” observed Guy, with the Brummel nonchalance that sat so naturally on him; “your face says it quite plainly enough. Doesn’t it, Miss Mason? Miss Mason and I are old friends, or ought to be, which amounts to the same thing. She’s been acquainted with my portrait for the past ten years, she tells me, and really, my dear fellow, you can’t expect to monopolize the belle of the occasion in this preposterous way. Miss Mason has promised me unlimited dances, and she is going to waltz with me in two minutes.”

“Miss Mason has promised me unlimited dances, Mr. Earls court.”

“Rash promises are much better broken than kept. Tra-la-la—our waltz, Miss Polly!”

He whirled her off, and the last thing Polly saw was the annoyed face of the artist.

Her heart throbbed with rapture. This was excitement. Two gentlemen—gentlemen actually quarreling about her already! Mr. Fane was very well, but Guy Earls court, the son of Lord Montalieu, the hero of the day, was a great deal better. And oh! how handsome he was, and how beautifully he danced. She hoped Eliza Long was looking, and dying of envy—Eliza Long, who had once called her a red-haired, forward minx!

The waltz ended all too soon. And “I never regretted the close of a dance before,” whispered Mr. Earls court, in her ear. And he gave her his arm, and brought her refreshments, and before the ice was eaten, up came Mr. Francis, requesting his brother to present him, with his suave smile.

That day was a day to be marked forever in Polly’s calendar, a day of perfect, unalloyed bliss. She danced again with Mr. Allan Fane when Mr. Francis Earls court was done with her, and she walked with him down the green, woodland paths, and he quoted Byron and Moore, and other amatory poets, and the band played not earthly music, it seemed to her, but the harmony of Olympus.

The rosy sunset faded, the white June moon rose up, and the stars came out.

Mr. Francis came up once again, and asked her to lead off a contra dance with him.

The moon was shining now; the blue was a-glitter with the stars, and the evening wind swept up from the sea, but Lady Charteris still stood at her post, still watching with yearning, wistful eyes that slim, white figure that now flitted before her, now vanished in the hazy distance.

A number of visitors—their country neighbors—had arrived, and Lord Montalien and her husband and Miss Hautton were entertaining them. Her little daughter raced up and down with a curly King Charles at her heels. She was quite alone, full of deep and painful anxiety, when she saw Guy Earls court lounging lazily up the stairs. She stopped in her walk; he was a favorite of hers, as he was with all women.

"Awful hard work, Lady Charteris," he said, solemnly; "worse than a day's run after the fastest pack in the county. I've danced three sets of quadrilles, two waltzes, and one cotillion, and I give you my word, I'm fit to drop. Look at yonder light-hearted peasantry disporting themselves. Egad! the energy with which they go in for it is fatiguing only to look at. I never realized before how thankful we should be that one's majority comes only once in a lifetime."

He flung himself into an armchair, and produced his cigar-case, the picture of an utterly exhausted young man.

"You will permit me, Lady Charteris!—ah, thanks. Six hours in the saddle on a rainy day, when the House meets, is bad enough, but I prefer it to three hours' consecutive dancing on the grass under a June sun, and with such energetic young ladies as those down there. Where's Di?"

"She has gone in. Guy!"

Lady Charteris spoke abruptly.

"Yes, my lady."

"Who is that pretty girl in white I saw you dancing with half an hour ago? Ah! there she is now, with Frank—fair-haired, and dressed in white."

Guy turned his lazy brown eyes in the direction indicated.

"That's Polly," he answered; "and Polly's as jolly as she's pretty, which is saying a good deal. That young person in white—see how she laughs!—it does one good to look at her!—is Miss Polly Mason, my Lady Charteris."

"Mason!" One slender, white hand of the lady rested on the youth's shoulder. He felt it close there now with sudden, spasmodic force. "Mason!"

There rose before her at the sound of the commonplace name the vision of a dreary railway waiting-room, a shivering figure crouching before the fire, and a pale-faced young man repeating his name and address, "Marmaduke Mason, No. 50 Half-Moon Terrace." She grew so white so rigid,

that Guy half removed his cigar, and looked at her in surprise.

"My dear Lady Charteris, you are ill! Has the smell of my cigar——"

"Guy," she interrupted suddenly, "will you give me your arm? I should like to go down there—to——" Her voice died away.

He gave her his arm, with one gentle glance of reproachful surprise, quite thrown away upon her, as it chanced, and led her down below.

CHAPTER III.

"ALL NIGHT IN LYNDITH GRANGE."

The nine o'clock sunshine streaming in Polly's window, awoke her next morning. Polly, as a rule, was inclined to be lazy o' mornings, but brisk Rosanna routed her out without mercy at six. To-day, she let her sleep. The child hadn't got home until half-past eleven—three miles, you know, on a lovely moonlight night, with a handsome young man beside you, is a long walk. Rosanna knew nothing of the handsome young man, she knew nothing of the hours during which little Polly tossed on her bed, and could not sleep. Sleep! The red, the yellow, the purple lights flashed before her, the band music clashed in her ears, and the faces of Allan Fane and Guy Earls court swam in a golden mist. Her breast was full of delicious unrest; he was coming to-morrow, and all the to-morrows, and this was bliss, this was love. Poor little Polly!

All this glad tumult faded away in sleep—she awoke with a sort of guilty start to see the new day's sunshine.

Duke was at work in his painting-room, Rosanna was at work just outside the back door, up to her elbows in suds. Polly's toast and tea awaited her, and, in spite of her unhappiness about her looks, and her degraded state generally, she ate three large slices, and drank two cups of tea. Then she got her sun-hat, and her drawing materials, and prepared to make a morning of it, as she often did, under the greenwood tree or down by the shore—sketching from nature.

She did not go far, however. She perched herself on the garden wall, and went wandering off into a dreamy reverie. The faces of yesterday shone before her in the sunshine—the darkling splendid face of Guy Earls court, with its brown, brilliant eyes, and lazy, beautiful smile. The face of Allan Fane, fair, womanish, perhaps, but eminently good-looking,

and what Polly prized more, aristocratic. Tall, haughty Diana Hautton, dark, pensive Lady Charteris, little Miss Maud, with her rose-silk and streaming ribbons. Such high-bred faces all; such lofty, high-sounding names. And she was Polly Mason. Polly Mason, hopelessly vulgar, and common.

"I suppose I was christened Mary," the young lady thought. "Mary's no great things, but it's better than Polly."

And then mechanically she fell to drawing. The face that haunted her most was the face her pencil drew almost without volition of her own. The pencil sketch was careless and crude, but bold and full of power; so absorbed did she become over her work that she never heard approaching footsteps, and a voice at her elbow suddenly made her jump.

A very good likeness, Miss Mason, but don't you think you have flattered a little—just a little—our friend Guy?"

"Mr. Fane!" Polly jumped from her perch, with a gasp, and tried to hide away her drawing in overwhelming confusion. What would he think of her? What could he think but that she had had the audacity to fall in love with this splendid young guardsman, who had asked her for unlimited dances, and then only waltzed with her twice? But Mr. Fane set her at her ease. He did feel a twinge of jealousy—the sparkling face had pursued him in dreams all night—it was such a rare face—such a piquant face. Pretty faces there were by the score, but only one Polly Mason.

"You promised to show me the seaside cave, where you and Miss Alice Warren used to play Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday," he said, "and I have come to claim your promise. And this very afternoon, Miss Polly, I mean to drive you up to the Priory, and have our first sitting for the fair Rosamond. Miss Hautton has been also kind enough to pose for my Queen Eleanor."

"I think Queen Eleanor must have looked like that," answered Polly, remembering the haughty glances Miss Hautton had cast upon her humble self yesterday. "She seems as though she could give a rival that pleasant choice between the poison bowl and the dagger any day. No, thank you, Mr. Fane, I won't take your arm; people don't do that in Speckhaven, unless——" she stopped and blushed.

"Unless what, Miss Mason? Unless they are engaged—is that what you mean? I see it is. Ah!" with a telling glance under Polly's old sun-hat. "That, Miss Mason, would be too much happiness."

He really thought so at the moment. When this young gentleman was fascinated by a pretty girl he generally hunted down his prey with something of an Indian trapper's inten-

sity. And the artist must admire those cloudless blue eyes, that angelic mouth, those serene lines of future beauty, let the man cling to Miss Hautton's money-bags ever so closely.

Mr. Fane, seeing his danger, and wise from past sad experience, shied off this dangerous ground, and betook himself to pleasant generalities. He was a good talker, as talking goes in general society, *au fait* of the last new opera, novel, actress, and latest Paris fashion; and all those topics were deliciously fresh and new to Polly.

They went into the seaside cave together, and the artist made a sketch of it and the girl, with the wide sea before her, and the sunlight on her sweet, fair face. And then Miss Mason sang for him, that he might hear the echo ring along the rocky roof; and Allan Fane wondered more and more. Such a voice—rare, sweet, and powerful. She did not sing "The Night Before Larry Was Stretched;" she sang the song young Quintin Durward listened to in rapture, so many years ago, in the quaint old French town, and her thoughts left Allan Fane, and an olive face shone before her, lit by two brown eyes—the face of Lord Montalien's favorite son.

"Ah! County Guy! the hour is nigh,
The sun has left the lea;
The orange flower perfumes the bower,
The breeze is on the sea.
The lark, whose lay has trilled all day,
Sits hushed, his partner nigh;
Breeze, bird and flower confess the hour,
But where is County Guy?"

"The village maid steals through the shade,
Her lover's suit to hear;
To beauty shy, by lattice high,
Sings high-born cavalier.
The star of love, all stars above,
Now reigns o'er earth and sky;
And high and low his influence know,
But where is County Guy?"

"Here!" answered a voice, as the last note died away: "if you mean me!" And to the immense confusion of Polly, and the unconcealed annoyance of Allan Fane, Guy Earls court stepped round the rocky entrance into the grotto.

"Miss Mason, your voice is superb—equal to Lind's, with training. 'Pon my honor, I thought it might be Circe or Calypso, or those what-you-call-ems, sirens, you know, of the Aegean Sea, holding a concert by mistake on the Lincolnshire coast."

"What the—what brought you here, Earls court?" demanded the artist, with no very friendly accent.

Guy looked at him lazily from under his thick, black lashes.

"In the character of 'Paul Pry,' for this occasion only. Well, my dear boy, don't pour the vials of your wrath on me—I am Beauty's messenger. In other words, you promised to drive Lady Charteris and cousin Di over to Heatherholme, after luncheon, and as Di really seems anxious to go, I came in search of you. Had I known——" with a glance at Polly, but Mr. Fane cut in rather abruptly:

"I asked Miss Mason to bring me here, that I might sketch this grotto. Shall we return, Miss Mason, or——"

"Oh, yes, please," Polly answered, shrinking away, she hardly knew why, under the gaze of the brown eyes she thought the most beautiful on earth. "They will wonder where I have gone to at home."

Mr. Fane looked at Mr. Earls court, as if saying, "You hear? You're not wanted. Be kind enough to go." And the young guardsman answered the glance, and walking after Polly, began asking her questions about the town and the sands, as though the topography of Speekhaven were the vital interest of his life.

Polly Mason walked back through the noonday brightness with two gallants, instead of one, and flashed a look upon Eliza Long, as she passed her window, that made that young lady grind her teeth for very envy.

"Montalien's been as dull as death this morning," Guy was saying, plaintively. "Di's been sulky, Lady Charteris a prey to green and yellow melancholy, Frank not to be found (I didn't look in the bailiff's cottage), and little Maud the only human creature in the place to speak to. I think, considering the emergency of the case, and the danger I was in of falling a prey to the blue devils, you needn't look so ferocious, Fane, at my seeking you out in my dire necessity; need he, Miss Mason?"

Polly did not feel as if the interruption were by any means an unwelcome one.

Both gentlemen were delightful, no doubt, but Mr. Guy Earls court decidedly the more delightful of the two. She walked home in a happy trance, and it was all too soon when the little garden gate came in sight. Rosanna was hanging out linen on the gooseberry bushes, and Duke could be seen, with his shirt sleeves rolled up above the elbows, painting in his big, bare, front room.

The two young gentlemen said good-by to Polly, and left her. Mr. Fane made no further allusion to the sitting for his Fair Rosamond that afternoon. Queen Eleanor wished him to drive her to Heatherholme, eight miles off, and of course she must take precedence in all things.

Polly went through her usual afternoon's work of helping

Rosanna "red up," in a state of dreamy happiness; little trills of song bubbled to her lips, smiles and dimples chasing each other over her face. She was always happy, but somehow the sun never shone so brightly nor had life ever seemed so sweet as to-day. Rosanna looked at her, and congratulated herself that she had made her go over that morning. And presently when tea was over, she took her hat and went to the gate to watch the new moon rise—and wish—what did little Polly wish? It was very quiet. The new moon shining in the opal sky, a nightingale singing yonder in Montalieu woods, the soft flutter of the evening wind, sweet from the sea; the rich odor of Rosanna's roses and geraniums in the open window—that was the scene. And fairer than all, as Mr. Allan Fane would have told her, had he been there to see the tall, slim girl, with the sweet, happy face, and dreamy eyes of blue, softly singing "The Young May Moon."

As she stood there a group of four came up the road from the town. Polly's dreamy eyes turned from that silver sickle in the purple sky, and brightened into a light not so pleasant to see as she beheld her arch enemy, Eliza Long. Miss Long was gallanted by the haberdasher's clerk, and behind came Alice Warren and her "young man," Peter Jenkins, of the mill.

"Here she is herself!" exclaimed Miss Long, with malicious vivacity; "I've just been telling Samuel of the grand conquests you've made. How are all your friends at the Priory, Polly, dear?"

"All my friends at the Priory were quite well when I saw them last, Eliza," responded Miss Mason, promptly. "I'll tell them you inquired the next time I see them; they'll feel flattered, particularly Mr. Guy, who danced with you—once, wasn't it, Eliza? and forgot to come back."

"I didn't encourage him as much as some people might," retorted Miss Long. "I don't believe in gentlemen born dangling after country girls. I should be afraid of what people might say of me," concluded Miss Long, with a virtuous toss of her head.

"Then you needn't, Eliza, nobody will ever talk of you in that way. I'm quite sure. Gentlemen have such bad taste."

"Yes," said Eliza, with a hysterical little giggle, "I thought so myself when I saw two of them go by with you. I wonder Rosanna isn't afraid."

"Afraid of what, Eliza? I'll thank you to speak out." Polly's eyes were flashing now, as only blue eyes flash.

"We all know Polly isn't afraid of anything," cried the young man from the haberdasher's, who was mortally jealous.

"She wouldn't go three miles out of her way, as Jenkins did last week, rather than pass the haunted Grange."

"No," answered Polly, disdainfully, "I would not."

"That's easy to say," Miss Long said, with a second toss; "it's not so easy to prove. Polly's as much of a coward as the rest of us, I dare say, if the truth were known."

"I'm not a coward, and I'll thank you not to say so, Eliza. I'm not afraid of you, or what people may say, nor of ghosts either, if it comes to that."

"Prove it," cried the taunting Eliza, "prove it, if you dare, Polly Mason."

Miss Eliza Long understood her antagonist well. To dare Polly to do anything—however mad, however foolhardy, was to insure its being done. Had she not risked her life, only last winter, one stormy day, when dared to go out in a boat to the other side of Speckhaven Bay? And now into Polly's eyes leaped the light that had shone in them then, and her hands clutched together. She looked her adversary straight in the face.

"You dare me to what, Eliza?"

"To pass a night alone in the Grange. You are not afraid of ghosts! Prove it if you dare?"

"I shall do it!" Polly said, folding her arms, and looking daggers and carving-knives at her enemy.

"Yes," said Miss Long, "and Duke need never know. We're all going to a dance at Bridges'; that's only two miles from the Grange, and I'll tell Duke and Rosanna you're coming with us. We will go with you to the Grange and leave you there, and call for you when the dance breaks up, at two o'clock in the morning. That is, of course, if you really mean to go, you know. I wouldn't if I were you, if I felt the least afraid."

The word, the tone, the insolent sneer, stung Polly, as she meant it should. She opened the gate, and came out so suddenly and with such a wicked expression that Eliza recoiled.

"I'm not afraid, and I'll thank you not to use the word again. You're a coward, Eliza Long, and you know it, and you hope something evil may befall me, and you would have given a year of your life to stand in my shoes this morning! Bah! don't think I don't understand you, but I'll go all the same."

Eliza laughed, while she grew white with anger. She did not know she was a murderess in heart, but she did hope the ghosts of the Grange might whisk this insolent Polly Mason off to the regions of the Styx, although Miss Long had never heard of that gloomy river. She ran up to the house without

86 "All Night in Lyndith Grange."

a word, and came back in five minutes to say Polly might go to Mrs. Bridges' dance.

"Don't do it, Polly," Alice Warren pleaded in mortal dread; "you don't know what may happen. It's an awful place, and I should feel as if we had murdered you, if——"

Polly stopped and kissed her.

"You poor, little, frightened Alice! I don't believe in ghosts, I tell you, and I shall go to sleep as comfortably in the Grange as ever I did in my life. Don't let us talk about it. Eliza Long shall never call me a coward."

They passed Bridges' town with its noise and its lamps lay behind them; the lonely, open road that led to the Grange lay white and deserted before them. They passed the cross-roads, where fourteen years before Duke Mason had lost his way. A little more than a mile, and they would be at the Grange. Still Polly rattled on; a stranger might have said, to keep up her courage, but in reality the girl was not afraid. Hers was a nature singularly free from superstition or fear of any kind. She was not afraid, every nerve quickened with excitement; she longed to show this vindictive rival of hers how superior she was to her taunts.

The great gates, the grim wall, loomed up before them at last, and Alice suddenly flung both arms about her friend.

"You shall not go, Polly—you shall not! What will everybody say, and who knows what may happen? Peter, don't let her go—Eliza, speak to her!"

"She may go if she likes, for me," said Peter, boorishly.

"Certainly, Polly, I wouldn't go if I felt the least af——"

She did not finish the word, Polly turned upon her so swiftly and fiercely.

"You had better not!" she said. "Alice, dear, hold your tongue; there is no danger. There are no human things there, and I'm not afraid of the ghosts. None of you need come any farther, if you don't wish."

She opened the gates—they creaked and moved heavily on their rusty hinges, and walked resolutely in. Mr. Jenkins held back, but the other three followed her; Alice still clinging to her, and half sobbing; a Satanic gleam in Eliza's greenish eyes.

They walked up the avenue in dead silence; the unearthly stillness and gloom of the place awed them. Polly spoke, as the house came in view, and her voice sounded unearthly.

"How am I going to get in? There's a window I know of—if you can only raise it for me, Sam."

It was the very window, near the elm tree, in which Duke had sat and stared that memorable night. The ivy made an easy ladder for Mr. Samuel, who in some trepidation moved

and shook the casement. Wind and weather had done their work—the window went crashing into the room.

Miss Mason turned and faced Miss Long with the look of a duelist waiting to fire.

"Will that room do, Eliza, or is there any apartment in the house more especially haunted than another? I should like to please you, and it is all the same to me."

"Oh, don't ask me," said Eliza, shivering slightly as she spoke; "don't say I want you to go; I don't. I think you had much better turn back."

Polly laughed bitterly.

"I understand you, Eliza! If anything happens, you must prove your innocence. Good-night, all; don't fret, Alice, about me."

She seized the ivy, and with one light leap was inside the room. Her dauntless, smiling face looked down upon them from the window.

"Go!" she said; "good-night."

"Come," said Eliza, with another shudder; and "oh, Polly, Polly, come back!" came faintly from Alice. She felt as though she were leaving her friend to be murdered in cold blood.

But the others drew her with them, and Polly was alone in the house where, sixteen years ago, she was born.

She stood by the window until the last echo of their footsteps, the heavy clang of the gates, told her they were gone. A great awe stole over her—not fear—the solemn stillness of the night—the white, spectral light of the moon—the moving of the wind among the trees.

It was like living down among the dead. She turned and glanced about the room. The little old piano stood in its corner, the easy-chair in its place before the black hearth-stone, a spindle-legged table, the faded tapestry, the bare oak floor. Through the corridors the wind wailed, overhead the rats scampered. The girl shuddered for the first time as she listened to them. It was so deadly still that she heard the clocks of the town toll nine. Nine! and she must wait until two or three before they would return. If she could only sleep and dream those long, lonesome hours away. She would try. She knelt down, her face in her hands, and said her prayers a little more devoutly than usual, and then cuddled herself up in the armchair.

Who had sat in this old chair last, she wondered? She shut her eyes, wrapped her summer shawl closer about her, and tried not to think of the cavalier and the mad lady, not to hear the wind or the rats. She tried to think of yesterday's delights, of to-morrow's bliss, when she would go to

Montalien Priory, and sit for her picture. She was in love with Mr. Fane—no, with Mr. Guy Earlescourt—she didn't know which. Presently the white lids went down on the purple lustre beneath, and the blessed sleep of healthful youth came to Polly.

She slept for hours. The moonlight flickered in a ghostly way enough across the floor; the rats scampered like an army of spirits overhead.

Was it in her dream that she heard the gates clang again, and the footsteps of her late companions drawing near the house? Was it in a dream that she heard footsteps that were not the footsteps of the rats overhead?

She sat up all at once, with a start, broad awake. The moon had gone under a cloud, and the room was in darkness.

What was that? Surely, footsteps—human footsteps—along the hall outside, and approaching the door.

Yes, the handle turned, the door creaked and opened!

The girl rose and stood up by no volition of her own, and seemed staring straight at the opening door. Her heart had ceased to beat—she was icy cold all over. Was this fear? She had consciousness enough left to wonder. The door opened wide—there was what seemed to Polly a blaze of supernatural light, and in that glow she saw the form of a woman entering, and coming straight toward her.

CHAPTER IV.

FACE TO FACE.

Had Olivia, Lady Charteris, really grown utterly heartless? Had she entirely forgotten the child she had deserted fourteen years before? Was she a living woman with a heart of stone? There were people who said so, people who said her nature was as cold and colorless as her pale, unsmiling face, people who said she loved neither husband nor child. Perhaps those people were right in that last surmise. Her estrangement from Sir Vane Charteris the whole world was welcome to know, so far as she was concerned. They dwelt under the same roof, they were outwardly civil to each other—the husband, indeed, more than civil, assiduously polite and deferential to his statue of a wife; but for all that they were to all intents and purposes as widely sundered as the poles. It had been so since the birth of little Maud—no one knew the cause. They met by chance—on the stairs, or in the passages (the only places they ever met alone), and the lady swept by with head erect and lashes proudly drooping, shrink-

was in love
—she didn't
down on the
faithful youth

in a ghostly
ered like an

clang again,
ing near the
eps that were

awake. The
s in darkness,
footsteps -
r.

pened!
her own, and
her heart had
as this fear?
er. The door
a blaze of sun-
he form of a
er.

erly heartless?
deserted four-
with a heart of
who said her
smiling face,
r child. Per-
mise. Her es-
ole world was
They dwelt
o each other—
sly polite and
hat they were
d as the poles,
—no one knew
or in the pas-
and the lady
oping, shrink-

lest he should touch the hem of her garments. When
addressed her at the dinner table her answers were always
monosyllabic, and she never looked at him. It was a curious
way to watch them—she as cold, as lifeless to him as the
Lama of the Louvre, whom people said she resembled; he
with the red glow of suppressed fury and mortification rising
in the sullen depths of his black eyes.

Whose fault was it? Well, as is generally the case, the
wife came in for the heaviest share of the blame. She was
a niece, not a woman. She was a marble statue, not a wife.
Sir Vane—was he not always bland, always sociable, always
bonnaire, the most delightful of men? But opinions dif-
fered. Those delightfully social and brilliant men, in pub-
lic, are sometimes intensely selfish and cruel husbands, in
private; and there was a gleam in Sir Vane's black eyes—an
expression about his heavily-cut mouth—that made some fas-
cinations natures shrink away with repulsion, only to look at.

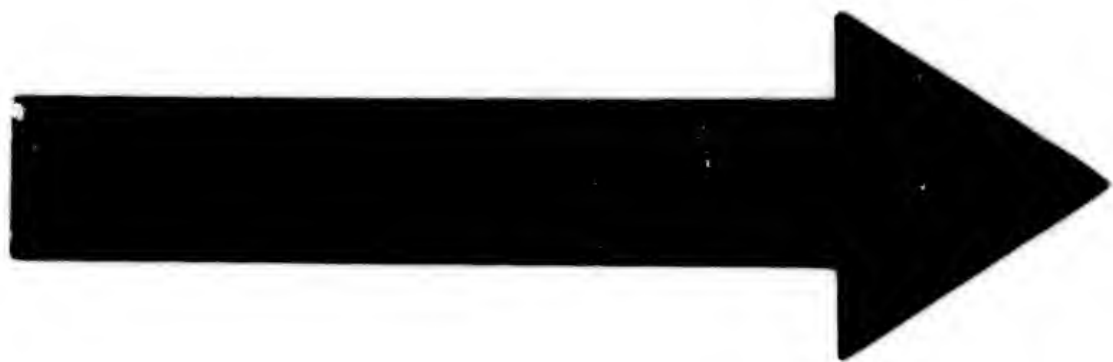
Once, and once only, Lady Charteris had spoken of the
arrangement to Lord Montalien, whom she esteemed most of
all men she knew, when he had striven (very faintly) to bring
about a reconciliation.

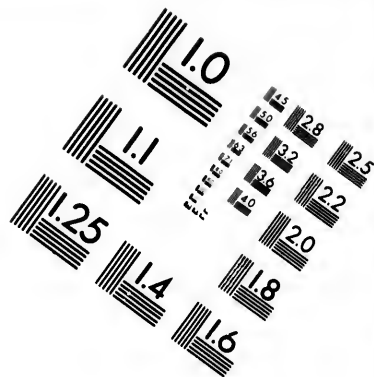
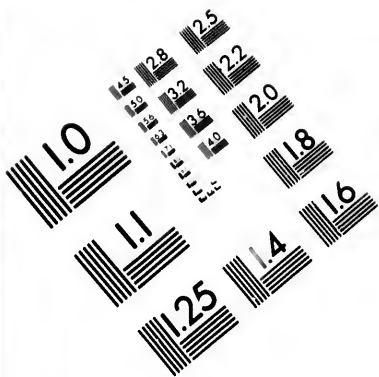
"Sir Vane Charteris has insulted me, my Lord," Lady Char-
teris said. "Women of my race have given back death be-
fore now for less insulting words. If I were on my death-
bed, and he knelt before me, I would not forgive him."

And the dark eyes had dilated, and filled with so terrible a
light, and over the pale face came a glow so deep, so burning,
that Lord Montalien knew she meant it. He bowed his head,
and said no more, and from that hour never tried the *role* of
peacemaker again.

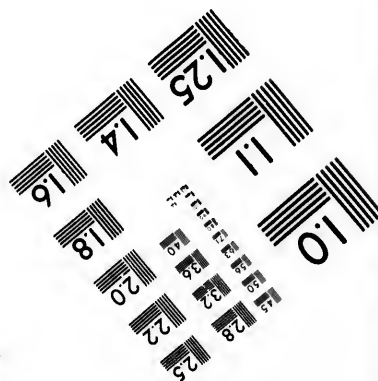
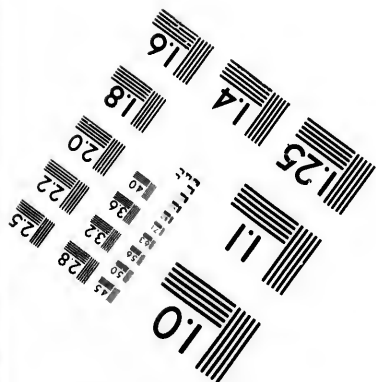
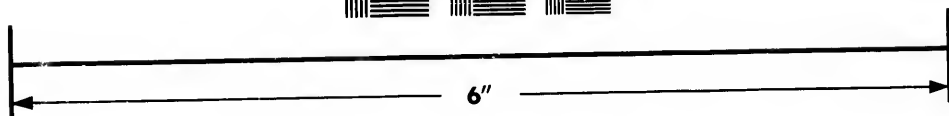
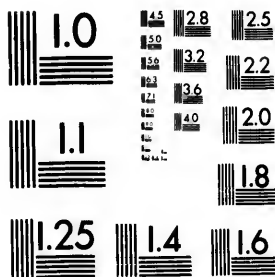
For little Maud, she was her father in miniature—the same
black eyes and hair, the same features, the same nature. She
was his idol. She had not a look of her mother, and he
exulted in it. She was all his own. Could Olivia Charteris,
hating the father, love the child? And the little girl, cling-
ing to her father, never seemed to have any special love left
for her mother. It was an odd, abnormal state of things
altogether, and you see people were more than half right in
calling Lady Charteris a cold, unloving wife and mother.

But the child of her love, of Robert Lisle—that was quite
another matter. Her very love for that child had made her
give it away to strangers, out of the clutches of her uncle
and husband. Had fourteen years steeled her heart there,
as well? Duke Mason, standing before her in the twilight of
the *fete* day at Montalien Priory, knew better. Such pas-
ionate, yearning love as the eyes fixed on the fair young
girl in white expressed, he had never seen in all his life be-





**IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)**



**Photographic
Sciences
Corporation**

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

15
18
20
22
25
28
32
36
40
45

10
11
12
15
18
20
22
25
28
32
36
40
45

fore, except once—once, in an upper chamber of a house in Park lane, where a mother wept over the child she was signing, perhaps forever.

They stood face to face, there under the green trees of the park, and knew each other. Thus they met again. Duke turned cold all over as he stood there. The hour dreaded and utterly had come. The mother had found her child. Her eyes spoke to him: they said "Stay!" as plainly as words. Polly was whirling away in the dance again. Guy Earlescourt was waiting with weary resignation to be led whithersoever her ladyship willed. They moved on, her dress brushed him, her lips whispered "Wait." They disappeared in the silver dusk, and Duke was alone.

The summer light had faded entirely out of the sky, and the moon, and the stars, and the Chinese lanterns had it all their own way; and still Duke sat, and waited as patiently now as he had done fourteen years before, in the elm tree for Olivia Lyndith.

A cold hand falling on his own aroused him—the same chill touch that had startled Lord Montalien's favorite son—and turning round, he saw in the night light Lady Charteris. She looked like a spirit—so white, so unearthly—her black eyes wild and solemn. She had thrown a scarlet cashmere over her dark dress, and her small face shone from the rich red folds like a wan star.

"Come!" she said, "come with me."

Her cold fingers still held his hand. Duke shuddered at their touch. He was in no way fanciful, but just then he remembered legends ran of pale water-spirits bearing away hapless mortals to their doom.

She led him away from the noise and the people, down a green aisle, in whose sombre darkness a murder might have been committed. One or two red lamps flickered luridly athwart the blackness, and a nightingale piped its sweet, mournful lay somewhere in the stillness. Even the braying of the brass band came faint and far-off, here. She clasped both hands around that of her prisoner, and the dark, spectral eyes fixed themselves upon his face.

"She is mine—my daughter—my child—whom I gave you fourteen years ago?"

"She is."

"You have cared for her all those years! She has grown up like that—strong, and tall, and healthy, and beautiful—beautiful as he was, and like him, and like him!"

"Well, yes," Mr. Mason responded, thoughtfully, and quite forgetting himself, "she is like him, and when her face was washed, the Duchess isn't a bad looking girl."²

There was a vision before him as he spoke—Miss Polly, in the kitchen on washing, ironing and baking days, with spots of soot on her oval cheeks, and perennial smudges of grime on her pretty Grecian nose. Indeed, it seemed on these occasions—as the young lady herself observed, with an injured air—that she couldn't so much as look at a pot or a kettle without half the black flying off and transferring itself to her countenance.

"Does she know—who does she think she is?" the lady hurriedly asked.

"She thinks she is Polly Mason, an orphan, the child of a dead cousin of mine. The Duchess hasn't a notion of who she really is."

"The what?"

"I beg your pardon, my lady, I call her the Duchess, because she looks like one, not that I ever was personally acquainted with any duchess," Duke put in, parenthetically. "She called herself Polly; but I never took kindly to the name of Polly."

"Her name is Paulina."

"Yes," said Duke, forgetting himself for the second time. "I know it is. He said so."

"Who said so?"

The solemn, dark eyes were fixed on his face, the friendly darkness hid the guilty red that flushed it at the question.

"Who said so? who could know her name?" the lady demanded, suspiciously.

"It was—it was a sick man who stopped with us, when she came," stammered Duke, who never could learn the manners of good society, and tell polite lies; "he suggested that her name might be Paulina."

"How should he think of it—who was this sick man?"

"His name was Hawksley, my lady."

Duke's heart was throbbing against his ribs. If she only knew!

"If she asks questions enough, she'll surely find it out," he thought, with an inward groan. "I never could stand pumping."

But my lady's thoughts had drifted away to more important things than sick men by the name of Hawksley.

"Why did you leave London?" she asked; "do you know where he wrote to the old address twice, and my letters were returned. The last fell into the hands of Sir Vane, and there was a resemblance?" she twisted her fingers together as though in pain; "and I never dared write again. I would rather have seen my darling dead than that he should find her out. Oh! if he should recognize the resemblance, and discover her identity,

even now! He knew there was a child—he knows I hidden her away. If he should find out! if he should find out!" She clasped her hands around his arm, and looked at him with a face of mortal dread.

"He will not find out, my lady," Duke said, quietly, "you do not betray yourself. How should he—she is Polly Mason, the orphan cousin of a poor scene-painter; and by the resemblance, he will not see it as you do. You do not," he half gasped, as he asked the question. "You will not tell her away, my lady?"

"Take her away!" repeated Lady Charteris; "never, my friend—my good, kind faithful friend! Do you love her—tell me—is she indeed dear to you? Would it grieve you to give her up?"

"My lady, nothing on earth could grieve me so deeply. I don't know how a father may feel for an only child, but I know no father in this world could love a daughter more than I love Polly."

"And your sister—she loves her too?"

"She is the torment and the idol of my sister's life. Every one loves the Duchess."

She put her hands over her face. Tears were falling—the happiest Lady Charteris had ever shed. When she looked up she was ineffably calm in the dusk.

"I have been praying for my darling," she whispered. "O God keep her—God protect her—pure from the world—safe from her enemies!"

"Her enemies—she has none."

"She has a terrible enemy while Sir Vane Charteris lives. Save her from him. Look, Mr. Mason! I was an heiress—it was for my fortune my uncle persecuted me, Sir Vane married me. That fortune was so left me that it falls to my eldest child at my death. He idolizes his daughter—it is his ambition that she shall make a lofty marriage—he has become almost a miser that she may be a great heiress. And Paulina is my eldest child—to Paulina it shall all go at my death—if they cannot prove my first marriage illegal and she illegitimate. I speak calmly of these things, my friend. I have thought of them so often. Paulina will inherit in spite of him—the marriage was legal, I know. I have consulted lawyers on the subject. One hair of her head is done to me than a dozen Maunds—it may be wrong; I cannot tell it. At my death Paulina will come into an income of ten thousand a year—his daughter will not inherit a shilling. It is well he has sufficient for her. He is a bad bold, unscrupulous man, who spares neither man nor woman in his wrath. Tell her this—because you know how he married me, while

loathed him, and told him I loathed him. A man who could stoop to such a marriage would stoop to anything. Could Paulina be safe, think you, then, in his power? We only remain here a week, or two; keep her away from this place during that time. He suspects me now; since our return to England he has watched me as a cat watches a mouse. I don't know what he suspects, what he fears, but it is so. You now I may be missed, he may be searching for me. Mr. Mason, I think I am the most wretched woman the wide world holds—I think my heart broke sixteen years ago when they told me my darling was dead. The only creature in this world whom I love is yonder, and I dare not speak one word to her, dare not give her one kiss for her father's sake."

She covered her face again, and broke out into sobbing—loud, hysterical, but suppressed sobbing. Alas! long years of sin, of surveillance, had taught her, that even grief was a luxury she must not indulge in.

Duke had nothing to say; a woman crying made him cold and hot, by turns. He wasn't much used to it—Rosanna was superior to crying as to all other weaknesses of her wretched sex, and for Polly's tears, though they made him exquisitely miserable at the time, they were speedily dried. They were generally tears of rage, indeed, not of sorrow; and as she sobbed vehemently all the while she wept, it was not in the nature of things her tempests could last long—their very violence used them up. But this was something different; this was sorrow of which the man knew nothing, and he sank away, with a strange desire to take, to his heels, and escape. Some intuition told her it pained him—she dropped her hands, and smiled through her tears.

"I have no right to distress you," she said, sweetly, "you are my best, my only, friend—the only friend at least whom I can trust with the secret of my life. Tell me of my child—is she truthful, is she generous, is she noble-hearted, is she amiable; is she, in a word, like her father?"

"Amiable?" Well, Duke wasn't prepared to say that Polly was on all occasions. She had a tongue and a temper beyond a doubt; she had a will of her own, too, and made most people mind her. But—and Duke Mason's face lit up, and his eyes glowed, and great love made him eloquent, and he pictured Polly to Polly's mother as he saw her—the bravest, the handsomest, the most generous and loving little girl in Great Britain.

"Thank God!" the mother said. "Thank God! And thank you, who have been her father and friend, for so many years. Keep her still—keep her until I die and she comes to her fortune. She will be able to reward you then."

"I hope that day is very far off. I don't want any reward for keeping the Duchess. Life without her would not be worth the having."

"Teach her what you can—I cannot even give you a paltry hundred or two for that. I have not a sovereign without the knowledge of Sir Vane Charteris—not a trinket that he would not miss. I am poorer than she is, Mr. Mason."

"Oh, Polly isn't poor," cried Duke, forgetting himself for the third time; "thanks to Hawksley's generosity, she has seven hundred pounds in the Speekhaven Bank."

"Who is this Mr. Hawksley?" asked Lady Charteris, with renewed suspicion: "who knows Paulina's name, and gives her seven hundred pounds? what does it mean?"

"What a dolt—a dunderhead, I am!" thought Duke, ready to bite his own tongue off. "I've got myself into a pretty mess now! My lady," he said aloud, "Mr. Hawksley is only a very generous and eccentric young man, who took a fancy to Polly's pretty face when a baby, and sends her a Christmas present of fifty pounds from the California gold digging every year. He was just from the States, you see, and I dare say that's how he came to guess her name."

She had not the faintest suspicion of the truth, and this very lucid explanation satisfied her.

"He is very kind," she said; "take the money, then, and educate the child as befits her birth and the station she will one day fill. And now"—she laid her hand upon his arm and drew nearer to him—"a last favor. Will you accompany me to-morrow night to the Grange? A strange request," she added, as she felt how Duke must be wondering; "but I dare not venture to go in daytime. He would suspect something. He is always suspecting. And at night I fear to go alone. Not the cavalier's ghost," with a faint smile, "but the people I might meet at that hour. Will you be my escort to-morrow night?"

"Certainly, Lady Charteris."

"I go at night because, when all have retired, I am free—only then. And I go for something I left behind me in my flight fourteen years ago—ah, you remember that night? My husband's miniature—my lost husband's—Sir Vane Charteris is only that in name—some letters—trinkets—the few presents he ever gave me. They are dearer to me than anything in the world, except his child. I had them ready, and forgot them, somehow, that night in my haste. They may have been removed, but I think not. I left them in the secret drawer of an Indian cabinet, and I know none of the large furniture was ever taken from the Grange. At twelve, to-

"To-morrow night, I will be at the gates—will you meet me here?"

"I will."

She took his hand and kissed it, as she had done that night long ago in the waiting-room at the railway.

"Heaven bless you, best of friends. And now I must leave you—he has missed me long ere this." She flitted away with the words, and he was left alone under the red lamps and nightingale's jug-jug.

He looked at his watch—nine o'clock—the first act would be over; but better late than never. The first violinist of the symphony strode away at a tremendous rate toward the theatre.

Precisely at midnight, the following night, Duke, in a light wagon, was waiting outside the ponderous gate of the Priory. "Were his nocturnal adventures never to end?" Duke wondered, and "what would Rosanna say to-morrow when she found his bed unslept in?" Lady Charteris was punctual, and he drove her along through the quiet night to the haunted Grange.

"You had better wait outside," the lady said, "and keep watch. I know how to effect an entrance, and I am not in the least afraid."

She approached the house with a rapid and resolute step. She might be afraid of Sir Vane Charteris; she certainly was not of supernatural visitants. The open window caught her eye, she clambered up the ivy-rope ladder, and entered. The moon chanced to be obscured, and the figure asleep in the chair escaped her eye. She carried with her a dark-lantern, which she lit now, and passed out of the apartment and upstairs to the chamber that had long ago been her own.

She was right in her surmise. The Indian cabinet had not been removed. She found the spring she wanted, the drawer flew out; there lay the cherished packet. She caught it up, thrust it into her bosom, and rapidly descended.

It was then her footsteps awoke the sleeper.

She opened the door. Polly was standing erect, and very wide awake now.

Lady Charteris paused on the threshold with a low, startled cry.

There, in the house in which she had been born, sixteen years ago this very month, child and mother stood face to face!

not any reward
would not be

re you a paltry
foreign without
rinket that he
Mason."

ng himself for
osity, she has
"

Charteris, with
me, and gives
"

at Duke, ready
into a pretty
wksley is only
to took a fancy
er a Christmas
gold digging
see, and I dare

ruth, and this

ney, then, and
station she will
upon his arm
ou accompany
e request," she
g; "but I dare
ect something
ar to go alone
but the people
eort to-morrow

d, I am free
hind me in my
hat night? My
Vane Charteris
-the few pres-
than anything
eady, and for
they may have
in the secret
e of the large
At twelve, to

CHAPTER V.

POLLY'S MISDEEDS.

Face to face, in the dead hour of the night, in the desolate room of Lyndith Grange, Fate had done her work, and brought those two together at last!

For an instant both stood speechless, spellbound—each with the same wild thought that they beheld a supernatural visitant. Then, as the light of the lantern shone more broadly over the face and figure of the lady, the girl recognized her, and all superstitious fears were swept away in an impulse of uncontrollable surprise.

"Lady Charteris!" dropped from her lips. The words, the sound of a human voice, broke the spell. Lady Charteris knew the slim figure standing before her was not the ghost of the mad lady.

"Who speaks?" she asked firmly. She was intensely nervous, and her heart throbbed almost painfully. "Who are you?"

"I am Polly Mason." Polly's voice faltered a little as she said it. She always did feel ashamed of that intensely plebeian and unromantic cognomen, poor child.

"Polly Mason!" the name of all others now most dear to the heart of the lady. She drew near hurriedly—half incredulous—"Polly Mason!"

She lifted her light high—yes, it shone on the slender, girlish figure, the fair, drooping head, the beseeching eyes, the half-smiling, half-trembling lips, for Polly, thus detected, hardly knew whether to laugh or cry.

"My child! my child!" the lady cried, aghast, "what in the world brought you here? You, of all people alive, and at this unearthly hour?" Polly laughed a little hysterically—the half sobbed:

"Oh, Lady Charteris, it was foolish, I know, and Duke and Rosanna will be so angry when they find it out. I'm half-sorry now I came, but I couldn't help it. Eliza Long, you don't know her, of course—but we hate each other, she and I—dared me to come here and spend a night alone among the ghosts, and I—well, I know I'm a little fool!" Polly cried piteously, and looking up, with her big, blue eyes at the great lady, "but if she dared me to jump into Speckhaven Bay, I think I would do it. They left me here, and are to call for me at two o'clock. It must be near that now. And please, my lady," (very humbly,) "don't tell; I was not afraid. In

deed I wasn't, and I slept nearly all the time; but Duke would be vexed—(Duke's my cousin, please, my lady,) and he's such a dear old cousin, I hate to make him sorry. Oh, Lady Charteris!" Polly clasped her hands "I know this is your house, but I did not know that you or anybody ever came here, or I'd never have done it. Oh, please don't say I've done anything so very, very wrong!"

Polly could talk at all times, and awe of ladies, great or small, she did not know. She wondered to find Lady Charteris here, at such a time, and she hoped Duke wouldn't discover her escapade, but she was as prepared to converse with a baronet's lady as with Rosanna.

It was a moment before my lady answered, a moment during which she stood looking at the girl, with her hand pressed tightly over her heart. The blue, beseeching eyes were so like, so cruelly like eyes that seventeen years ago had been dearer to her than earth and all its glory. It gave her a pang almost as sharp as death to see their counterpart thus. She scarcely heard a word; she only knew that the child of her love stood before her.

"My darling! My darling!" she said, with a smothered sob, "oh my darling!" and the astonished Polly found herself caught in the lady's arms, and tears and kisses raining on her face.

Miss Mason's first impulse was that Lady Charteris had gone suddenly mad. It was not an improbable fancy, under the circumstances, and much more alarmed than she had been any time yet, she strove to get away. She was prepared to meet a ghost, if you like, but not a lunatic. Lady Charteris understood her in an instant, and at once released her.

"I have frightened you, my dear," she said, recovering herself—self-command was a fixed habit with her now; she was not at all likely to give way again, "but you—you resemble some one I once knew. My child, what a strange thing for you to do—to come and spend a night in this dismal place. Were you not terribly afraid?"

"Well—no, my lady, at least not until I heard you upstairs. I don't mind a bit so that Duke and Rosanna don't find out."

"You are very fond of your cousins, my dear?"

"Oh, very!" said Polly, "Duke especially; but every one loves Duke—the starved dogs in the streets, the little beggars who ask alms in the town—everybody!"

Her eyes lighted—yes, very fondly Polly loved "dear old Duke."

"And you are happy—truly and really happy," the lady asked—so earnestly she asked it.

"Happy?" Polly asked: "well, no, not quite; I don't think

anybody could be happy whose name was Polly Mason; Polly! it reminds one of a poll parrot in a cage asking for crackers."

Lady Charteris smiled in spite of herself.

"Is that all? Well, my child, you can console yourself with the thought that, like most young ladies, you will one day change your name."

Polly blushed, and thought of Mr. Fane.

"I ought to be a happy girl, I suppose, for everybody is very good to me. My lady, will you please tell me the time?"

"It is just half-past one," looking at her watch; "my errand here is done, and you will return with me. And Polly," she laid her hand on the girl's shoulder, "you know some of the people at the Priory. I saw you dancing, you remember, yesterday; don't mention to any of those young men, should you chance to see them, that you ever met me here. Now come."

"My lady, I cannot go—I promised to wait, and I must. They will call for me at two—only half an hour now; I wouldn't have them find me gone for the world when they return. I should never hear the last of it."

"Who are they, my little one?"

"Oh, Alice Warren and Eliza Long, and two young men; you wouldn't know any of them. They'll be here at two, and I must wait—I promised."

"A promise must be kept, of course. Will you not get a scolding to-morrow from—this Duke you love so well, for this madcap prank?"

"A scolding! Duke scold!" Polly laughed aloud at the stupendous joke—such a sweet, merry laugh. "Oh, dear no, my lady, Duke couldn't scold if he tried—least of all, me. But he would look grieved, and that would be ten times worse. and never say a word, and be kinder to me than ever. Rosanna would scold, and I shouldn't mind it a bit; but Duke." Polly shook her curly head, with contrition: "No, I hope Duke won't hear of it."

"Then, he shall not—from me. And I must go and leave you here. It seems almost cruel."

"You are very kind, my lady, but don't mind me; I'm not afraid, and I couldn't go, that's the amount of it. Please let me help you out."

Lady Charteris stooped, and kissed her very gently this time.

"You are a brave little girl. Good-night, and don't come here any more."

The benediction given with the kiss was uttered in the lady's heart. Polly helped her out of the window, and watched her as she flitted down the avenue, her light steps lost on the grassy ground.

She frowned dismally. "I do wish they would come."

She had not long to wait. Before two o'clock the quartet stood under her window, filled with remorse and dire misgivings. Would they find her alive when they returned; would they find her at all? Might not the cavalier's ghost carry her off bodily to the land of restless shadows whence he came? But Polly, as bright as a new shilling, stood smiling before them, and leaped with the bound of a kid out of the window and into the arms of the haberdasher's young man.

"That will do, Sam; I don't want help," said Miss Mason, rather disdainfully. After Allen Fane and Guy Earls court it wasn't likely she was ever again going to tolerate tradesmen's apprentices. "Yes, I'm safe, Eliza, in spite of you and the ghosts and the rats; and I've had a sociable chat with one of the ghosts that haunt the Grange, and a very pleasant ghost it is. I hope you're convinced I'm not afraid now; and if you, or any of you, let Duke or Rosanna find out this night's work, I'll—well, don't you do it, that's all! I may be an idiot for my pains, but I'm not going to worry them into their graves."

Even Eliza Long promised. She had been considerably alarmed during the hours of waiting. If they found Polly dead or gone mad through fright, Peter Jenkins would turn Queen's evidence, she knew, and there was no telling what the law might not do to her—hang her, perhaps. She promised, and she kept her word—for two or three months—and by that time it did no harm to tell.

At half-past two exactly, Polly stole in through a kitchen window and upstairs in her stockings to bed, and fell asleep, and woke up and came fresh and smiling down to breakfast, none the worse for her night's dreary frolic.

"He will be here presently," was the young lady's thought; and breakfast over, she went back to her room to get herself up for the occasion.

Mr. Fane came, and not alone. At eleven o'clock he drove up in a dashing little pony phaeton, with cream-colored, high-stepping ponies, and Miss Maud Charteris by his side. Polly was seated under an arch of morning glories, reading Tennyson, posing for the occasion, and Mr. Fane's speaking eyes told her pretty plainly what he thought of her looks. He had come to take her to the Priory for that first sitting for the fair Rosamond, and this was Miss Maud Charteris, Miss Mason, and he was quite sure each young lady would be charmed with the other. Miss Maud Charteris gave Miss Polly Mason a little half-patronizing, half-haughty smile and bow, which the latter returned with equal hauteur. She was not pretty—little Miss Charteris. She was pale and sickly of

aspect, with her father's black eyes, and tar-black hair, straight as an Indian's. The bright silks which that daring father liked to see her wear contrasted harshly with her small, pinched features and sickly pallor. She was dressed like a doll now, in tartan silk of brilliant hues, a white lace scarf, a Paris hat, wreathed with pink rosebuds, and dainty boots, and gloves, and pink-silk and point-lace parasol.

Miss Charteris deigned to talk a little to Miss—aw—Mason, as the steppers bore them along. Had she really lived all her life in this dull, country town? Had she never been to school, nor to Paris—never even been to London? It must be dreadfully dull—such a life. She regarded the shabby merino and the common straw hat with pitying wonder. She was unutterably condescending to this dowdy country girl whom Mr. Fane wanted to paint. The little embryo lady took the airs of a *grande dame* as naturally as a duckling takes to water, and with every question of the disdainful patrician, Polly grew more and more angry and sulky, and sorry she came; and it was in a very bad humor, indeed, that she entered the dusky splendor of the Priory, and followed Mr. Fane into an apartment where flowers bloomed, and birds sang, and beautiful pictures were on the walls, and tall vases—taller than herself—stood, and a Turkey carpet covered the floor, and silken draperies hung, and Parisian statuettes glimmered in the pale green light. No wonder Maud Charteris despised her—Maud Charteris, to whom this gorgeous temple was only an everyday drawing-room, and who lived in perpetual tartan silks.

Mr. Fane left her for a moment to go in search of Miss Hautton, he said, who was to sit for Queen Eleanor. Miss Charteris left her, excusing herself elaborately, to remove her hat and scarf. Polly was alone. Silence reigned. It was like a church. She glanced about her in awe. But presently, through a curtained arch at the further end of the room, voices came. One was the voice of little Miss Maud; the other the languid, haughty accents of Miss Hautton.

"Pretty?" she was repeating, in rather a contemptuous tone. "Did Mr. Fane really say so, Maud? He must have been jesting, surely. Why, the girl in white, with whom I saw him dancing, was a perfect little dowdy."

"Well, I thought so too, Diana," said the piping treble of the little lady of thirteen; "and to-day—you should see her!—such a dress, old and faded—and made—oh!"

Words failed to describe the unfashionable make of this old, faded dress.

"How tiresome of Mr. Fane to fetch her here; and one must be civil to the little creature, I suppose. Pretty! a stupid country girl, with red hair and freckles."

Polly waited to hear no more; her heart felt full to bursting—she hardly knew whether with anger, or wounded feeling; or what. She had been insulted, cruelly insulted. Why had Mr. Fane ever brought her here? She got up, and made her way out—how, she hardly knew—through long suites of rooms, and down that grand gilded and carved stairway. She was out of the house, and into the bright sunshine, with the summer wind blowing in her hot face, and a swelling in her throat that nearly choked her.

"A stupid country girl, with red hair and freckles!" That dreadful sentence rang in her ears like a death knell all the way home.

Polly worked for the remainder of that day with an energy that completely astonished Rosanna. Ironing was going on, and she got a table to herself, and ironed those clothes with a vindictive energy, that left her cheeks crimson, and her eyes full of streaming light. She was dead silent, too, and declined taking her tea, when teatime came, and went out into the garden to let the evening wind cool off, if it could, her flushed face. And as she reached the gate, there stood Mr. Allan Fane in person.

"Miss Mason—Polly!" he began, "what on earth made you run away? Did I leave you too long? I give you my word I could not help it, and I hope you are not offended. What was it?"

Polly looked at him with flashing eyes. She would have cut off her right hand sooner than let him know how she had been humiliated.

"What is it, Polly? I think you said that I might call you Polly," with a tender look.

"You may call me anything you please, Mr. Fane—a dowdy, stupid country girl, such as I am. If I were Miss Diana Hautton, or Miss Maud Charteris, it would be quite another thing—but how could a shabby, ignorant, red-haired rustic expect either respect or courtesy!"

"Polly—Miss Mason! Good Heaven! has any one insulted you? Who came into the rooms while I was away?"

"Not a soul, Mr. Fane. But you should not be surprised at anything a person in my class of life may do. We don't know any better, and I got frightened, very naturally, at all the splendor about me, and ran away—just that. One word, one look from so grand a lady as the Honorable Miss Hautton would have annihilated me; I ran away. Don't waste your time, I beg, Mr. Fane—go back to the Priory and the high-born ladies there."

"You are as thorough a lady as the best of them, Miss Mason, if you will pardon my presumption in saying so, and I

wouldn't exchange five minutes with you for a day with the fairest of them!"

He told the truth—there was a glow on his placid face very unusual there. Polly, pretty at all times, was tenfold prettier when thoroughly angry. The haughty poise of the head, the flashing fire in the blue eyes, the flush on the oval cheeks, the ringing tones of the clear voice, became her well.

"Some one has offended—some one has insulted you, it may be, Miss Mason, but it was not I. If I only dared put in words what I think of you; but no, even the deepest admiration sometimes appear impertinence. Tell me you are not angry with me—I could not bear that, Polly."

His voice softened to a wonderful tenderness, the eyes that looked at her were full of a light that shot the words home. Mr. Fane having spent the past four years at the business was past master of the art of *love a la mode*. And Polly's heart stirred for an instant, and the fiery scorn died out of her face, and into its place came a beautiful, tremulous light; but she laughed saucily even while moved.

"You are talking treason to your sovereign, Mr. Fane. What would Miss Hautton say if she heard you?"

"Miss Hautton may go to Paradise, if she likes. What is Miss Hautton to me?"

"The future Mrs. Fane, or rumor tells awful stories!"

"Rumor does tell awful stories, always did. If I cared for Miss Hautton would I be here? Polly, you must sit for that picture, only, by Jove, I shall have to paint you for Queen Eleanor, if you look as you do just now. Won't you ask me in, and give me some tea, please? I came after you in such haste that I never waited for luncheon."

"What?" Polly cried, "has it taken you since one o'clock to walk three miles? Oh, Mr. Fane, don't think me a greater goose than you can help. Come in, if you like, and I will see if Rosanna will let you have the tea."

"That doesn't sound too hospitable," the artist said, "but where one is very anxious to obtain the *entree*, one must not stand on the order of his invitation. We shall have the sittings here, Miss Polly, instead of at the Priory."

Mr. Allan Fane went into the house, meeting a rather cool reception from both Duke and Rosanna.

Polly was all mortal man could desire, and he lingered until the moon was up, and the loud-voiced kitchen clock struck nine. The girl went with him to the gate, the moon shone crystal clear; what a night it was, what a beautiful, blissful world altogether! And Rosanna called life a weary pilgrimage and earth a vale of tears.

"May I come again—and very soon, Polly?" asked Mr.

Fane, holding her hand, and looking into the eyes he thought brighter than all those shining stars above.

"Certainly," Miss Mason responded, demurely; "and if you make such progress at every sitting—as you have done at this, Mr. Fane, the fair Rosamond will be completed before you know it." Her clear laugh rang out, the truth being the artist had entirely forgotten fair Rosamond, Allan Fane being so engrossed by Polly Mason.

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

"Duchess," Mr. Mason said, the following morning, as he arose from the breakfast table, "when you're quite finished, and got the dishes washed, I wish you would step up to my room before you go anywhere. I have a proposal to make to you."

"Oh!" said the Duchess, "a proposal of marriage, Duke?"

Paying no attention to the flippant inquiry, the scene-painter went on his way upstairs, to his own peculiar sanctum.

"I wonder if I could postpone it until to-morrow," he said as she entered. "Shaving makes a man look cleaner, no doubt, but it is an awful bother. Do you think the bristles will be too strong, if I waited another day, Duchess?"

"Mr. Mason, was that what you requested me to come up here to decide?"

"No, Duchess; don't be in a hurry." Duke turned from the glass, and leaning forward looked at her. How pale she was in the garish morning light—how dull the brilliant eyes—almost as dull as Miss Hautton's own!

"Duchess, what's the matter? You're getting thin. You're losing your appetite—you only took two cups of tea this morning and three rolls."

"Do you usually count my cups of tea and the number of rolls, sir?" cried Polly, firing up, for her powerful schoolgirl appetite, so unlike her heroines, was rather a sore spot with this young lady.

"You're getting thinner and pale; you're losing your good looks, Miss Mason. You want a change, and you shall have it. Duchess, you shall go to boarding-school!"

"To boarding-school, Duke!"

"To boarding-school, Duchess."

The girl's face flushed, then paled; she walked to the window, and looked silently down the quiet road. To boarding-

school! Why, it had been the dream of her life to go to school hitherto, but Duke clung to her bright presence with an almost selfish love, and could not bear to part with her. Now her dream was realized, she was to go, and her first sensation was one of blank dismay.

"Duchess—Polly!" he exclaimed, in a frightened voice, "you always wanted to go. Don't tell me you are going to object now!"

She turned from the window, and the smile he loved lit up her face.

"No, Duke, I'm not going to object. I'll go with all the pleasure in life. I need school of some kind, goodness knows—such an ignorant, wild, good-for-nothing wretch as I am. Where am I to go?"

"To Brompton—to Miss Primrose's establishment. Squire Weldon's daughter went there, you know. And I'll take you next week, if you think you can be ready."

"That's a question for Rosanna—I can be ready fast enough if my clothes can. And now, as I've got to go into town, I'll bid you good-morning, if you're quite done with me."

It was late in the afternoon when Polly returned home, and the first person she beheld as she neared the cottage was Mr. Allan Fane. She had spent the whole morning in Speekhaven—dining with a friend there—and now as the western sky was reddening, she sauntered homeward, trilling a song in very gladness of heart. It was her favorite ballad of "County Guy," and it was of Guy Earlscount she was thinking as she sang. He reminded her of the heroes of her books, with his darkly handsome face, his large Italian eyes, with that sleepy golden light in their dusky depths, and his smile, that not Mr. Allan Fane or his brother could rival. She was heart-whole where the artist was concerned in spite of her pique and mortified vanity—a very child playing at being in love. And there was all a child's audacity in the saucy smile, and glance, and greeting she gave him now.

Allan Fane had been a little doubtful about his reception—ever so little uneasy.

"How do, Mr. Fane?" Polly said, with that rippling smile. "Have you heard the news? I am going away—going to school in London—no, Brompton—for the next two or three years."

"Two or three years!"

He did look blank. The possibility of her going away had never occurred to him. He had not given the matter much thought, but it had seemed to him that the bright summer months would go on like this, in pleasant interviews, and de-

light
time,
phire
betwe
And
Fane
in lov
when
godde
tions,
eyes,
The g
"Yo
days—
wild t
'a pie
of spe
you a
please
lars—
before

"I s
He
That
the pa
but th
been a
many
again
and th

"Yo
laugh,
the m
hair, a
Hautt
hurry,
make
—Diar
good-b

"Po
"A
wearil
pocket
It w
picked
sunshi

lightful sittings for his picture. The end must come some time, and he must leave this girl with the tawny hair and sapphire eyes, but the end had only been glanced at afar off, and between lay a golden mist of long, delicious days and weeks. And now she was going away, and there broke upon Allan Fane the truth—that he was in love!—not merely smitten, but in love, with a slim, untutored little girl, with the manners, when she chose, of a princess, and the beauty of an embryo goddess. For the first time in his life, after ten score flirtations, Allan Fane was in love! He was white as a sheet; his eyes, his voice, his careless attitude changed in a moment. The girl saw it with wonder and delight.

"Yes," she pursued, mercilessly, "I am going away in a few days—as soon as ever my things can be got ready—and I am wild to be gone. Don't you think I need it, Mr. Fane? Even 'a picturesque model' is the better for knowing the nine parts of speech and how to spell words of three syllables. When you and Miss Hautton go to St. George's, Hanover Square, please send me the *Morning Post* containing all the particulars—that is, if you haven't forgotten my very existence long before that time."

"I shall never forget you!"

He spoke the truth. Allan Fane never did forget her. That hour came back to him years after with something of the pang he felt then. Weak, selfish, he might be, and was, but the pain of loss was there, and as bitter as though he had been a stronger and worthier man. That hour came back many times in his after life, and he saw little Polly Mason again with the red light of the sunset on her sparkling face, and the gleams of scornful humor in her flashing eyes.

"You will never forget me!" she repeated, with another laugh, that had yet a tone of bitterness in it; "no, I suppose the memory of the little picturesque model, with the tawny hair, and blue Greuze eyes, may serve to amuse you and Miss Hautton for some time to come. Pray don't speak in a hurry, Mr. Fane, as I see you are about to do. Who would make speeches to a little rustic schoolgirl? What you say to—Diana—you mean. Our paths lie apart—let us say good-by, and meet no more."

"Polly! what a cruel speech!"

"A sensible one, Mr. Fane. Let me go, pray," rather wearily: "See! you have dropped something from your pocket!"

It was a tiny morocco casket, which lay at his feet. He picked it up, opened it, and took out a ring that blazed in the sunshine. It was a cluster diamond. The next instant he

had repossessed himself of Polly's hand, and the shining circlet shone on one slim finger.

He lifted the hand to his lips and kissed it passionately—for the first—the last time!

"Wear it, Polly, for I love you!"

Alas! for man's truth! A fortnight ago that ring had been ordered of a London jeweler to fit the finger of Diana Hautton. He meant to propose down in Lincolnshire, and this was to be the pledge of the betrothal. Only an hour ago the London express had brought it, and here it glittered on the finger of Polly Mason!

Heaven knows what further he might have said, what words, what promises might have been exchanged; Polly might have become Mrs. Allan Fane, perhaps, and this story had never been written, for the great romance of this young woman's life you have yet to hear, but at this instant (sent there by her guardian angel, no doubt) there appeared upon the scene the gaunt form of Rosanna, summoning sharply her youthful charge in to tea.

She tendered no invitation to the gentleman. She scowled upon him, indeed, as this exemplary lady could scowl. Rosanna could have told you stories fit to make your hair rise, of "squires of high degree," who came a-courting village maids, and of the dire grief and tribulation the aforesaid maids had come to in consequence. Polly in love, indeed! Polly—who had taken her doll to bed yesterday, as it were, and sang it to sleep!

Mr. Fane lifted his hat and departed at once. The girl would not look at him. She could not meet the glance in his eyes. Her face was burning, her heart thrilling. She hid the hand that wore the ring, and followed Rosanna meekly into the house. On the stairs she met Duke, and Duke, as gravely as in the morning, summoned her into his own room. Miss Mason felt she was in for it.

"I wouldn't let that young man dangle after me too much, if I were you, Duchess," he began. "He isn't what he pretends to be; he's a humbug, you'll find; a false, fickle, mean humbug! His father's a very honest man, and a good tailor—a deuce of a screw, though—but——"

"Duke!" Polly cried, with indignant scorn. "A tailor!"

The young lady said it in much the same tone you or I might exclaim "A demon!"

"Yes, Duchess, a tailor. I've bought clothes at the shop in Bond street many a time, and I've seen Mr. Allan Fane when he was a pale-faced little shaver in roundabouts. He doesn't remember me, of course, and I don't care about renewing the

acqu
it's
It
thin
this
whit
"I
dle-
born
univ
ings
him-
"I
quit
Sh
she
bered
—"I
An
way
done
blue
not a
ners,
had
curse
hear.
Polly
He
the g
Mi
ing a
"M
"mor
ald is
drear
Th
He
ished
Haut
too.
and s
mond
Mason
in,
abb

acquaintance. He's a tailor's son, fast enough, and I dare say it's the only thing about him not to his discredit."

It was very unusual for Duke to be bitter, or say cruel things of the absent, but he felt terribly sore on the subject of this dandified artist, with his shining boots and swell hat, and white hands, and soft voice, making a fool of his little Polly.

"He's a humbug, Duchess, and he's trying to get that middle-aged Miss Hautton to marry him. She's rich and high-born, and he's only an adventurer, with a good address and a university education. Don't take his pretty books, or drawings, or sit for him as a model, or have anything to say to him—that's a good girl, Duchess."

"Have you anything more to say, Duke?" Polly asked, quite meekly.

She felt somehow that what Duke said was true, but still—she looked at her ring and her heart thrilled as she remembered his words—words so sweet to every girl's ear and heart—"I love you!"

And meantime Mr. Allan Fane walked home, and on the way found out he had been mad, and a fool. What had he done? Given up all the hopes of his life for a pretty face with blue eyes. Very good and pleasant things in their way, but not available as ready cash; not to be exchanged for good dinners, horses, opera boxes, and a house in Mayfair. What had he done? Dire alarm filled him as he walked along; he cursed his own folly and precipitancy with a fervor good to hear. Was it, after all, too late yet? He had not asked Miss Polly Mason to be his wife.

He found Miss Hautton walking wearily round and round the great fish pond, and joined her at once.

Miss Hautton, like Miss Mason, informed him she was going away.

"Montalien bores me, I find," the lady said, carelessly; "more this year even than usual, and the Duchess of Clanronald is going to the Italian lakes, and urges me to——" A dreary yawn finished the sentence.

The Duchess of Clanronald!

Her grace of Clanronald had a nephew—rather an impoverished nephew, who had made hard running last year for the Hautton stakes. No doubt he would go to the Italian lakes, too. Starry blue eyes, a witching, gypsy face, a supple form, and sixteen sunny years, are very well, if set off with diamonds and gilded with refined gold. He couldn't marry Polly Mason; he couldn't turn itinerant portrait painter in this dull town, and merge his bright individual star of self into a lobby-hatted, rate-paying, tax-fearing, cradle-rocking, family

108 How Hawksley Kept His Word.

man. It was written—it was his fate—he must marry a rich wife; and so—alas for Polly!

Before Miss Hautton's yawn was quite ended, he had poured forth the tale of his long admiration, and implored her to be his wife!

The rosy light of the sun went down, and Diana Hautton lingered by the fish pond with her accepted lover. Her accepted lover!

He was pale and cold, and something inside his breast, that did duty for a heart, lay like stone, but he lifted one of the Honorable Di's skin-cold hands to his lips and kissed it: Cold as that hand was, the touch of his lips seemed to chill it.

She looked at him, and wondered at his pallor. But of course he was agitated; he loved her so, and had dreaded a refusal.

They entered the house together betrothed, a satisfied smile on Miss Hautton's lips. She liked him very much; he was handsome, and would make her a devoted husband. No ring glittered on her finger—that would be remedied speedily. Mr. Fane whispered.

And three miles off a young girl—younger, fairer even than the Honorable Diana Hautton—stands watching that rosy light in the sky as it sparkles and flickers on the diamond circlet on her finger. And the happy glow is in her eyes, the happy smile still lingers on her face, when all the sky is dark.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW HAWKSLEY KEPT HIS WORD.

It was the third day after Polly Mason stood at the parlor window, looking listlessly enough up and down the deserted country road.

There came a knock at the door. Polly's heart gave a leap. At last! surely this was he! Duke came out of the painting-room in his shirt sleeves, and opened the house door. A portly lady in a black silk dress stood there, a comfortable-looking basket in her hand—no less a lady than Mrs. Hamper, the housekeeper at the Priory.

Mrs. Hamper, as a visitor of distinction, was ushered into the parlor, whither Rosanna and Polly followed. Mrs. Hamper might not be the rose, but she dwelt near the splendid flower—she was not Allan Fane, but she brought news of him, no doubt. She would know now whether he were ill, or false, and Polly sank on a low chair, and leaned her head in a weary way against the back. Her pretty face had dark circles under

the eyes, and looked wanner, it seemed to the housekeeper, than she had ever seen it.

"You're not looking well, Polly," she remarked, with her eyes fixed on that colorless, small countenance. "You're bilious or growing too fast, may be. Growing girls are always thin. I tell lady Charteris Miss Maud will be less pale and puny when she grows up. I've brought you some hapricots, and peaches, my dear, which I know you're uncommon fond of both." She opened her basket, displaying a tempting heap of fruit. Polly thanked her, but rather spiritlessly still—she liked peaches and apricots, but there were other things she liked better.

"And how are all the gentry at the great house, Mrs. Hamper?" Duke inquired. "Lord Mantalien got back from town yet?"

"No, my lord had not got back yet, and everybody was well at the great house. The latest news—but, of course, Polly had heard it long ago from Alice Warren?"

"No, Polly had heard nothing; the rainy weather had kept her indoors, and she was very busy getting ready to go away to boarding-school. What was the news?"

Her heart thrilled as she quietly asked the question. She knew it was news of Allan Fane.

"Why, the engagement of the Honorable Miss Hautton to Mr. Allan Fane. Which." Mrs. Hamper said, folding her arms on her fat stomach, "I think myself it's a lowering of a heart's granddaughter to go and marry a hartist, but then she ain't as young as she was, and never a beauty at best of times; and he's a very pleasant-spoken, good-looking, young gentleman, and free of his money, I'll say that for him, and the family is willin', and it's been looked forward to this some time. He proposed to her on Tuesday hevening last, and he's going to hacompany her to Italy shortly for the July and August months."

The housekeeper paused for breath, her eyes fixed curiously on Polly's face. Was it altogether to deliver the fruit Mrs. Hamper had stepped out of her way to visit Mr. Mason's? It was no secret in the servants' hall at the Priory how Mr. Fane was running after little Polly Mason, or that Miss Hautton was jealous. She liked Polly, this fat, fair and forty Mrs. Hamper, but she looked with expectant eagerness, at the same time, for some sign, some token, some cry of pain. There was none. The pale face kept its tired look, the long, dark lashes veiled the blue eyes; Mr. Allan Fane might have been Mr. Julius Cæsar, dead and gone, for all emotion that still face and form showed.

Duke looked at her, too, in wonder and pride at her

110 How Hawksley Kept His Word.

"pluck." "Blood will tell," he thought; "she's like her mother—ready to die game!"

Mrs. Hamper rose to go, just a trifle disappointed. She had looked to see anger, mortification, sorrow on Polly Mason's face, and she had seen nothing. The girl had heard the news with utter indifference. Perhaps the stories of the servants' hall were unfounded after all. It was quite clear that Polly had sense, and thought nothing about him.

Duke accompanied the portly lady to the door, and saw her out, then went back to his work.

"Thank God!" he thought, "she doesn't care for the puppy! I'm not ordinarily of a pugilistic nature, and don't, as a rule, let my angry passions rise, but if I could give Mr. Allan Fane a sound kicking on the first occasion, I think it would do us both good!"

Polly took her sewing and sat down by the window. The wind grew wilder, the leaden sky grew darker as the afternoon wore on, the raindrops began pattering once more against the glass. And in the young girl's breast, as she sat, her needle flying, a sharp and cruel pain ached. She had been fooled, deceived, laughed at, her woman's pride hurt to the core—she could never again, her life long, have the same perfect faith in man or woman. She had lost something, the ineffable bloom of perfect innocence and childlike trust, and Allan Fane's was the hand that had brushed it off.

"How dare he! how dare he!" she thought, her little hand clenching again; "how dare he trifle with me so!"

She sat there for over an hour, her anger rising and swelling with every instant. The rainy twilight was falling, when suddenly there came a knock at the door. She knew that knock; her work dropped, but before she could rise the door was opened, and the visitor, hat in hand, walked in. He had come at last!

Allan Fane stood before her, his light summer overcoat wet with rain, his high riding boots splashed with mud, pale, paler than herself!

She spoke first—he could not have uttered a word.

"You have come for my congratulations, Mr. Fane," she began, in a clear, ringing voice, that had neither quiver nor tremor in it. "I hear you are engaged to the Honorable Diana Hautton. Well! you have them! It is an eminently suitable match in every respect; age,"—with cruel emphasis—"birth, fortune, rank, and all!"

He looked at her with horror-struck eyes. What did she mean by that stinging sneer? Did she know of that Bond street shop? Oh, impossible! It was but a random shot that had hit home.

"It
that.
portu
that,
you s
go to
voted
knew
ness s
poor
man
kindl
voice
you h
I dare
He
as wa
one b
He
hands
She
iation
beaut
"Fo
her vo
give y
you n
you, b
the sa
youth
to me
eyes f
if I ca
"I c
She
quick
"Do
ring t
to the
books,
gave r
hour a
Wha
hour—
that m
the lit
cut in

How Hawksley Kept His Word. 111

"It is not every day," pursued Miss Mason, with a smile that stung him, "that the son of a London tailor gets an opportunity of marrying an earl's granddaughter! Ah! you feel that, Mr. Fane!" with a scornful laugh. "I know your secret, you see, so carefully guarded! But don't be alarmed, I won't go to the Priory, and tell Miss Hautton. I am afraid, as devotedly as she is attached to you, she might jilt you if she knew it. I won't tell, Mr. Fane, and I wish you every happiness so suitable a match deserves—if the poor scene-painter's poor relation may presume to offer congratulations to a gentleman of Mr. Fane's standing! And this ring, which you so kindly forced upon my acceptance the night before last"—her voice faltered for the first time—"permit me to return it. If you haven't purchased an engagement ring for Miss Hautton, I dare say you might make this answer."

He broke down. He was of a weak nature, impressionable as wax, but as strongly as it was in his nature to love no one but himself, he loved this girl.

He broke down as a woman might—his face hidden in his hands—his voice faltering, and asked her to forgive him.

She stood and looked at him—rage, wounded pride, humiliation, scorn, pity, all in her glance. If she had never been beautiful before she was beautiful in this moment.

"Forgive you," she repeated, and the hard ring died out of her voice and a great pathos followed. "You ask me to forgive you! Well, Mr. Fane, I will try. It is not that I care for you much—no, Allan Fane, I know now I never cared for you, but you have hurt me all the same. I shall never have the same faith in mankind again—I seem to have lost my youth in the moment it became mine. You have acted badly to me—badly! badly!"—the fire that can only blaze in blue eyes flashed from hers now—"but I will try and forgive you if I can. Take your ring!"

"I cannot; oh, Polly!"

She flung it at his feet in a sudden tempest of fury—the quick fury of a very child.

"Don't ever call me Polly—how dare you do it? Take your ring this moment or I will walk straight out of this house up to the Priory, and tell Miss Hautton every word! And your books, and your drawings—here they are—everything you ever gave me, except the flowers, and those I threw into the fire an hour ago. Take them, I command you, Mr. Fane!"

What could he do but obey? He was afraid of her in that hour—afraid of her even if she had not known his secret, but that made him her abject slave. He took the ring, he took the little package, and a very sorry figure the conquering hero cut in the hour of his triumph. It struck Polly's sense of the

112 How Hawksley Kept His Word.

ludicrous. In all tragedies do not the elements of the ridiculous linger? and she burst out laughing, with the passionate tears still in her eyes.

"You look like a colporteur going his rounds with tracts. Don't let me detain you an instant longer, Mr. Fane; Miss Hautton may want you. You have had your sport; and a verdant little country girl has helped while away a summer holiday, so there is no need to linger now; I have congratulated you, and given you your belongings back, and now the sooner we say good-by the better."

She made him a low bow—Miss Hautton could never have surpassed it in grace or insolence—and walked straight out of the room. And Allan Fane left the house, and coming to the garden well flung his bundle of books to the bottom. He might have flung the ring after, but diamond rings cost, and—and so he put it in his pocket, and went back to his high-born bride. And an hour after he placed it on her finger, and Diana deigned to say she thought it "rather pretty."

The lord of the Priory had arrived by the seven o'clock train, bringing with him a short, sombre, stout man, with a legal look. He was legal—he was Mr. Gripper, of the firm Gripper & Grinder, Lincoln's Inn, London; and he and Lord Montalien were closeted together on important business for some time after their arrival. Mr. Gripper emerged at last, and was shown to his room. He was staying over night, it seemed; and Mr. Fane was shown into the library, where my lord sat.

The curtains were drawn, the lamps shone, while outside the rain fell and the black June night shut down. My lord sat in his great armchair, near a writing table, staring in a dazed sort of way at the lamp before him. His usually placid face wore a strange expression, half perplexity, half dismay. For Mr. Fane, as the servant ushered him in, also looked pale and strangely disturbed, and both were so absorbed in their own thoughts that neither noticed the expression of the other's face.

Mr. Fane took a seat opposite, looking singularly nervous indeed. I am given to understand by masculine friends who have done the business, that asking the consent of a young lady's papa, or guardian, is much more disagreeable than asking the young lady herself. Mr. Fane had got through his part with Miss Hautton glibly enough, and this asking Lord Montalien was the merest matter of form; still, like Macbeth's "Amen," the words "stuck in his throat." Lord Montalien wrenched his thoughts away from his own absorbing topic with an evident effort, and listened with bland suavity to the young man's stumbling words.

How Hawksley Kept His Word. 113

“Wish to marry Diana, and ask my consent? My dear boy, my consent is quite unnecessary, as you know. Very correct of you, though, to come to me. Of course, I have long foreseen this, and, as Diana seems pleased, I sincerely offer you my congratulations. There’s some trifling disparity of years, I am aware, but you know the Scotch have a saying, that for the wife to be the elder brings luck to the house.”

Mr. Fane said nothing but he looked somewhat rueful. He was thinking he would rather dispense with a little of the luck and have the “trifling disparity” on the other side.

“Then I have your approval, my lord,” he said, rising, “and may consider all things settled?”

“You have my approval and best wishes. Diana is certainly old enough to act for herself”—again the young man winced—“and her income, as you must know, dies with her. By the by, Fane,”—changing his voice with abruptness—“you mixed a good deal among the people at the *fete* the other day, and may know—was there a man by the name of—of Trowel—no Mason,” referring to his tablets, “here upon that occasion?”

Allan Fane started, more nervously than before.

“There is a man by the name of Mason living about three miles from here. Mason is a common name, however; there may be many Masons in Speckhaven.”

“So there may. The fellow I mean is called Marmaduke Mason, and has a maiden sister, Rosamond—Rosalind—no, Rosanna,” referring to the tablets again. “By occupation a scene-painter.”

“That is the man, my lord. Yes, I know him.”

“And he has a ward—she passes for his cousin, a girl of sixteen—called Polly?”

Had Lord Montalien not been so engrossed by his tablets and questions he must have noticed Mr. Fane’s greatly disturbed face.

“Yes, my lord, there is a Polly Mason!”

“That’s the girl!” His lordship shut up his tablets with a triumphant snap. “Now, what’s she like? I’ll lay my life she has thick ankles, a Lincolnshire accent, and a turned-up nose!”

“You would lose your stake, then, my lord. Miss Mason is—” with something of an effort he said this—“one of the very handsomest girls I ever saw in the whole course of my life.”

“Ah! is she?” his lordship sighed resignedly; “all the worse for me. An heiress and ward with a snub nose would be trouble enough, but a ward with a Grecian nasal appendage and eighty thousand pounds to her fortune! Ah, well, my life has been one long martyrdom—this is only the last straw that very likely will break the camel’s back!”

114 How Hawksley Kept His Word.

Allan Fane looked at the speaker with a face of ghastly wonder.

"My lord," he said, "I don't understand. Polly Mason is no heiress—she is this scene-painter's poor relation—brought up out of charity."

"My good fellow," Lord Montalien said, plaintively, "she's nothing of the kind. She is my ward, and she has eighty thousand pounds at this moment deposited in the funds for her benefit. No, don't look so imploringly—it's too long a story to tell you. There's the dressing-bell—you shall all hear it at dinner."

He arose. Allan Fane quitted the room, and went up to his own. He did not seek his affianced—he was aghast with wonder and alarm. What did it mean? Eighty thousand pounds and Polly Mason!

The great bell clanging high up in the windy turrets, at half-past seven, informed Speckhaven and its inhabitants that my lord and his family were about to dine. Lord Montalien took advantage of a few minutes before going into dinner, and presented his congratulations to his cousin Diana on this interesting episode in her life. Mr. Gripper brought up the rear of the dinner procession with Guy, and was introduced to the other people around the table.

"He doesn't look like the harbinger of romance or a fairy godfather, or anything of the kind," Lord Montalien remarked; "nevertheless he is. He comes to inform a little country girl of sixteen that she is my ward, and heiress of eighty thousand pounds. Do any of you beside Fane know her? Her name at present is Polly Mason!"

Lord Montalien glanced around his own board, and was somewhat surprised at the sensation the very commonplace name of a very commonplace young person created. Diana Hautton started, and turned an icy look upon her lover—that gentleman fixed his eyes upon his plate and seemed slowly petrifying—Guy suppressed a whistle and looked unutterable things—and my Lady Charteris' spoon dropped into her soup-plate with a clash—Francis Earls court was eagerly interested, and Sir Vane, after one steady look at his pallid and startled wife, waited with composure for the peer's next words.

"Well," said his lordship, "you all look as if you knew her. Being so interested before I begin, how will you be thrilled before I have finished? Shall I go back and begin at the beginning with this romance of real life, as the *Penny Herald* calls its lightning-and-thunder serials. Yes, I will?"

Lord Montalien pushed away his soup, leaned back in his chair, and began to "thrill" his hearers.

"It's just fourteen years ago, on the second of last April

How Hawksley Kept His Word. 115

...at - left New York for Liverpool. I remember the date, because of the profound regret with which I left America. I've not had much of what the world generally calls 'enjoyment' in my life"—the pathetic tone of the speaker was remarkable to hear—"but I think those nine months out there among the herds of wild buffalo, and herds of wilder Indians, on the Western plains came nearer it than I shall ever come again. The passengers of the *Land of Columbia* were the usual sort of people one meets—rich mercantile and manufacturing people from the Northern cities, with millions of dollars, going over to make the grand tour. There was only one among them I ever found worth the trouble of talking to, and he was a second-class fellow—splendid proportions—tall and molded like an athletic Apollo, with a face full of intelligence and self-repression. Self-repression in man or woman I like. This man looked as if he had a story—he puzzled me --to be puzzled means to be interested. I was interested in Mr. Robert Hawksley; and on the last day out, he told me his story, mentioning no names, not his own—the name he went by on shipboard, even then, I suspected, at times, to be assumed.

"He was an Englishman, the only son of a yeoman farmer, but educated as a gentleman. He had been two or three years before secretary to a man in Staffordshire. I think he said this man had a daughter or niece, I forget which, a great heiress, a great beauty, and six years his junior. She was home from school, romantic as all girls home from school are, and she meets my handsome secretary. What would you have? Why fall in love with each other, of course—run away to Scotland, and be married!"

My lord paused. The fish had been placed upon the table, and he took his knife and fork and refreshed himself with a little turbot. And over the face of Sir Vane Charteris a strange, dark change was passing, and over the face of my lady a deathly whiteness had come. She leaned a little forward, her lips apart, her great eyes dilated—heedless of her husband, of her dinner, of the people who looked at her. What story was this she was hearing?

Lord Montalien complacently set it all down to his own "thrilling" powers of narration, and placidly went on:

"Well, those two foolish, unfortunate, happy young lovers kept their secret for four months; then the truth came out, and then there was the deuce to pay. Little missy was spirited away; my handsome secretary, through some nefarious plot on the part of the guardian, was found guilty of robbing money and jewels, and obliged to fly England. Now, two years after, he had made a home and competence, and he was

116 How Hawksley Kept His Word.

returning to seek out his wife and take her back to that new world. We parted on the quay. As we shook hands I made him promise that if ever, in any way, I could serve him, he would command me. I liked the lad greatly—it was a brave and loyal nature, I truly believe.

“Well,” said Lord Montalien, taking a little more turbot, “fourteen years passed, and I heard nothing more of, or from, Mr. Robert Hawksley until yesterday. Until yesterday, when when Mr. James Gripper here, called upon me and informed me I was solicited to become guardian of a young lady, heiress of eighty thousand pounds, and presenting me with a letter containing further particulars. The letter was all the way from San Francisco, and from my old acquaintance, Hawksley. He recalled the promise I had voluntarily made, and in the most manly and frank way asked me to fulfill it now by becoming the guardian and protector of his only child. And he told me his story in brief, from the time of our parting on the Liverpool dock.

“He had found his wife—the wife on whose fidelity he said to me on shipboard he could have staked his existence—how do you think? At the altar—the bride of another—a man to whom she had been engaged before he had met her, of her own rank and station. There are other Enoch Ardens in the world besides Mr. Temyson’s hero. He left England again without speaking a word to her, and he has never returned since. But by some mystery, which he does not explain, he discovered that his wife had given birth to a child—a daughter—five months after his first flight from England, which child, at two years old, she had given to a scene-painter, named Mason and his sister, to bring up. He found the child, begged the Mason people to take every care of her, and they should be one day well rewarded. That day has now come. In the California gold mines this man has made a fortune. Eighty thousand pounds he has deposited to be his lucky daughter’s dowry, and I am appointed her guardian. He asks me to place her at a school where she will be become educated in a manner befitting the station in life she is destined to fill; and he says that she may drop the cognomen of ‘Polly Mason’ for her own rightful name of Pauline Lisle. From this, therefore, it is plain that instead of his name being Hawksley, it is Robert Lisle!”

Lord Montalien paused—not that he had finished by any means with his interesting story—but at that moment, with a gasping cry, Lady Charteris fell forward, her head on the table. All started up; her husband lifted her in his arms, almost as ghastly as herself. She had fainted dead away!

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY CHARTERIS HEARS THE TRUTH.

As the night wore on the rain increased. At half-past eleven, when Duke and Polly left the theatre, it was pitch dark and pouring torrents. Polly did not mind the rain; in her strong young girlhood she had not had half-a-dozen colds in her lifetime, and the two had a nice, long, muddy walk through the blackness. Hackney-coaches there were, but all had been monopolized by greater folks than the scene-painter and his cousin. They trudged contentedly along, and who was to tell either that it was for the last time? That with the new day, so near breaking, a new life was to dawn for this girl of sixteen?

Rosanna was up, waiting with dry clothes, a good fire, and a cozy little supper. She was very tender with her child now that she was going away to school. Polly's spirits had risen with the walk in the fresh summer rain; they were too elastic to be long depressed, and then her wound was only skin deep.

The scene-painter, with a yawn, took up his bedroom candle, bade his sister good-night, and was turning to quit the room, when there came such a knock at the front door as literally made him drop it again with amaze. A knock that echoed through the whole house, at a quarter to one, of a pouring pitch-black June morning. The master of the house looked at his sister aghast.

"Who can it be, Rosanna, at one o'clock in the morning?"

"Give me the light and I'll soon see," retorted the intrepid Rosanna; and taking the candle her brother had dropped, she marched straight to the door and flung it open.

Whoever Miss Rosanna Mason expected to see, it was evident she did not expect the visitor she beheld, for with a loud, startling cry she recoiled. At that cry Polly's curly head, peeping curiously over the banister, came down another step or two. Duke from his place in the kitchen advanced, and there, standing on the threshold, drenched through, splashed with mud, pale as death, with wild eyes and disordered hair, he saw—Lady Charteris! Lady Charteris, alone, wet through, so far from home, and at that hour. Some prophetic instinct made him understand all. He took the candle from his sister's hand, and whispered in her ear:

"For God's sake, make Polly go to bed!"

Rosanna left obediently, awed by the sight of that awfully, **corpse-like face.**

118 Lady Charteris Hears the Truth.

"Come in, Lady Charteris," Duke said gravely. "You will get your death standing there in the rain. Are you alone?"

She did not answer the question. She came in and stood before him in the warm, lighted kitchen, her wet garments dripping on the white floor, her loose hair falling about her face, her great black eyes fixed with spectral solemnity on the man.

"Duke Mason," she said, in a hoarse, unnatural sort of voice, "you have deceived me, and I trusted you! My husband is alive?"

"Lady Charteris!"

A dull, red glow leaped up in the dusky depths of her great eyes.

"I am not Lady Charteris," she said, in the same still, compressed tone, "and you know it! I have never for one hour had a right to that hated name. I am Robert Lisle's wife, and Robert Lisle is alive, and you know it."

"My lady——"

"You know it," she repeated. "You have deceived me long enough, all of you. I am no child. I will be deceived no longer. This night you will tell me the truth. I have walked three miles through darkness and storm to hear the truth and you shall speak it. On the day—the accursed day—upon which I stood at the altar, Sir Vane Charteris' bride, Robert, my Robert, my husband, my love, was in the church looking at my perjury. And you knew it like the rest, and like the rest have hidden it from me—you knew how I loved him—you whom I never wronged."

Her voice sank to an unutterable pathos, her eyes looked at him unutterably sad, unutterably reproachful. Duke fairly gave way.

"I did, my lady—forgive me if you can! It was wrong—I thought so from the first, but what could I do? He bade me keep his secret from you—from you most of all on earth."

"He—you mean——?"

"I mean the man who called himself Robert Hawksley—who was Robert Lisle, as I know very well now, and your husband. You were out of England—he bound me by a promise never to reveal his existence if I chanced to meet you again. What could I do, my lady? I don't know how you have found this out; the whole thing is so confused that I hardly know which is the right and which is the wrong. I wanted to tell you that night at Montalien Park, but I feared—I feared! What right had I to tell you were the wife of two living husbands, bound to each by the tie of motherhood? And so I held my peace. I am sorry for you, my lady—sorry from

my inmost heart. I would help you, Heaven knows, if I could."

"You can!" she said, still retaining that deep, unnatural calm. "I have come to you for help. Twice before you aided me in my great need; now help me for the third time, in a greater extremity still."

She held out both hands to him. He remembered the gesture—the very same as she stood by the window of Lyndith Grange and implored him to aid her in her flight, as on that night he answered, more moved than he cared to show:

"I will help you, if I can. Tell me how, Lady Charteris?"

"Not that name!" she cried, rising passion in her voice and face. "Never again that name! I loathe it. I abhor it, as I do the man that bears it! I am Olivia Lisle—oh, thank God! that I can say it! Thank God! that my darling lives, though I should never see his face again!"

She sank into a chair, and the womanhood within her gave way. She covered her face with her hands, and the room was filled with anguished sobs—anguish that was still half-delirious joy. He lived!

Lady Charteris looked up at last. As on that other night, under the trees of Montalien, she commanded herself for his sake, and held back her passion of tears by the effort of self-repression, that had become habitual to her. She held out her hand to him with a pathetic glance that went straight to his big, tender, honest heart.

"Forgive me, Mr. Mason," she said, sweetly; "it is weak and selfish of me to distress you—you, my best, my most faithful friend. I will not give way again. My own cowardice, my own pitiful weakness in fearing for my child, in wishing to regain her, in too readily believing the lies he told me of—of his death, has brought all this long misery upon me. I must bear it to my life's close alone. But I must hear all you have to tell—all—every word he spoke, everything he did—everything you know. I am I think the most utterly wretched and lost creature this wide earth holds. There are times when I fancy I am almost mad. If you have any pity in your heart for so miserable a wretch, you will speak to-night and tell me the truth."

Duke told her all that had happened, and ended with the question:

"Now, my lady, may I ask how you have learned that Robert Hawksley—no, Robert Lisle—is alive?"

She was sitting, leaning forward, her hands clasped tightly together in speechless pain, her large dark eyes full of untold despair. In a few quiet words she repeated the story Lord Montalien had told at the dinner that evening.

120 Lady Charteris Hears the Truth.

"I remember listening," she said, almost dreamily, "with a feeling of tightening around my heart, knowing from the first that it was of my Robert he spoke. When he uttered his name at the last, the tension seemed suddenly to give way—a great darkness came before me, the room, the chairs seemed reeling, and I fainted. I was in my own room when I recovered, with my maid and the housekeeper and Sir Vane Charteris (for the first time in fourteen years) beside me. I looked at him and pointed to the door: 'Go out of my room,' I said, 'and never come into it again as long as you live.' The two women looked at each other; no one spoke. He went at once, and then for hours and hours it seemed to me I lay there alone. I even believe I slept for a time, and then, all at once, I was sitting up in bed, cold as death, with great drops standing on my face, repeating aloud, 'Robert is alive! Robert is alive!' My maid came in from the next room, with a frightened face, looking at me as though she thought me mad. I sprang from the bed, seized a shawl lying near, and rushed out of the room and the house. I ran all the way down to the gates; they were open still, by some chance, and I came straight here. I never felt the rain. I suppose I was mad—perhaps I am yet."

She put her hand to her head in a lost sort of way. Duke Mason looked at her in alarm, her face was as white as the face of a corpse—her eyes shone with a dry, bright glitter—her voice was strangely quiet and slow—she spoke of herself as though speaking of another. The hysterics were nothing to this. Had her troubles turned her brain? Should he summon Rosanna?

Before he could answer his own mental question, a carriage driven furiously stopped at the door. He heard it flung open with a crash, a man's heavy step sounded in the hall. The next instant the kitchen door was thrown wide, and Sir Vane Charteris stood before them!

Once again Duke's thoughts flew back fourteen years to the Speekhaven waiting-room, at the same abnormal hour, and Geoffrey Lyndith standing dark and grim as Sir Vane Charteris stood now. Once again with the same gesture the hunted lady lifted her head and looked her pursuer full in the face.

The usually florid countenance of the baronet was faded now to a dull livid pallor. There was a look about his mouth and eyes not good to see.

"Lady Charteris," he said, grimly, "come home!" He advanced toward her. She shrunk back, both arms outstretched, with a scream of fear and horror.

"Don't touch me!" she cried. "Don't come near me!"

Don't ea
was. In
only hus
was dead

He lis
eyes nev

"Have
is enter
costume
that at
at home
with a
low's ill

She u

"If yo
take car

"Ah!

the word

ber very
lection

elod, an
only in

heiress

this hou
must be
my arm

He lo
tremblin

"Take

"and co
provided

She d
great ho

"A m

He li
in his h
within h

She v
looked b

ing, and
farewell

So Du
after, w

face. S
with mu

seen her

Lady Charteris Hears the Truth. 121

Don't call me by that name! I am not your wife—I never was. In the hour you married me you knew my lawful, my only husband was alive! And you lied to me and told me he was dead—you false, false, false villain!"

He listened with a diabolical smile, his glittering, sinister eyes never leaving her wild face.

"Have you quite done, madame? This sort of performance is entertaining enough with the stage-lights and appropriate costumes, and at a suitable hour; but allow me to suggest that at one o'clock in the morning Lady Charteris should be at home and in bed. This is the scene-painter, I suppose," with a sneering look at Duke, "to whom you gave that fellow's illegit——"

She uttered a cry, and half sprang toward him.

"If you dare!" she gasped. "You said it once. Take care! take care!"

"Ah! I remember," with sneering scorn. "You don't like the word. I said it once, over thirteen years ago. I remember very distinctly. I told you it was not an agreeable recollection for me that I had married the mistress of a country eld, and from that hour to this we have been man and wife only in name. Is Mr. Robert Lisle's interesting daughter and heiress visible, Mr.—ah—Mason? I suppose not, though, at this hour. I should really like to see her; but that pleasure must be reserved for another time. For you, my lady—take my arm!"

He looked at her with a terrible glance. She shrank away, trembling from head to foot.

"Take my arm!" he repeated, still with that basilisk stare, "and come home. Home! Do you know the sort of home provided for such women as you?"

She did not speak. Her eyes looked up at him full of a great horror.

"A madhouse!"

He literally hissed the words, a devil of hatred and rage in his black eyes. As he spoke he drew the shrinking hand within his own, and forced her toward the door.

She went without a single word. On the threshold she looked back once at the humble, faithful friend she was leaving, and who stood so powerless to help her now. It was her farewell.

So Duke Mason saw her in his dreams, for years and years after, with that look of unutterable horror on her death-cold face. So for years and years that farewell look haunted him with much the same remorse as though he had stood by and seen her slain before his eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAWN OF THE NEW LIFE.

On the stately turrets and ivy-grown towers of Montalien Priory, and on the two-story wooden box of Mr. Duke Mason, the light of a new and glorious day shone.

The storm had passed with the night. The June sunshine flooded sky and earth; the birds sang blithely, the busy town was astir, and at his painting-room window Duke Mason sat, gazing blankly out, and seeing nothing but darkness and desolation.

He was going to lose the Duchess. It was all said in that Polly—his bright, beautiful, laughing, mischievous, troublesome, loving little Polly—was going from him to return no more. For fourteen happy years she had been the joy, the torment, the delight of his life—now she was to be taken from him. And what remained? He had intended to send her away to school himself, it was true, but that sort of separation would have been different. She would still have been his, belonging to his world, and one day she would have come back to lighten their dull, gray-colored life with her sunshiny presence again. But now she was Lord Montalien's ward, and heiress of eighty thousand pounds, and as lost to him almost as though the coffin lid had closed upon her.

The morning mail brought Duke a letter—a foreign letter—and inclosing a brief note addressed to "Paulina Lisle." Duke laid it aside—that name smote him like a blow—and read his own. No words could be more manly, more grateful, more kindly than those of Robert Lisle, but the decree of parting was irrevocable. By birth and fortune Paulina was a lady. As such she had her place to fill in society—in that world to which Lord Montalien, as her guardian, could present her. It was all quite right, he felt it plain as any one, but the pain was none the less acute. He sat there for hours, with that open letter in his hand. Rosanna sat idly by the kitchen fire—and when had Rosanna been idle before? Polly had gone to make an early call upon her friend Alice, and talk about her new clothes and her new school prospects—the ticking of the old clock sounded preternaturally loud in the blank stillness. And so, when at half-past eleven Lord Montalien reached the house, and knocked at the door, he found them.

Rosanna's face betrayed no surprise when she admitted her

disting
lived h
ushered
and put
"I see
"that y
have ha
"I ha
"It is
daughte
any eas
unbound
you. I
"She
of poor
"She th
child of
her—yo
such ple
He sp
Lord
"I an
change
she will
Mason,
I do, fo
Duke
painter
gent.
"Don
you any
mother's
worst is
He sp
think h
uneasily
not.
"Is M
"Miss I
have no
"Cert
course.
He stop
"I sh
swered.
shall no
sending

distinguished visitor. Yes, she answered, Mr. Duke Mason lived here, and was disengaged, and would see him. She ushered the peer into the humble parlor, and Duke got up, and put his letter in his pocket, and went slowly downstairs.

"I see by your face, Mr. Mason," his lordship said, quietly, "that you know the errand upon which I have come. You have had a letter from California by this morning's post?"

"I have, my lord."

"It is doubtless painful to you to part with your adopted daughter after all these years, but the thing is inevitable. In any case, you must have lost her sooner or later. Mr. Lisle is unbounded in his expressions of gratitude and respect for you. Have you told her yet—does she know?"

"She knows nothing, my lord!—I cannot tell her!" Some of poor Duke's pain was in his voice and face as he spoke. "She thinks still, as she thought from the first, that she is the child of a dead cousin of my own. You will kindly undeceive her—you will tell her the truth. It will not be a hard task, such pleasant news!"

He spoke a little bitterly—his heart was very sore.

Lord Montalien looked at him kindly.

"I am quite sure the young lady will sincerely regret the change of guardians—the new is pleasant, beyond doubt, but she will not leave her old friends without sincere regret. Mr. Mason, you know more of this young girl's history than even I do, for you knew her mother!"

Duke started. The eyes of the two men met—the scene-painter's, startled, alarmed; the peer's, keen, sharp, intelligent.

"Don't distress yourself, Mr. Mason; I am not about to ask you any questions. I had much rather, indeed, not hear the mother's name. It is a very painful story—let us hope the worst is over."

He spoke with a certain grave earnestness that made Duke think he at least suspected the truth. He averted his eyes uneasily. He longed to ask for Lady Charteris, but dared not.

"Is Miss Mason—nay, I beg her pardon," with a smile, "Miss Lisle in? I should like to see her? I presume you have no objection to my telling her at once?"

"Certainly not, my lord; she must know it at once, of course. She will be in presently. May I ask how soon——"

He stopped, ashamed of the choking in his throat.

"I shall leave that entirely to you and her," his lordship answered. "You are aware it cannot be postponed long, but I shall not hurry her away. She is to go to school. I propose sending her to the Convent of the Sacred Heart, in Paris. I

have a prejudice against fashionable boarding-schools, as a rule. Had I a daughter, she should never enter one; and I believe those nuns of the Sacred Heart to be the best teachers and most accomplished ladies under the sun. But, for a few weeks, if she chooses——”

He did not finish the sentence. The house door opened, a quick, light step crossed the hall, a fresh young voice trilled a merry tune, the parlor door opened, and Polly herself stood revealed!

Lord Montalien looked at her earnestly. What did he see? A tall, slim figure, two flushed cheeks, two bright blue eyes, and a head “running over with curls.” She paused short, her young dying away in a sort of consternation at sight of so unlooked for a visitor. Duke rose up, and led her forward.

“My lord,” he said, “this is your ward: Polly, Lord Montalien has come here to see you and tell you some wonderful news. Try and not be angry with me for keeping it from you so long; and when you have heard all, read this letter.”

He put her father’s note in her passive hand, and went out of the room. Polly sank down in the chair he had vacated, with bright, large eyes of wonder. Lord Montalien took her hand in both his, and looked at her with a smile that went straight to her heart.

“You have your father’s face, my child,” he said. “I liked him the moment I saw him first; and I like you.”

“My father!” the girl uttered. “You knew my father, my lord—Duke’s cousin?”

“Not Duke’s cousin—no tie of blood or name binds you to this good young man who has brought you up. Your father is alive! That letter you hold is from him, and you are Polly Mason no longer, but Pauline Lisle!”

She grew ashen pale, and began to tremble. What was this she was about to hear? The hand Lord Montalien held grew cold in his grasp.

“No need to tremble—no need to fear, my child. My news is wonderful news—the best of news for you. Your father lives, and has sent you a fortune. You are the heiress of eighty thousand pounds, and I am appointed your guardian. Miss Paulina Lisle, let me be the first to congratulate you!”

She fell suddenly back in her chair. Lord Montalien started up in alarm.

“I have told her too abruptly—she is going to faint! I might have known it! Whom shall I call?”

He was going to the door, but she put out one hand and motioned him back.

“Wait,” she said in a voice that trembled. “I shall not

faint.”

with lips

And kindly in

She s

kitchen

ing unsh

At last s

beside he

“Who

“I do

told me

fortune,

are a gro

“A gro

of bitter

than the

never see

infancy-

talien, y

it here!

Lord

which fo

rape, and

client.

or two c

was Lor

marry.

the powe

And in

or witho

minority

forth.

This v

he prev

light of

to save

in provi

laughter

noise, it

The p

ward wi

will. M

she adm

who rep

ments.

intensity

faint." She sat up bravely, as she spoke, and tried to smile, with lips that quivered. "Please go on, my lord; tell me all."

And then, still clasping the small, cold hand, still looking kindly in the pale young face, Lord Montalien told her "all."

She sat quite still, quite pale, the loud tick-tack of the kitchen clock almost painfully audible, the sunshine streaming unshadowed in among Rosanna's roses and geraniums. At last she spoke, to ask a question, looking at the nobleman beside her with big, solemn eyes:

"Who was my mother?"

"I do not know," he answered gravely; "your father never told me her name. Rest contented with your wonderful good fortune, my dear, and don't ask too many questions. You are a great heiress now—try and think of that."

"A great heiress!" the girl repeated, and there was a world of bitterness in her tone; "a great heiress, and yet poorer than the poorest, with a father and mother alive whom I have never seen, never may see—a mother who cast me off in my infancy—a father at the other end of the world. Lord Montalien, you may not tell me, Duke may not tell me, but I feel it here!—if my mother is alive, I shall find her out!"

Lord Montalien came over next day with Mr. Gripper, which legal gentleman produced documents tied with red tape, and read them solemnly aloud to his bewildered little client. It was all Greek or thereabouts to Polly, except one or two conditions which her mind grasped in passing. She was Lord Montalien's ward until she should come of age or marry. If Lord Montalien died before either of those events, the power of appointing a new guardian was vested in him. And in the hour of her marriage, whether she married with or without the consent of her guardian, or during her minority, her fortune became absolutely her own from thenceforth.

This was the proviso which his lordship had mentioned on the previous day as unusual. It was easy enough, by the light of Robert Lisle's own history, to understand it—it was to save her from her mother's fate. How little he dreamed in providing that saving clause for the happiness of the daughter he loved, how much trouble, and shame, and remorse, it was to cause her in the days to come!

The people from the Priory called upon Lord Montalien's ward with congratulations and cordial expressions of goodwill. Mr. Francis, whom Polly did not like; Mr. Guy, whom she admired and liked very much, and Sir Vane Charteris, who repelled her with his coarse mouth and fulsome compliments. The girl wondered why he looked at her with such intensity, his small, black eyes seeming to devour her. His

little daughter came with him, beautifully dressed, and much more gracious than on that other memorable occasion. Sir Vane expressed his regret that Lady Charteris could not have the happiness of making Miss Lisle's charming acquaintance. Lady Charteris was ill, confined to her room—a nervous, hysterical attack, but would probably be able to travel on the morrow, when he proposed returning to town to consult an eminent physician on the state of her health. Miss Lisle listened very coldly; she disliked both him and his daughter, and was relieved when they went away. Miss Hutton also called with her kinsman, Lord Montalien, elegant of costume, indisputably high-bred and patrician, but looking more elderly and faded than ever by contrast with that fresh, bright face. Mr. Allen Fane did not call—he was eating his very heart out with rage and baffled love. Retribution had come very swiftly to the tailor's ambitious son.

Lord Montalien's ward, obeying the behests of her guardian, spent one evening at the Priory. Only one—Duke and Rosanna must have all the rest. She went dressed in white tarlatan (white was the proper thing for a heroine), with a blue ribbon in her amber curls, and a blue belt around her slim waist. And she looked lovely! The white arms and neck glimmered through the flimsy tarlatan, and there was a flush on her cheeks and a light in her eyes. She entered those stately rooms a guest, an equal—she who had been Polly Mason last week; and she sat at Lord Montalien's right hand at dinner, and was the little queen of the feast.

In the drawing-room, after dinner, with some little urging, Polly sang. She did not mind singing at all, but she only played accompaniments of her own; she did not understand the piano.

"What does that matter, Miss Lisle," said Guy Earlscount; "who cares for the accompaniment. I know you can sing—I've heard you." Polly laughed, and blushed at the remembrance. "That song has haunted me ever since, I assure you. Sing it again, Miss Lisle, and exercise it."

He led her to the piano, and she obeyed. Her sweet, clear voice filled the rooms. With proper training, that voice alone might have made her fortune. She sang again "County Guy."

"Ah, County Guy! the hour is nigh,
The sun has left the lea,
The orange flower perfumes the bower,
The breeze is on the sea.
The lark, whose lay has thrilled all day,
Sits hushed, his partner nigh—
Breeze, bird, and flower confess the hour
But where is County Guy?"

He w
Italian
think of
haunt h
forever.
when G
the face
him, as
Southern
trast to
happy s
terly in

The la
It was
wonderf
It was
and mus
like drift
like it h
friends.
the bank
himself
His pale
Montalie
in the B
Polly," I
will neve
For on
hand, an
"You
fulfilled
For P
sumptuo
costly gi
hurt and
sent to
and Ros
enough i
Warren
ments b
watches

He was beside her, bending over her, his dark, dreamy, Italian eyes fixed on her face. What did Guy Earls court think of her? In days to come did that sweet, youthful face haunt his dreams? In the girl's memory that night lived forever, the first of her new existence, and there were hours when Guy Earls court's dark face rose up before her, like the face of a reproachful ghost. She never forgot it, nor him, as he stood there beside her, the dark beauty of his Southern face, and his jet-black hair, such a marked contrast to her own. How handsome he had looked! How happy she had been! She had reason to remember it—bitterly in the years to come.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST DAY.

The last day had come.

It was two weeks precisely since she had first heard the wonderful news, and Miss Paulina Lisle was entirely ready.

It was a wonderful fit-out in this young lady's eyes—silks and muslins of all hues and the finest textures, and linen, like drifted snow, trimmed with real Irish lace. Nothing like it had ever dazzled the eyes of the late Miss Mason's friends. That seven hundred pounds, so long laid away in the bank, was drawn forth to furnish this wardrobe. For himself and sister, Mr. Mason positively refused a farthing. His pale face flushed—his mild eyes quite flashed as Lord Montalien, ever so delicately, made the offer. "All the gold in the Bank of England could not repay me for the loss of Polly," he said. "Unless you want to insult me, my lord, you will never allude to this again."

For once Duke was dignified. Lord Montalien wrung his hand, and looked at him admiringly.

"You are a fine fellow," he answered, simply, "and have fulfilled your trust to Robert Lisle right loyally."

For Polly, she would have liked to fill the little house with sumptuous adornings, and load down her two friends with costly gifts. They refused everything, and it was only when, hurt and wounded, the girl was turning away, that Duke consented to replace his big silver watch with a gold patent lever, and Rosanna, her rusty brown with a new black silk, stiff enough in its glistening richness to stand alone. Miss Alice Warren got a locket and chain, and numbers of pretty ornaments besides. She would have liked to have sent gold watches and silk dresses to every one in Speckhaven—the

charity children included. She had even made friends with her old foe, with whom she had waged vendetta so long. She had met Eliza Long on the street, and that young woman had turned away with sullen eyes and bitterest envy. There had been a moment's struggle in Polly's breast—then that generous nature conquered, and she went up to her with extended hand and pleading eyes.

"I am going away, Eliza," she said; "don't let us part bad friends. I dare say I have been most in fault all through, but I am sorry. Do shake hands!"

Brave words to come from so proud a spirit! They had melted Eliza, and a reconciliation took place there and then. And that night, when the handsomest brooch and earrings money could buy in the town reached Miss Long, she fairly gave way and sobbed over them, struck with surprise and contrition. She was at peace with the world and all therein—happy Polly—and no shadow of the darkness to come marred to-day's brightness.

The visitors at the Priory were nearly all gone. Sir Vane Charteris, his wife and daughter, had left the day before the one on which the heiress dined here. My lady, closely veiled, and tottering as she walked, came forth leaning on her maid's arm. Once, as Lord Montalien said farewell, she had paused, catching his hand in both her own, and clinging to it as though her last hope were there. But Sir Vane had come forth, and she had dropped it, and fallen back in a corner of the traveling carriage, with her black veil over her face, and so the peer saw her for the last time on earth.

Miss Hautton had gone to Scotland two days after, to join the Duchess of Clanronald; Mr. Fane was to meet them in London, and accompany them to the Italian lakes; Lord Montalien, when his ward was safely deposited in her convent school, was to start for Syria; Francis Earlscount was going back to Oxford to read for his degree; and Guy was to rejoin his regiment at Knight's Bridge. So the actors in this life-drama were situated this twenty-first of July, fixed for Polly's departure. Widely enough separated, it would seem, but like the cards in the same pack—sure to come together again in the universal shuffle.

They were to start by the noonday mail, in time to catch the tidal train that evening for Folkestone. She had bidden good-by to all her old friends in the town, to her garden, to her pets, to her violin, to her little attic room. Lord Montalien's carriage awaited her outside the garden gate. My lord sat within in horrible dread of a scene. Alice Warren was sobbing beside Rosanna—sobbing bitterly. "I feel as though I were saying good-by forever," she said once. It was good

by to her, though she little knew it. The two friends would never look in each other's faces more on earth.

Rosanna, looking as if carved in gray stone, stood stiff and tearless beside the kitchen fire. And up in the painting-room, Paulina, in a charming traveling suit of gray and blue, and a little French hat, had her arms around Duke's neck, trying to say farewell. The little watch ticking at her belt pointed to five minutes to two; at ten minutes past their train started.

"Oh, Duke! oh, Duke! how can I say good-by? Oh, Duke! it breaks my heart to go!"

She was sobbing wildly. The scene-painter unloosed the clinging arms, and put her gently from him, looking at her with eyes full of great sadness.

"You must go, and at once, Duchess; good-by, my little one, and God in heaven bless you!"

He led her out of the room. On the threshold he stooped and kissed her for the first time since she had been a little toddling baby, crowing on his shoulder. Then the door shut upon her; the glory of Duke Mason's life was over—he had lost the Duchess!

He went back slowly to his old seat, sat down, laid his arms on the table, and his face upon them, as though he never cared to lift it again. And so, when hundreds of miles lay between him and his little one, and the starry summer twilight shone over the world, his sister found him.

She had kissed Alice, she had kissed Rosanna, sobbing vehemently, her tears falling like rain, and she had fled from them, and into the carriage with the coronet on its panels. The liveried coachman started his horses; she pulled a little blue veil she wore over her face, and turned away from her companion. They were flying through the town. She looked out with blinded eyes to take a last glimpse at the familiar streets. Eliza Long waved adieu to her from her window; Francis Earls court, walking to the station, lifted his hat as she passed. And then, through all her tempestuous grief, it dawned upon the young lady that she was reddening her eyes and swelling her nose in all probability, and that there would be plenty of time to cry on the way up to London. Ah, me! it is but a step from the depths of despair to the absurdly ridiculous; the philosopher who laughed at life and its follies and its pitiful weakness was the wiser philosopher of the two. Miss Lisle wiped away her tears, and wondered if Guy Earls court would also be at the station to say farewell.

He was not there. She felt a pang of disappointment as she saw Francis alone.

"I liked him best, and he might have come," she thought,

as my lord handed her into the *coupe* reserved for themselves. It wanted but two minutes of starting time—he would not come.

“Good-by, Miss Lisle; I wish you a pleasant journey,” Francis had said, shaking hands and stepping back. And then, at that instant, a tall, black horse came thundering in a cloud of dust down the road, bearing a breathless rider. The black horse was Thunder, and the rider Guy Earls court, late because he had stopped to fill a dainty little moss-lined basket with rarest flowers and fruit. He leaped off his horse, and gave the basket to the guard for Miss Lisle. The young lady’s heart bounded as she saw him; flushed, glowing, handsome.

“Rather a close finish,” he said, laughing, and holding out his hand. “I should never have forgiven myself had I been too late. Good-by, Miss Lisle; don’t quite forget your Speckhaven friends in your Parisian convent, and don’t, I conjure you, take the black veil. We cannot afford to lose you.”

She had barely time to touch the hand he reached her through the window, when the whistle shrieked and the train started. She sprang up for a last look; it fell upon him standing there, hat in hand, the July sunshine on his handsome head. And so the last face the girl took out of her old life, with the smile upon it that lit it into such rare beauty, was the dark, Italian face of **Guy Earls court**.

PART THIRD

CHAPTER I.

AFTER TWO YEARS.

The glory of a golden September day lay over the earth. It was the middle of the month. Down at Montalien Priory, for the past two weeks, the sportsmen had crashed through the stubble, and turnip fields, and the sharp ring of their fowling pieces echoed all day long through the golden richness. Very fair, very stately, looked the grand, ivied, old mansion, with its wealth of glowing dog roses and shining ivy, its waving oaks and cedars, its yellow harvest fields, its blooming gardens, all gilt with the glory of the cloudless September sun.

There were a half-dozen men, all told—Lord Montalien and his brother Guy, Allan Fane, the artist, and husband of the rich Diana Hautton, a Mr. Stedman, a Sir Harry Gordon and Captain Cecil Villiers, of the Guards. All good men and true, and not a single woman in the house to mar their sport, all day among the partridges, nor the perfect dinner Mrs. Hamper got up for their delectation in the evening. It was Liberty Hall; lord and guest did precisely as they pleased, and enjoyed themselves admirably.

"There are times when women are desirable, nay, inevitable," Guy Earls court said, in his lazy voice. "They embellish life in a general way. At flower shows and in ballrooms they are simply the necessaries of life; but commend me to a comfortable country house in the shooting season, and not a single enchantress within three miles."

"A declaration which, coming from you, Earls court, of all men alive, should have weight," observed Captain Villiers. "I always fancied your idea of paradise was borrowed from the Koran—a land of promise, flowing with wine, and peopled with black-eyed houris, or blue-eyed ballet-girls."

"Let me see," said Lord Montalien, peeling his apricots—"not a single enchantress within three miles! Yes, that's about the distance. The bailiff's cottage is precisely three miles from the gates of Montalien."

"And never houri of Mussulman, nor ballerina of Covent Garden, was half so lovely as the bailiff's blue-eyed daughter," cried Sir Harry Gordon. "The most bewitching, the

most divine little piece of calico I ever laid eyes on. She is Hebe personified."

"You are all in the same boat, then," remarked Mr. Allan Fane. "In love with pretty Alice—Guy, as usual, stroke oar, and safe to win."

Guy Earls court glanced across the table at his brother.

"Well now Fane, do you know I'm not so very sure of that. I'm the best-looking man here by long odds, and women, whether they be peeresses or peasants, do go down, I admit, before me; but somehow the little warren seems to have very poor taste, and to differ from the rest of her appreciative sex. I don't seem to make as profound an impression as I would like. Do you suppose I can have a rival?"

His sleepy, half-closed eyes were fixed upon his brother. Lord Montalien laughed pleasantly.

"If you mean me, Guy, and you look as if you do, I plead not guilty to the soft impeachment. Losing my head about rustic nymphs, be they ever so charming, is not in my line."

"No," answered Guy, a little thoughtfully, "as a rule I don't think it is. High-born beauty, with forty thousand down for her dowry, is your aim, dear boy. But the little Alice is exceptionally handsome, and somehow, I think—well," he added, rising with half a yawn, "there have been worse-looking Lady Montaliens."

There was little in the words, but his brother's face flushed. The women of the house of Montalien had been noted for generations for their beauty—the mother of the present lord being the sole exception. The first wife of Nugent, late Baron Montalien, had been hard of feature and sour of temper, as her picture still could show you; and on this point, Francis, twelfth Baron Montalien, was especially sensitive.

For Francis Earls court was Lord Montalien now, the late lord having twelve months before passed to a better, and (with all due respect for the British nobility), let us hope, even a higher sphere, where boredom is unknown. And his elder son reigned in his stead—that elder son whom, like his mother, he had never loved.

The men dispersed in the South Coppice, and soon through the sultry noontide the sharp ringing of the guns left the hot, still air. Lord Montalien alone was missing as the afternoon sun sank low in the summer sky, and a faint, sweet evening breeze arose and stirred the leaves.

"Frank bags other game than partridges," Guy said, with a shrug. "He's deuced close about it; but I know he's after that little girl like a ferret after a rabbit, or a terrier after a rat."

His fowling piece rang out, and two birds came tumbling down.

"You think, then——" Stedman began.

"Bah!" interrupted Guy. "I know. And you know, my good fellow, so don't try it on with me. Frank's just the sort of man not to lose his head after women, and to go straight to the dickens when he does. It's no affairs of yours or mine, however; we, neither of us are prepared to set up as censors, and Mistress Alice must look out for herself."

He plunged into the coppice and disappeared. Stedman looked after him with a peculiar smile.

"If Miss Warren is capable of looking out for herself it is more than you are. You can see my lord's little game there, clearly enough, but you are blind as a mole where you are concerned yourself. He hates you as a pheasant does a red dog. Why, I wonder?"

He was a pale young man, this Augustus Stedman, with a high, thoughtful brow, a retreating chin, a thin mouth, and shifting, hazel eyes. He was Lord Montalien's especial friend. There was an affinity in the deep, subtle natures of the two men, both—the truth may as well come out—thoroughly cold-blooded and unprincipled at heart, and outwardly models of all domestic and social virtues. No one could lay any charge whatever at the door of either, and yet there were men who mistrusted them, women who shrank away from them only to see them smile once.

Francis, Lord Montalien, walked slowly up to the house, and entered the library by an open French window. A noble room; its four walls lined with books, statues, and bronzes, everywhere writing-tables and easy-chairs strewn around, pleasant recesses for reading, and the mellow, afternoon sunshine flooding all.

There were three pictures in this library—three pictures hanging together over the tall, carved mantel. They were three portraits—the late Lord Montalien, his second wife, and younger son. Venetia, Lady Montalien, a portionless Italian girl, with a face of perfect beauty, such as one does not see twice in a lifetime, and barely eighteen when her son was born. That son's portrait hang by hers—the same dark, brilliant face, the same lustrous eyes of Southern darkness, the same proudly-held head, the same exquisite, smiling mouth.

The mother had lain in her grave for many a year; and the son's bright beauty was somewhat marred and haggard now. Those pictures were the first objects Lord Montalien looked upon, as he strode through the window, and a glance of bitter, vindictive hatred flamed up in his light, cold eyes. He

stood an instant regarding them with set teeth, and an expression bad to see. He spoke to them as though they had been senseless things.

"Ay," he said, "you have had your day—it is my time now! There you hang—the father who could barely conceal his dislike—the woman who supplanted my dead mother—the boy who would have supplanted me had it been in his father's power. You left your younger and favorite son, your Benjamin, every penny you could leave away from the entail; now is the time for me to show my gratitude. In your lifetime he was always first—his beauty, his brilliant gifts, drew all to his side, while I was passed over. 'What a pity Guy is not the heir!' my father's friends used to say. 'Poor Frank is so dull—so like his mother!' You thought so too, my lord—poor Frank went to the wall in your reign. When the heir of Montalien came of age, who knew or cared? When Guy came of age, bells rang, bonfires blazed, and the tenantry were feasted. Even those boors said 'What a pity Master Guy isn't the heir.' Ah! well, we'll change all that; I am Lord Montalien now, and Guy Earls court is where I have led him, on the high road to ruin—nay, a ruined man and a pauper to-day. '*Semper Fidelis*' is the motto of our house; and 'Always Faithful' to my revenge, he shall pay me back for every sneer, every slight, every advantage over me, to the uttermost farthing."

It was the secret of his life. Francis Earls court hated his brother.

He turned away from the three pictures at last—the smiling faces of Guy and the dead Lady Venetia seeming to mock him from the canvas.

"The day is near when I shall have the pleasure of putting you all three in the fire," he thought. "The day is near, my Lord Montalien, when your beloved one shall drag out the remainder of his brilliant existence within the walls of the Fleet Prison, or become an exile for life from his native land."

He paced up and down, up and down, while the sun dropped lower and lower, and not all the glory of the heavens could brighten the dark moodiness of his irate face.

"Curse her obstinacy," he muttered, sullenly. "With her fair, drooping head, her fawnlike eyes, her timid blushes, and flattering replies, she has the devil's own will! She won't yield—three times a day to church every Sunday, as long as she can remember, and the Sunday school between whiles, have done their work. I could as easily remove the Baron's Tower yonder as that frail milk-and-rose cottage

girl. What the deuce shall I do?—for, have her, I must, though I paid the dire penalty of—a wedding ring!”

He paced to and fro, revolving this question. “What shall I do?” He had a deep, subtle brain, like his smile, powerful to work good or evil for himself or others.

“In the days now past,” he mused, “a post-chaise-and-four round the corner, two muffled bravoos, and a midnight abduction would be the thing! Or one might go seek that convenient college friend, ever ready to personate the clergyman, and a mock marriage would settle the fair one’s scruples. But that sort of thing exploded with ruffles and rapiers, I suppose. And yet—and yet, I don’t know. What has been done can surely be done again. Why not the convenient college friend, and the mock marriage? She is as innocent as her own field daisies, my dear little verdant Alice, and she loves me with her whole good little heart, and would consent to a marriage, however private, so that it were a marriage. Without the parson, and the wedding ring, she won’t listen to a word—thanks to popular rustic prejudice, and the tenets of the Sunday school. A mock marriage—why not—why not?”

The scheme was practicable, but where was the convenient college friend to be found. But one, Stedman—his face suddenly lighted as he thought of Stedman.

“The heart of a cucumber fried in snow,” he thought, grimly. “A man with neither honor, conscience, principle, nor feeling—a man poor as a church mouse—a man capable of poisoning his own mother if he could benefit himself by the old lady’s demise, and not be found out. Yes,” he said, unconsciously loud, “Stedman will do it.”

“Will he, my friend?” said a cool voice, and a tall figure darkened the sunlight, as Mr. Augustus Stedman stepped through the open window. “I thought it was only on the stage and in madhouses people talked to themselves. And what is our Stedman to do, my lord?”

He flung himself into an easy-chair and proceeded to light a cigar. Lord Montalien looked at him suspiciously.

“What brings you here?” he asked. “How long were you watching me?”

“Do I intrude upon your profound cogitations? If so——” he made a motion of rising and leaving.

“No, no!” Lord Montalien said, hastily. “Don’t go; the fact is, Stedman, I want you. Can you guess, Stedman, what the business is?”

“Something about our blue-eyed Hebe, the blushing divinity, whose earthly name is Alice Warren.”

“Exactly, Gus—I’m hopelessly done for in that quarter. **The girl loves me with all her heart, but she is fearfully and**

wonderfully obdurate on the point of marriage. She is quite ready to resign me, and break her heart in the most approved fashion, and go off genteelly in a decline, but——”

“She insists on the nuptial knot,” interrupted Mr. Stedman, “which, of course, is simply preposterous; and so there’s nothing for it but to break both your hearts, and part. A case of Lord Lovel and Lady Nan—cee over again. Or is there something else on the cards?”

“Yes,” said Lord Montalien. And then, still pacing up and down, he laid bare his dark scheme.

Augustus Stedman listened, smoking, with an immovable face.

“Yes,” he said, slowly, at last, “I see. The thing can be done, I suppose, but it seems rather risky. And my part, dear boy? Am I to play the parson, and tie the knot? Unfortunately, *la petite* knows my interesting physiognomy almost as well as she does your own.”

“Of course not; but you may know some one who will play parson. You have a very extensive and not too select circle of acquaintances in London. Think, and see if there is not one among them who will do the business; and believe me, I shall not speedily forget your service.”

There shot from the eyes of Stedman, as Lord Montalien spoke the last words, a gleam not good to see; over his thin lips there dawned a faint, chill smile, that never came there save for evil.

The acquaintance of those two congenial spirits had come about rather curiously. Years before, a certain dashing young London actress had fettered Augustus Stedman in her rose chains. A thoroughly vicious woman, with nothing but her bold, handsome face to recommend her—coarse, heartless, and avaricious. He had wooed her long, and success seemed near, when the Honorable Francis Earls court appeared upon the scene, with the longer purse of the two. It is an episode neither pleasant nor profitable to relate. Stedman retired baffled, but he took his defeat wonderfully well. From that hour he became the chosen friend and associate of Francis Earls court, forgiving him handsomely for his somewhat treacherous conduct in the little matter, and, with the patience of an Indian chief, biding his time to wipe out the score.

Five years had passed, and the time had come!

The gleam in his gray eyes, the pale smile on his cynical mouth, were unseen by his companion. He had turned his face away, and was looking at the amber light in the soft western sky—at the green beauty of the sloping glades. For

five minutes silence reigned; then his lordship's patience gave way.

"Well!" he said, with an oath; "speak out, can't you? Does your silence mean you decline?"

"Silence means consent. Don't be impatient, my Lord Montalien; a man can't review some six or seven hundred acquaintances all in a second. I'll help you in this matter; and I know the very man you want."

"You do?"

"I do. A young fellow, destined for the church, on the point of receiving orders more than once, but the matter has been always postponed. He is the slave of the brandy bottle, and ready to do anything short of murder—a highway robbery for a five-pound note. It is my belief he will never be ordained; but he will marry you. He lives with his uncle, the incumbent of the Church of St. Ethelfrida, in the city, and nothing will be easier than for him to admit you, and perform the mock ceremony in the church after nightfall."

"In the church?"

"In the church. The uncle is down in Essex, as I happen to know, for a fortnight's holiday; the nephew can obtain the keys when he pleases. How soon do you want it done?"

"Immediately—day after to-morrow, if possible."

"Ah!" Stedman said, with a covert sneer; "the proverbial impatience of lovers! I remember once before, five years ago, you were almost equally far-gone."

"Stedman! I thought you had forgotten that. Remember, I was only a lad of one-and-twenty then."

"Old enough to be my successful rival," laughed Stedman. "Day after to-morrow will be rather sharp work, but, if the lady be willing, I don't say that it is impossible."

"The lady will be willing. I shall see her this very evening, and arrange all. How do you propose to manage?"

"Thus: I shall go up to town by the first train to-morrow, call on the man we want, bribe him, procure a special license (to satisfy herself), and have the job done next day. Miss Warren might go up by to-morrow's evening train, and remain quietly at some decent lodging, until the wedding hour. Your own movements you must settle yourself."

Lord Montalien seized his hat, and grasped Mr. Stedman's hand with a cordiality very unwonted with him.

"You are the prince of good fellows, Gus! Believe me, I shall not forget this."

He wrung his hand, dropped it, hurried through the open window, and disappeared.

Mr. Stedman looked after his retreating figure, and the ominous smile, the latent gleam, were very apparent now.

"No, my Lord of Montalien, I don't mean you shall forget this. I think before the week ends I shall wipe out that old grudge about poor Fanny Dashon."

Lord Montalien strode through the dewy meadows and the short, sweet grass, full of triumph and exultation. For Francis Earls court, from earliest boyhood, to set his heart upon anything was to strain heaven and earth to compass his ends. Years might come and go, but he remained faithful to his purpose. "Always faithful," the motto of the Earls courts, was never more strikingly exemplified than in him. By fair means or by foul, he must win Alice Warren!

He found her where he knew she was always to be found at this calm evening hour—milking. Flower, and Daisy, and Moolie stood around her, the sweet scent of new-made hay filled the air, the vesper songs of the birds rang down the pastoral stillness, the last golden glimmer of sunset was fading in the clear gray sky. All things looked fair and sweet; and fairest, sweetest of all, the girl who rose with a blush and a smile to greet her lover.

"Come with me, Alice," he said. "I have something to say to you—something you must hear at once."

She went with him across the long fields to the gloom and solitude of the distant fir plantation. Even in the heat of his wooing and success, he could remember prudence. Beneath the sombre shadow of the trees he passed his arm around her waist, and whispered his proposal. Would she be his wife—secretly, of course, but his wife?

The girl lifted two large, searching eyes to his face, and clasped both hands round his arm.

"Frank!" she cried, "your wife—your very wife. I, the bailiff's daughter—you, Lord Montalien! Do I hear you aright? Do you mean it?"

"More than I ever meant anything. Why not, my Alice—you are fair enough and good enough to be a queen, and who is there to say me nay. Only for the present it must be private—strictly private, remember. Not a whisper of your secret to a living soul."

And then, in soft, caressing tones, he told her what she was to do. To steal quietly from home, and take the eight-fifty train for London, to go to a quiet hotel, whose address he would send her, and wait there for him until the following day. And an hour after his arrival they would drive together to some obscure church, and be married. Would she consent?

Consent! She clasped her hands closer around his arm, her fair face rosy with joy.

"Frank! to be your wife, I would risk, would do anything.

Only some day soon, soon after our marriage, you will let me write, and tell father and mother. I can't bear that they——"

"Of course not. After our marriage you shall tell them everything. Don't fail; and, by the way, if you should meet my brother at the station, you can travel under his protection. Not a syllable to him, of course, for the present, at least. If you love me as you say, Alice, you will be content to wait a little before I present you to the world as Lady Mentalien."

If she loved him! the innocent eyes looking up to him were full of deathless devotion. They smote him—heartless, selfish as he was—they smote him the loving, faithful eyes of the girl he was betraying.

A great bell clanged out over the woods, the dressing bell at the Priory. He stooped hastily and kissed her. "Good-by, my Alice—for the last time. On the day after to-morrow we will meet in London to part no more."

Alice retired as usual to her room, but not to sleep. At midnight she lighted her candle and sat down to write a hasty note to Polly.

The few words she had to say were soon written:

"MY OWN DARLING:—I must speak one word to you before I go—before I go away from my home, my dear, dear home, to be married. Yes, Paulina; Alice is to be married to one she loves—oh, so dearly—so dearly—the best, the noblest of men on earth. Some day you will know his name, and what a happy, happy girl I am. Until then, love me, and trust always your own.
ALICE!"

She addressed this brief note to Paris, to "Mlle. Paulina Lisle." She kissed the name, she took the locket from her neck, and kissed the pictured face. "Darling little Polly," she said, "to think that when next we meet, Alice will be a lady, too."

And then at last she said her prayers, and went to bed. But the bright, broad day was shining gloriously in before the happy eyes were sealed by sleep. The new day—the beginning of a new life.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROAD TO RUIN.

Early on the following morning Mr. Augustus Stedman took a run up to town. And late in the evening, Mr. Guy Earls court was driven down from the Priory to catch the last express. The gray of the summer evening was fast deepening.

ing to darkness as Mr. Guy Earls court jumped out, and ran to the office for his ticket. In two minutes the train would start. One of these minutes he spent at the ticket office, the other in lighting a cigar and looking about him. Half-a-dozen loungers were scattered about the platform, and save himself, there was but another passenger—who wore a close, black veil, and who carried a small bag in her hand.

Something in this lonely female figure, standing there in the gloaming, something familiar, made the young Guardsman look again. She saw the glance, and came gliding up to him, and laid one timid hand upon his arm.

“Mr. Guy.”

“Alice!”

She had not lifted the close mask of black lace, but he recognized the voice, the whole form, the instant she spoke.

“Yes, Mr. Guy—I am going to London, and—and I am frightened to go alone. Might I—would you——”

“Now then, sir,” cried the guard, holding open the door of the first-class compartment. “Look sharp, if you please.”

“This way, Alice,” exclaimed Guy, and the three words, spoken in half a whisper, reached the ears of the guard, to be graven on his professional memory, and destined to be repeated, years after, with such deadly peril to the unconscious speaker.

There was no time for parley, no time for questions or remonstrance. He assisted her in, sprang after, the whistle shrieked, and the express train flew away through the darkening night.

“Now, then, Miss Alice Warren, explain yourself? What does a young lady from Speckhaven mean by running away to London at this unholy hour, and alone? I give you my word I should as soon have expected to behold the Czarina of all the Russias at the station as you.”

The veil was still down—its friendly shelter hid the burning, painful blush that overspread the girl’s face, but he could see she shrank and trembled.

“I am obliged to you, Mr. Guy.”

“You are, eh? I hope for everybody’s sake, my old friend Mathew knows all about it. And, if he does, my old friend Mathew ought to be ashamed of himself—letting his pretty daughter run wild up to London. Where is Peter Jenkins, too—the sturdy miller—that he doesn’t look better after his little affianced?”

“I am not his affianced,” Alice replied, between a laugh and a sob; “I never was. And my father and mother don’t know I’ve come—please don’t blame them, Mr. Guy.”

"As in a glass, darkly," he saw the truth, and for once in his life felt actually called upon to remonstrate.

"Alice," he said, "I don't want to pry into any secret of yours—you know your own affairs best, of course; but is this a wise step you are taking? Think, before it is too late, and turn back while there is yet time."

"There is no time. It is too late. And I would not turn back if I could."

She spoke more firmly than he had ever heard her. She was thinking that this time, to-morrow she would be Frank's wife.

"You know best. Pardon my interference. At least, you will permit me to see you to your destination."

She took from her purse a slip of paper and handed it to him.

"I am going there. If you will take me to it I will be very, very thankful."

"Mrs. Howe's Lodgings, 20 Gilbert's Gardens, Tottenham Court Road," read Guy. "Ah, I don't know. Mrs. Howe's Lodgings, Gilbert's Gardens, sounds rural, though. Yes, Miss Warren, I shall certainly see you there; and now, with your permission, will read the evening paper."

And then silence fell between them.

It was close upon midnight when the countless lamps of London first shone before the country girl's dazed eyes. The bustle and uproar of the station terrified her; she clung in affright to Mr. Earls court's arm. And then they were in a four-wheeled cab, whirling rapidly away to Gilbert's Gardens.

"It's rather an unearthly hour," remark'd Guy, looking at his watch. "I only hope Mrs. Horne—no, M^s. Howe—is prepared to receive us."

Mrs. Howe was. Mr. Stedman had arranged that as well as other matters; and Miss Warren was affably received by a thin, little woman, with a pinched nose and a wintry smile, and shown to the ladies' sitting-room at once.

She gave her hand to her companion with a glance of tearful gratitude.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Guy. I don't know how I should have got here but for you. Good-night, and, oh, please"—piteously—"don't say anything to anybody down home about having met me."

"Certainly not, Alice—good-night."

He had reached the door when a sudden impulse struck him, and he turned back. He took both her hands in his own and looked kindly, pityingly, down in the sweet, tear-wet face.

"Little Alice," he said. "I'm a good-for-nothing fellow, but I have a very tender regard for you. If ever you find yourself up a tree—I mean in trouble of any kind—I wish you'd come to me. I'll help you if I can. Here is an address to which you can write at any time, and if ever you call upon me I will never fail you."

The dark, handsome face, the brown, earnest eyes swam before the girl in a hot mist. If he had been her brother he could hardly have felt more tenderly toward her than at that moment. Trouble! He knew, if she did not, what dark and bitter trouble was in store for her, and he was helpless to ward it off.

"I've had the fortune to come across a good many inscrutable cards in my time," he thought, as he ran downstairs, "but for inscrutability, Monti puts the topper on the lot. What an infernal scoundrel he is; and what an inconceivable idiot that poor child! Of course, he's going to marry her—nothing else would have induced a girl like that to take such a step."

Mrs. Howe led the way upstairs, with a simper on her faded face.

"I know all about it, miss," she whispered, confidentially; "the young man as was here this morning—a most genteel young man he is—told me that you was going to be married, you know, miss, and that is the gentleman, of course, a military gentleman, as one may see, and the very 'andsomest as I ever set eyes on."

Alice shrank away, almost with dread. How dare Mr. Stedman tell this strange woman her secret? She entered her room, a neat little apartment enough, but insufferably close and stuffy, as it seemed to the country girl, used to the fresh breath of the German Ocean, and the sweet breeze of the Lincolnshire wold.

Mrs. Howe set down the candle, still simpering, still courtesying.

"And if there's anything else, miss—hot water, or a cup of tea, or a plate of cut 'am, or anything as you might mention—I'm sure I'd me most happy. Which the genteel young gent this morning paid up in advance, most generous—"

"No, thank you; I want nothing," Alice answered, hurriedly; and the simpering landlady, with a last dip, walked away.

She closed and locked the door, and sank down on her knees by the bedside, her hat and shawl still on, with an overpowering sense of desolation and loneliness. What were they doing at home? What did they think of her? They would miss her at the hour for evening prayers, and they would

search for her in vain. She could see her mother's scared, white face, her father's stern, angry. Oh, what a bad, cruel girl she was, only thinking of herself and her own happiness, and never caring for the grief she was leaving behind! Very soon they would know the truth, that she was the happy wife of Lord Montalien, but until then, what grief, what shame, what fear, would she not make them suffer!

A clock in the neighborhood struck three. She had scarcely slept the night before—involuntarily her eyes were closing now. She got up in a kind of stupor, removed her outer clothing, threw herself half-dressed upon the bed and slept deeply, dreamlessly, until morning.

It was broad day when she awoke and started up—nine o'clock of a dull, rainy morning. The crashing noises without half stunned her for a moment, until she realized she was in London.

In the course of the forenoon Mr. Stedman called; she was glad to see even him then, though down at home she had disliked him. Everything was in readiness, Mr. Stedman told her; she might look for Lord Montalien a little before six o'clock.

Seven hours to wait—would they ever pass, Alice thought. She asked the landlady for a book, and tried to fix her attention upon it, but in vain. For once a novel failed to absorb Miss Warren. She listened to the hours, and the quarters, as they chimed two, three, four, five.

In Gilbert's Gardens the dark, rainy day was closing already, and yellow lamps glimmered athwart the fog. Half-past five—a quarter of six—oh, would he never come! She had worked herself up into a fever of longing and impatience, when a hansom whirled up to the door, a man very much muffled leaped out, and rushed up the stairs, and, with a cry of joy, Alice flung herself into the arms of her lover:

"Oh, Frank! Frank! I thought you would never come! The day has been so long—so long!"

He was so closely muffled that the eyes of love alone could have recognized him. He looked flushed and eager as a prospective bridegroom should.

"Dress yourself as quickly as possible, Alice," he said, hurriedly; "we will drive to the church at once."

In five minutes the girl's straw hat and simple shawl were on. She drew her veil over her face, and with a beating heart was led by her lover to the cab. A second more and they were whirling away, and the curious eyes of the landlady were removed from the window.

"I could not see his face," she remarked afterward; "he was that muffled up, and his hat was that pulled over his

heyes, but I know it was the same millingtary gent as brought her the night afore."

The Church of St. Ethelfrida was a very long way removed from Gilbert's Garden, and it was entirely dark by the time they reached it. A small and dingy edifice, in a small and dingy court, with not a soul to observe them, and only a solitary cab waiting round the corner, from which Mr. Stedman sprang to meet them. An old woman in pattens opened the church door—an old woman, who, with Mr. Stedman, was to constitute the witness of the ceremony. A solitary lamp lit the dark edifice, and by its light they saw a young man in a surplice, standing behind the rails, with a book in his hand. Lord Montalien led the palpitating little figure on his arm up the aisle, and in less than ten minutes the young man in the surplice had gabbled through the ceremony, and pronounced Francis Earls court and Alice Warren man and wife. Then came signing and countersigning in a big book—a fee was slipped from the palm of the bridegroom into that of the young man in the surplice. Alice received her "marriage lines" and all was over. At the church door the bridegroom stopped to shake hands with his faithful friend and accomplice.

"You're a trump, Stedman! Believe me, I shall not forget what you have done for me to-night."

Mr. Stedman, with his hands in his pocket, and that pale, ominous smile on his lips, watched bride and bridegroom re-enter their cab and drive away; then he laughed to himself—a soft, low laugh.

"No! most noble lord; I don't think you will forget in a hurry what I have done for you to-night. I was to be the cat's-paw, was I—the hanger-on who was to do your dirty work, and take my reward in being told I am a trump? In six weeks from now, if I am har'ed up, I shall know where to call, and trust to your gratitude for a check for a couple of thousand; and I think that other little score, five years old, is pretty clearly wiped out at last."

* * * * *

When Guy Earls court told Alice Warren that he was "a good-for-nothing sort of fellow," he uttered a fact in which he would have found a great many people agree. As fast as man could tread that broad, sunlit, flower-grown highway, known as the "Road to Ruin," Lieutenant Guy Earls court had been treading it for the past three years.

Ever since when at twenty years of age he had begun his new, bright life as fledgling guardsman and emancipated Etonian, he had been going the pace with a recklessness, a

mad ex
was bu
head a

Just
Syria.
Nugen
ruptly
oughly
through
longing
would
not wis
rather
general

He
Robert
appoint
men he
or, if su
had alm
Charter
meditat
such a
ends of
the one
dislike
the day
declarat
forgive

Poor
now; s
recover
three w
up to t
beer ev
sion wa
husban
Americ
ing pla
at a fas
out, to
distant
At th
Syrian
dence t
the que
of Pau

mad extravagance, that knew neither bounds nor pause. He was but four months past three-and-twenty now, and over head and ears in debt, and irretrievably ruined."

Just one year and a half ago his father had died, away in Syria, of typhoid fever. Amid strangers, in a strange land, Nugent, Baron Montalien's long exile of sixty years had abruptly ended. He drifted out of life as quietly, as thoroughly self-possessed and gentlemanly as he had drifted through it. In his last hour there were no vain regrets, or longings for home and friends. Once he had thought he would like to see Guy; it was but a passing weakness; he did not wish a second time for what was impossible. It was rather a relief, on the whole, to go—to make an end of the general weariness and delusion of living.

He had but one trouble—the thought of the girl whom Robert Hawksley had left in his charge. Whom should he appoint guardian in his own stead? He thought over all the men he knew, and there was not one among them suitable, or, if suitable, willing to undertake the troublesome duty. He had almost given up the problem in despair, when Sir Vaue Charteris suddenly appeared upon the scene. It was no pre-meditated meeting; it was the merest chance—if there be such a thing as chance—if the destiny that was shaping the ends of Paulina Lisle had not driven him hither. He was the one man whom his lordship had not thought of. A vague dislike and distrust of him had been in his mind ever since the day upon which Lady Charteris had made her passionate declaration that he had insulted her, and that she would never forgive him.

Poor Lady Charteris! it mattered little whom she forgave now; she was the inmate of a madhouse! She had never recovered from that sudden illness down at Montalien; and three weeks from the time when her husband had taken her up to town her mind had entirely given way, and she had been ever since the inmate of a private asylum. Her delusion was a singular one. Sir Vaue Charteris was not her husband, she persisted; her lawful husband was alive, and in America, to whom she was always trying to write. And having placed his insane wife in safe keeping, and his daughter at a fashionable boarding-school, Sir Vaue Charteris also set out, to drown the great trouble of his life, sight-seeing in distant lands.

At the close of a bright summer day, he entered the little Syrian village where my lord lay dying. It seemed a Providence to the sick man. Almost the first words he spoke were the question—would he assume in his stead the guardianship of Paulina Lisle?

There rose up over the swarthy face of the baronet a flush that was not the rosy light of the Eastern sunset. He had never thought of this! Among all the chances that were to place his wife's elder daughter in his power he had never thought of this! It was a moment before he could answer—a moment during which his face was turned far away from the dying man, and his black eyes gazed at the rainbow light in the Syrian sky. Then he spoke very quietly:

"If it will relieve your mind any, my lord, I willingly accept the charge. With my unfortunate domestic affliction I had not thought of ever again making England my home, but my duty to my daughter, perhaps, should be paramount over every mere personal grief. I will become Miss Lisle's guardian, and fulfill my duty to the best of my ability. She and Maud will be companions, and my sister Eleanor—Mrs. Galbraith, you recollect!—will preside over my home."

The necessary documents were immediately drawn up; and that night, when the great white moon rose up out of the Orient, Nugent, Lord Montalien, lay white and cold in death.

Sir Vane Charteris lingered in the Syrian village long enough to perform his last duties to his friend. The body was embalmed and transported to England; and perhaps among all who stood bareheaded around, while the great vault down at Montalien opened to receive another inmate, Guy Earls court was the only mourner at heart. It had not been the way of father or son to speak of it, or even much to think of it, but in their secret hearts they had loved each other wonderfully well. For Francis, the new Lord Montalien, he looked, as he always did, the model of all filial virtues and quiet grief; but the dark spirit within him exulted. His was the power now and the glory—he, not the dead man's favorite, reigned in Montalien.

He listened with the same expression of subdued sorrow when the will was read, and knew that his father had not left him one memento of fatherly regard. All had gone to Guy—a trifle, perhaps, but all. He grasped his brother's hand when they were alone together, and looked at him with glistening eyes.

"Guy, old fellow," he said, "thirteen thousand is not much to you with your habits and tastes, but when you are up a tree call upon me without fear. The income of Montalien is a noble one, and I shall share it as a brother should. Sift yourself in no way—your debts shall be paid."

Guy lifted his dark eyebrows, and pulled his mustache in dense bewilderment.

"Has Frank gone mad, I wonder?" he thought; "he pay

my de
keep r
gushin
very r
straight
aged v

Sir
return
He ha
young
a few
for he
teris,
ized a
called
tember
conver
a pale
coldly
plans

She
come.
and hi
ber. I
grace,
at Cou
remain

"Yes
it." S
in the
ginia
nal m
make
If Sir
the mi

The
sired,
a will
for ha
possess
a battl

"Sh
man o
Engla
At her
to say

So v

my debts! Why, the selfish beggar would not give a sou to keep me from starving! What the deuce does he mean by gushing in this way?" But aloud he had answered: "Thanks, very much; you're not half a bad fellow, Frank!" and had straightway proceeded to squander his legacy, which he managed very completely to do in a year.

Sir Vane Charteris made an end of his Eastern tour, and returning home by Paris, proceeded to call upon his ward. He had informed Miss Lisle by letter of the change, and the young lady had shed some very sincere tears over the news, a few for Lord Montalien, whom she had liked, and a few for herself, that she should be the ward of Sir Vane Charteris, whom she disliked with a heartiness which characterized all this young person's likes and dislikes. The baronet called upon her one July day—the July preceding the September of which I have written—and there descended to the convent parlor, a tall, slim young lady, in a gray dress, with a pale face, and large, bright eyes. She gave her hand rather coldly to her guardian, and listened while he unfolded his plans for her.

She was eighteen now, and the time for leaving school had come. Early in October his town house would be in order, and his sister and daughter ready to receive and welcome her. It was his wish she should enter society at once; her grace, the Duchess of Clanronald, had offered to present her at Court. Pending the ides of October, would Paulina mind remaining quietly where she was?

"Yes," Miss Lisle answered, "decidedly, she would mind it." She had no notion of spending the midsummer vacation in the convent. She had promised her friend, Mlle. Virginia Dupont, to spend August and September in the fraternal mansion, at Versailles. And she was quite willing to make her *debut* in society immediately—delighted, indeed. If Sir Vane Charteris should choose to come for her about the middle of October she would be ready to go to England.

The interview ended, and the baronet had got what he desired, an inkling into the character of the heiress. She had a will of her own—that was clear—and a very strong fancy for having her own way. It would require all the tact he possessed, and all the strength of mind to come off victor in a battle with her.

"She shall marry in her first season," he thought; "and a man of my choosing. Robert Lisle will never dare return to England; and Olivia's life will soon end in her madhouse. At her death her fortune becomes Maud's, for who is there to say she ever had an elder daughter?"

So while Miss Lisle was enjoying herself very much in her

friend's name, there were several people across the Channel to whom she was an object of great interest. Sir Vane Charteris, busily preparing his town house, in the aristocratic neighborhood of Berkeley Square, for her reception—Lord Montalien, who had made up his mind, entirely to his own satisfaction, to marry her, and the spendthrift and prodigal Guy, who was strongly recommended to do the same. His adviser was an old maiden aunt of his father's, from whom he had expectations, who had already paid his debts half-a-dozen times, and the thought of whose prospective legacy alone kept the Jews from swooping down upon him.

"You are the most reckless, the most wickedly extravagant man in the Guards," this ancient grandaunt said to him in a passion; "and I will pay your debts no more, sir; do you understand? Gambling and drinking and horse racing are bad enough, Heaven knows, but let there come a whisper of anything worse to my ears, and I disinherit you, and give everything to Frank; do you understand?"

"There is no mistaking your meaning, my dear aunt," Guy answered, with imperturbable good temper. "I dare say you will, eventually; I'm an unlucky beggar generally, and it will only be of a piece with the rest, if you do disinherit me. It's a pity, for Frank's sake, I don't go to the bad altogether."

"You have gone there, sir!" cried old Miss Earls court. "You're a disgrace to your name and family, sir. Why don't you get married?—answer me that—and change your life, and leave the army, and become a decent member of society?"

Guy looked at her with a face of unfeigned horror.

"Get married! Heaven forbid! My dear aunt, I don't like to doubt your sanity, but to propose marriage to a man of my age—three-and-twenty, odd! No, it is not so desperate as that; while there is prussic acid enough left in the chemist's to enable me to glide out of life."

Miss Earls court struck her stick vehemently on the ground, looking very much like a venerable witch.

"Lieutenant Earls court, I say you shall marry, and at once! There is this girl, who was your father's ward; she is rich—she is handsome. I say you shall marry her!"

"Shall I?" murmured Guy, helplessly.

"She is coming home next month. I asked Frank, and he told me, and you shall make her fall in love with you, and marry you. You are handsome—one of the very handsomest young men I ever saw—and a favorite with all the women. I don't go into society, but I hear—I tell you, sir, you shall marry this Paulina Lisle, or I will disinherit you! Now

go!?" a
see yo
annou

Awa
stood.
from
Firs."
had ne
gloomy
countr
long w
gaunt,

The
some a
her hat
did the

Mrs.
Charter
widow
twenty
Sixtieth
within
only br

Sir V
he com
by that
must li
liance
and a
sire in
she like
from f
self—its
Galbrai
tirely v

Mrs.
socially
and gra
feet im
one ye
brother

gol" and the witch's stick pointed to the door; "don't let me see your wicked, spendthrift face again until you come to announce this heiress as your affianced wife!"

CHAPTER III.

PAULINA.

Away along the dreariest part of the Essex coast there stood, and stands still, a lonely old manor house, closed in from the outer world by funereal trees, and called "The Firs." It was the country house of Sir Vane Charteris, and had never been visited by him in the past twenty years. A gloomy and grewsome place, five miles from the nearest country neighbor, a squalid fishing village lying below, the long waves forever breaking upon the shingly shore, and the gaunt, dark firs skirting it, smothering it all around.

The "Moated Grange" could hardly have been a more lonesome and eerie dwelling, nor could "Mariana" have bewailed her hard lot in being shut up there much more bitterly than did the mistress of "The Firs," the Widow Galbraith.

Mrs. Eleanor Galbraith was the only sister of Sir Vane Charteris, and had spent the last nineteen years of her widowhood doing penance at "The Firs." When one-and-twenty she had thrown herself away upon a subaltern in the Sixtieth Highlanders, which penniless young officer, dying within two years, left his widow to the cold charity of her only brother.

Sir Vane had bitterly opposed the imprudent match; now he comforted Mrs. Galbraith in her weeds and widowhood by that cynical aphorism—as she had made her bed so she must lie. He was shortly about to contract a matrimonial alliance with the wealthy and beautiful Miss Olivia Lyndith; and a sister in weeds was an addition he did not at all desire in his nuptial establishment. There was "The Firs" if she liked. "The Firs" stood in need of a mistress to keep it from falling to decay. He never meant to go near it himself—its dismalness always gave him the horrors. If Mrs. Galbraith chose to go and reside at "The Firs," she was entirely welcome, if not—

Mrs. Galbraith did choose, wrathfully, and had become socially extinct from that hour. Nineteen years had passed, and gray hairs had stolen into her raven locks, and crow's-feet impressed themselves under her eyes. She was forty-one years of age, and was a handsome likeness of her brother. Look at her as she sits at her solitary midday meal,

with the hot September sunshine filling the long, dark, old-fashioned dining-room. A fine woman, most assuredly, in spite of the crow's-feet—a stout, handsome, middle-aged lady, with a clear brain and a firm will.

The rattling of wheels on the drive without reaches her ears—a most unusual sound. As she springs up and goes to the window, she sees, to her ungovernable surprise, her brother, Sir Vane Charteris. An instant more, and the old man who did duty as butler, gardener, and coachman, ushered in the lord of the manor.

"Vane!"

Mrs. Galbraith could just utter the one word.

The baronet advanced with more cordiality than he had ever displayed toward her, and held out his hand.

"My dear Eleanor, I am glad to see you again." He drew her to him, and kissed her wholesome brown cheek. "Yes, very glad, after so many years; and looking so nicely, too. What! luncheon already?"

He flung himself into a chair, and glanced at the substantially spread table.

"Dinner, Sir Vane Charteris! I dine at the hour at which people of your world breakfast. One nearly forgets the usages of civilized life after nineteen years' solitude at 'The Firs.'"

"I hope not, Eleanor," answered Sir Vane, coolly, "as I desire you at once to return to my world, as you call it. I have come down to remove you from 'The Firs' to my town-house."

Mrs. Galbraith gave a gasp. At last!—what she had pined for, prayed for, sighed for, during nineteen years had come!

"You have heard of my unfortunate domestic calamity?" pursued the baronet; "I allude to my unhappy wife's insanity. I had half resolved to sell the lease of the Meredan street house; but circumstances have occurred lately that have caused me to change my mind. I have been appointed guardian to a young lady, an heiress, whom I wish to present to society."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Galbraith, with her black eyes fixed on her brother's face. "I saw a brief paragraph in the *Morning Post* concerning it. A Miss Paulina Lisle, formerly the ward of the late Lord Montalien—is it not?"

"The same; and a very handsome and charming young lady, I assure you, with eighty thousand pounds as her fortune. She will be presented next season by the Duchess of Clanronald, and make her *début*, with yourself for chaperone. Meantime, she comes from France in a month, and will go out a great deal, no doubt, in a quiet way, this autumn and

winter
at Mor
once, a
leave s

"You
ward,"
trouble

ness.

Lisles?

"No;

"She

"Oh,

least li

Lord M

power t

death.

my duty

"The

"Of c

to-morro

"Quit

Vane w

her plat

"Vanc

would h

ing som

Miss Lis

that this

The ba

and Mrs

ergy tha

during h

the refer

and room

before th

street, Be

Miss Pau

Sir Va

France.

now, sma

cious littl

a grown-u

could play

talk a gr

drove out

of person

winter. The Christmas and hunting season we are to spend at Montalien Priory. My town house must be set in order at once, and you shall preside in my wife's place. Maud shall leave school, and have a governess."

"You give yourselves considerable trouble for your new ward," said Mrs. Galbraith, who knew that giving himself trouble for anything or anybody was not her brother's weakness. "Who is this Paulina Lisle? One of the Sussex Lisles?"

"No; I believe the father was of Scotch descent."

"She is an orphan, of course?"

"Oh, no; the father lives out in California, but not in the least likely to return to England. He was an old friend of Lord Montalien, and intrusted his heiress to him, with the power to appoint a guardian in his stead in the event of his death. I have been appointed, and trouble or no, I shall do my duty to this young lady."

"The mother is dead, I suppose!"

"Of course. Can you be ready to return to town with me to-morrow, Eleanor?"

"Quite ready," said Mrs. Galbraith; and then, while Sir Vane went to his room, she finished her dinner, regarding her plate with a thoughtful frown.

"Vane has changed very greatly," she mused, "or he never would have burdened himself with a ward at all. Is he keeping something back, I wonder? Has he designs upon this Miss Lisle's fortune? Does he expect his wife to die, and that this young heiress will marry him?"

The baronet and his sister returned to town early next day, and Mrs. Galbraith set to work at once with a zeal and energy that showed she had lost none of her sharp faculties during her nineteen years' exile from the world. She saw to the refurnishing and repainting and rehanging of the house and rooms, to the plate, the linen, the liveries—all. Long before the middle of October arrived, the house in Meredean street, Berkeley Square, was quite ready for the reception of Miss Paulina Lisle.

Sir Vane brought his daughter home, and then started for France. The baronet's daughter was in her sixteenth year now, small of stature, dark of skin, and with a pale, precocious little face. She had quite the air and conversation of a grown-up person, knew a deal of life, and French literature, could play a little, sing a little, draw a little, and dance and talk a great deal. Her aunt and she fraternized at once, drove out in the Park together, and speculated what manner of person this Miss Lisle might be now.

"Your father says she is very handsome, Maud," observed Mrs. Galbraith.

"Handsome! oh dear, no; quite a plain young person, with great eyes, and sandy hair, and the rudest manners. Quite an uninformed, gawky country girl!"

Late in the evening of a dismal day in October, Sir Vane and his ward, arrived. It had rained and blown heavily all day long. Miss Lisle had suffered agonies worse than death crossing the Channel, and was as limp, and pallid, and woe-begone an object as can be conceived. Mrs. Galbraith shrugged her broad shoulders as she looked at the wan, spiritless face.

"And you called her handsome, Vane?" she said to her brother.

Sir Vane laughed grimly.

"Wait until to-morrow," was his oracular response, as he, too, in a used-up state, retired to his room.

Lord Montalien, who, since the middle of the previous September, had spent the chief part of his time in town, chanced to be in the house. He was a frequent visitor. The house was pleasant, the wines and cook excellent, Mrs. Galbraith a capital hostess and a clever woman, and little Maud, in a year or two, would be marriageable. Her mother's fortune would be hers, and should Miss Lisle prove obdurate to his suit, why, it might be as well to win the regards of Miss Charteris. To marry a rich wife he was resolved—at heart he was a very miser, and worshiped gold for gold's sake.

"A sickly, sallow, spiritless creature as ever I saw!" was Mrs. Galbraith's contemptuous verdict on her return to the drawing-room. "There will not be much credit in chaperoning her. I dare say she will marry; girls with eighty thousand pounds are pretty safe to go off, but half the men in London will certainly not lose their senses about her! And my brother told me she was pretty!"

"She was pretty," said Lord Montalien, "more than pretty, if I remember right, two years ago. Allan Fane, an artist friend of mine, the man who married Di Hautton, you know, nearly went mad about her when she was only a poor, little, penniless country girl. Some girls do grow plain, and I suppose she is one of them. We shall be treated to austere conversations, no doubt, and have to listen to monastery bells and psalter hymns, whenever she sits down to the piano."

"Come to dinner to-morrow and see," was Mrs. Galbraith's response. And his lordship laughingly promised and left the house.

He did not return to his own elegant bachelor lodgings in Piccadilly, but drove to Gilbert's Gardens, and spent the

evening
called
of Pa
Lor
early
ing.
the g
stately
room.
school
another
shinin
at onc
"As
her de
Englan
Miss
him w
"I b
me up
was ch
"Your
"No
Mrs. G
"Oh,
the mo
"The
tender
"So
with t
times
think t
ship, b
She
song.
braith.
"A s
words
clevere
so sligh
The
taller a
face, p
large, l
saucy,
would l
enough

evening very agreeably in the society of a lady whom he called "Alice," and to whom he did not speak of the return of Paulina Lisle.

Lord Montalien, as a privileged friend of the family, came early to the house of Sir Vane Charteris the following evening. There was to be a dinner party, but he was the first of the guests to arrive. Mrs. Galbraith, in crimson velvet, stately and majestic, received him in the winter drawing-room. Two young ladies were present, one in her simple schoolroom attire, for Maud did not yet appear in public, another, tall and slender, in blue silk, with violets in her shining, gold-brown hair. Lord Montalien approached her at once with outstretched hand.

"As I was the last to say farewell to Miss Paulina Lisle on her departure, so let me be the first to welcome her back to England."

Miss Lisle turned round, and gave him her hand, scanning him with blue bright eyes.

"I beg your pardon, you were not the last to say farewell to me upon my departure from England," she retorted, and it was characteristic that her first words were a contradiction. "Your brother came after you, Mr. Earls court."

"Not Mr. Earls court now, my dear," smoothly insinuated Mrs. Galbraith. "Lord Montalien."

"Oh, yes! I beg your pardon again. The other name was the most familiar."

"Then call me by whatever is most familiar," with a long, tender glance, "as so old a friend should."

"So old a friend!" Miss Lisle pursed up her bright lips with the old saucy grace. "Let me see—we met just three times in our lives before this moment! Now, I shouldn't think three meetings would constitute such very old friendship, but, of course, your lordship knows best."

She walked away to a distant window, humming a French song. Lord Montalien looked after her, then at Mrs. Galbraith.

"A sickly, sallow, spiritless creature," he said, quoting her words of yesterday. "Mrs. Galbraith, you are one of the cleverest women I know, but don't you think you made ever so slight a mistake yesterday?"

The girl was looking superbly. The slim form had grown taller and rather fuller, its willowly grace was perfect. The face, perhaps, was a trifle too pale and thin still, but the large, brilliant, sapphire eyes, the sparkling white teeth, the saucy, ever-dimpling smiles, and the aureole of bronze hair, would have lit any face into beauty. In her nineteenth year, enough of childhood yet lingered to give her a frank confi-

dence that rarely lasts through later years. The blue eyes looked you full, brightly, steadily in the face, the frank lips told you the truth, with all the audacity of a child. A lovely girl, in her first youth, with a will and a spirit, and a temper, too, of her own, ready at a moment's notice to do battle for friends or with foes.

"A half-tamed filly, with a wicked light in the eyes," thought Lord Montalien. "My dear Mrs. Galbraith, I don't want to discourage you, but your spiritless *debutante* will give you as much trouble in the future as ever *debutante* gave chaperone. That young lady means to have her own way or know the reason why."

"Young ladies with eighty thousand pounds generally do have their own way," the lady answered. "Do you mean to enter the list, my lord? The competition will be brisk. She is a handsome girl, despite yesterday's seasickness. Just the sort of girl men lose their heads for most readily. By the by, she has been asking for your scapegrace brother."

Mrs. Galbraith rose to receive some new guest, and Lord Montalien approached the window where Miss Lisle still stood gazing out at the twilight street. She glanced over her shoulder, and asked him a question before he could speak.

"My lord, how long is it since you were at Speckhaven?"

"A little over a week, Miss Lisle. You mean to visit it soon, I suppose? By the way, there is quite an old friend of yours stopping at Montalien."

"Indeed! Another old friend, like yourself, whom I have probably seen three times."

"More than that, Miss Lisle. I allude to Allan Fane."

"Oh!" said Paulina, and laughed and blushed. "Yes, I saw a good deal of Mr. Fane at one time. He wanted me to sit for a picture, you know. Mrs. Fane is there too, I suppose?"

"No, Mr. Fane is alone. Mrs. Fane is in Germany for her health, which is poor. They meet once or twice a year, I believe, and are always perfectly civil to each other; but, as a rule, they get on much more happily with two or three hundred leagues between them. Mrs. Fane grows old and sickly, and is notoriously jealous of her husband."

"Poor Mr. Fane! And your brother, my lord—is he, too, at Montalien?"

"You remember Guy, then?—poor Guy!"

"Certainly I remember Guy. I saw a great deal more of him than I ever did of you; and two years is not such an eternity! And why poor Guy?"

"Because—because—you haven't heard, then?"

"Lord Montalien, I only reached England late last night;

how w
fallen

"Yo
worthy

"W

"Be
for me
they sa

"I s
means
debt."

"It
gloom
horror

"Ye
brothe

while

The

"Mi
explai
the wo

He s

blue e
wished
and sp

"We
subject

was th
flush r

of Alic

The
pected

"Ali
she?"

"Wh
not ne
wired

"Ad
stupid

"Yes
"The

strange

"Not
tomary

"To
pale as
"Cer

how was I to hear anything? Nothing very dreadful has befallen your brother, I hope?"

"Your interest does him too much honor. He is quite unworthy of it."

"Why, please?"

"Because—my dear Miss Lisle, it is not a pleasant story for me to tell, for you to hear. Guy has gone to the bad, as they say, if you know what that means."

"I should think I did; it seems tolerably plain English. It means, I suppose, he has spent all his money, and got into debt."

"It means that, and more," Lord Montalien answered, gloomily; "it means debt, and gambling, and all sorts of horrors."

"Yes. But you are very rich, my lord, and he is your only brother. I should think his debts would not signify much while you have plenty of money."

The dark blood rose up over his lordship's face.

"Miss Lisle, you don't understand, and it is impossible to explain—to you. Guy has gone to the bad in every sense of the word. Pray do not ask me any more."

He shifted away from the gaze of the innocent, wondering blue eyes: She did not in the least comprehend what he wished her to comprehend by his immuendoes. Guy gambled and spent his money; she understood just that, and no more.

"Well," she said, too highly bred to press an unwelcome subject, "that was not what I wished to say. Did you hear—was there any news?" She hesitated a little, and a faint flush rose up over her fair face. "Has anything been heard of Alice Warren?"

The question confounded him, and yet he might have expected it.

"Alice Warren," he stammered. "Alice Warren? Who is she?"

"Who is she?" Paulina repeated, emphatically; "you did not need to ask that question two years ago, when you admired her so greatly, Lord Montalien."

"Admired her so greatly! oh, of course, I know now—how stupid I am—you mean the bailiff's daughter, of course?"

"Yes, I mean the bailiff's daughter. Poor Alice!"

"There is no news of her, that I have heard. It is a very strange thing, her running away from home as she did."

"Not in the least strange," retorted Paulina, with her customary frankness. "She ran away to be married."

"To be married!" Lord Montalien's face was startled and pale as he repeated it.

"Certainly. She wrote to me the night before she left

home. I have the letter yet. She told me she was going to be married."

"Did she tell you to whom?"

His heart was beating quick as he asked the question though he knew what the answer would be.

"No. To some one above her in rank, though, I know Lord Montalien, don't you suspect it was one of the gentlemen staying at your place last month?"

He had had time to control himself, otherwise the gaze of the large, earnest eyes must have disconcerted him horribly.

"Miss Lisle, I have thought, I have suspected! She left late in the evening. Have you heard who traveled up with her to London?"

"Of course not; I have heard nothing but what her own letter tells me, and a few brief lines from Duke Mason, saying she was gone, no one knew where or why. Who went with her up to London?"

"Miss Lisle, will you take my arm? They are going in to dinner. And will you forgive me if I do not answer your question? She was your friend—it is not from my lips you should hear the name of her companion."

"Do you mean your brother?" she demanded, abruptly.

"I am sorry to say—I do."

"Then I don't believe one word that she ran away to be married to him!" answered Miss Lisle, with calm decision. "She never cared for him, and he never paid her the least attention whatever. He may have gone up with her to London, but I am quite certain your brother is not the man whom she has married."

"If she be married!" Lord Montalien said, stung to bitterness by her words. Miss Lisle did not blush one whit. She looked at him with surprised, unshamed eyes; the open, fearless gaze of perfect innocence.

"Of course she is married!" she said; "she told me she was going to be. Do you think she would run away to seek her fortune alone in London? There were other gentlemen at the Priory last September besides your brother, I suppose?"

"Three others—Allan Fane, Sir Harry Gordon, and Captain Villiers."

"And yourself?"

"And myself."

She looked at him searchingly a moment: his face baffled her. She turned away, and resumed her dinner with a resolute air.

"I shall find out," she said, quietly; "I am going down to Speckhaven the day after to-morrow to spend a week; I shall find out."

"Going down to Speckhaven," he echoed, "to spend a week with your old friend Mason, I presume."

"Yes; dear old Duke! He will be glad to see me. And I shall find out all about Alice Warren."

Lord Montalien was by no means allowed to monopolize the heroine of the evening. Sir Vane had invited several very eligible unmarried men, and Miss Lisle's beauty and spirited style of conversation had already produced considerable impression. Her manner was simply perfect; a belle of four seasons could not have been more entirely and gracefully at ease. She talked very much better than most young ladies. Paulina was clever, and had ideas of her own, and it was quite refreshing to some of those men about town to hear her fresh views of people and things. She was charming; that was the universal verdict—beautiful beyond doubt, accomplished and rich. She sang after dinner, and her rich voice astonished her hearers, so full, so sweet.

"She is equal to Patti!" was the verdict of more than one present. "It is a superb soprano."

Altogether, Miss Lisle's first appearance, though her part this evening was a small one, was an entire success. Lord Montalien found himself fascinated in a way he could not understand. She was so unlike the ordinary English miss he was accustomed to; she was so piquant, so sparkling, so brightly handsome and audacious, that she bewildered him. She possessed that spell irresistible in man or woman—the gift of fascination—her joyous laugh, her ringing voice, the bright flash of her eyes, took your heart by storm before you knew it.

Miss Lisle had said, in all honesty, that she meant to go down to Speckhaven in two days; but with the best of intentions, the sincerest affection for her two friends there, two weeks elapsed before the promised visit was made.

London might be empty to some people, and the season over, but to this young lady, fresh from her twilight convent life, it was the most populous and delightful of cities. She went out continually; and October was very near its close when, one frosty evening, Miss Lisle opened the little garden gate of Duke Mason's, and walked through the open front door. There were changes, many and great, in herself, but not one here. The roses and geraniums bloomed in perennial freshness, the old cat basked on the hearth; the old order, silence, cleanliness prevailed, and Rosanna, on her knees, was toasting muffins for tea. Two arms went around her neck, and an impetuous kiss, the only kiss poor Rosanna had received since she had said good-by to her nursling, was pressed upon her withered cheek. Duke came in presently. The fire-

light shone redly through the room, the lamp burned on the mantel, the table was spread for supper, and a graceful, girlish figure sat on a low stool, fresh and beautiful as a rosebud. Duke stood a second regarding this picture, then advanced with outstretched hand.

"Well, Duchess," he said, as if they had parted two weeks instead of two years before, "you have come back, after all."

And so "Polly" was home again, but somehow it was not the Polly of old. The fault was not hers; she strove to be in all things precisely the girl who had left them, but she sat before them, a tall young lady, out of their world altogether, with the new dignity of dawning womanhood upon her—educated, refined, rich, handsome, fairer than ever, but never again little "Polly."

Late in the evening of the ensuing day, Mr. Allan Fane, busily at work since early morning, threw down brushes and palette, lit a cigar, and started for his daily brisk twilight walk. On this particular evening, his steps turned shoreward, he strolled along through the lamplit town, and down to Speekhaven sands. The Cave was a favorite resort of his, where he could sit and smoke and watch the gray, whispering sea, and think, perhaps, of the girl who had first brought him there. He was thinking of her now as he advanced along the shingly path whence she had long ago led him. The last rays of the fading daylight were in the cold, gray sky; pale yellow gleams of wintry brightness lit the west, and there was a ring of sharpness in the evening air. His steps echoed loudly on the sands, and a quiet figure standing at the entrance of the Cave, watching those pale yellow gleams, turned at the sound. And he and Paulina Lisle stood face to face!

He turned pale at the sight. He had not dreamed she was in Speekhaven. He had been thinking of her, imagining her radiant in her new life, and here she rose up before him, like a spirit in the gloaming! She recognized him immediately, and held out her hand, with her frank, bright smile.

"It is Mr. Fane!" she cried. "The very last person I expected to see! Lord Montalien mentioned your being at the Priory, too, but I had actually forgotten all about it."

Yes—the whole story was told in those lightly spoken words—she had "forgotten all about it," and all about him, as completely as though he had never entered her life. He had loved her as honestly and strongly as an honest and stronger man—he had given her up of his own accord, and he had no right to complain. But the bitter sense of loss was ever there—the brilliant, spirited face haunted him by night and day!

"Well," said Miss Lisle, "you don't look very cordial, I

must
Fane's
friend
And r
of nig
blossom
you w
good-n
She
closer
dressed
pork-p
her oft
did she
someth
monpla
"You
be quit
of stran
A pr
tiredly f
small st
"I an
And, be
afraid,
think sh
eort me
He lo
"You
years ag
spare m
"The
I saw it
don't try
fully old
are quite
walk ho
hear it."
After
monplac
"Do yo
you do—
She lo
"And
Rosamon
Fane, an
"I pain

must say: Do you take me for a ghost, or a mermaid, Mr. Fane? You see I have been paying visits all day to my old friends; and this, my seaside grotto, is the last on the list. And now I really must go home. Poor Rosanna has a horror of night dews and night winds. She takes me to be a fragile blossom, that a sharp, autumn blast would nip in twain. If you won't say anything else, Mr. Fane, perhaps you will say good-night!"

She laughed—Polly's sweet, gay laugh—drew her shawl closer about her, and turned to go. She was very simply dressed, in a dark merino, a soft gray shawl, and a little pork-pie hat, with a scarlet bird's wing. But though he saw her often after in silks and roses, the queen of the ball, never did she look lovelier than at that moment. He spoke with something of an effort—good Heavens, how cold and commonplace the words sounded!

"You will permit me to see you home, Miss Lisle—it will be quite dark before you are half way, and the town is full of strangers, down for the October meeting."

A provoking smile dawned on her face. She had not entirely forgotten the past, and the temptation to give him a small stab was irresistible.

"I am not the least afraid; thanks, very much, Mr. Fane. And, beside—it is quite unpardonable of me to say it—I am afraid, but I have heard Mrs. Fane is—jealous! Do you think she would mind very greatly if I permitted you to escort me home?"

He looked at her—a dark, painful flush rising on his face.

"You are merciless," he said. "You had your revenge two years ago, on the day you gave me back my ring! You might spare me now!"

"The ring you presented the same night to Miss Hautton! I saw it on her finger when I dined at the Priory. Please don't try to be sentimental, Mr. Fane; I have grown dreadfully old and wise since that foolish time, and pretty speeches are quite thrown away upon me, I assure you. And you may walk home with me—let us hope Mrs. Fane will never hear it."

After vainly trying to confine the conversation to the commonplace, Allan Fane said, suddenly:

"Do you recollect the 'Rosamond and Eleanor'? Yes, I see you do—I am finishing that for the spring exhibition."

She looked at him saucily.

"And what little country girl have you chosen for Fair Rosamond now! Please be merciful as you are strong, Mr. Fane, and don't turn her head with your flatteries."

"I paint my Rosamond from memory—my Eleanor is one

of the housemaids at the Priory—a tall, black-browed, Roman-nosed young woman. And I am quite alone up in the big, rambling old mansion. Guy was with me during the races, but he has gone.”

“Ah! Guy Earls court! Do you know I have never met him yet? and people speak of him as though he were the man in the Iron Mask, or Guy Fawkes, or anything else dreadful. Mrs. Galbraith calls him ‘a deterrental,’ whatever that may be. Pray, what has that unhappy young man done?”

“Nothing to any one save himself. You have heard of the road to ruin, I suppose? Well, he has been going at a gallop along that highway for the last three years. The end must come very soon now. If his old grandaunt does not die, and leave him her money, he must, in a few months at the most, send in his papers to sell and fly the country. He is involved beyond redemption. Mrs. Galbraith is quite right; in a marriageable point of view, he is a deterrental.”

“Poor fellow,” Paulina said, her eyes softening. “I am sorry! I used to like him very much. He was so handsome.”

“And is still. I wonder his handsome face has not won him an heiress long ago. It would, I think, if he tried, but he seems to have no time.”

“If he is ruined, as you say, how does he live?”

“By a well-made betting book, by a run of luck at cards, by cleverly written magazine articles. Once or twice his aunt has paid his debts—he tells me she has refused to do it again. He has gone across to Germany for the autumn races.”

They had reached the house now, and Rosanna was waiting anxiously in the doorway. Miss Lisle bade him good-night, and Allan Fane strolled homeward through the sharp October night, thinking—well, not of his wife.

Sir Vane Charteris came down for his ward at the expiration of the week, and Paulina went with him very willingly. It was pleasant to see her old friends, no doubt, but life in Duke Mason’s house seemed hopelessly dull to her now.

On the night of her return she went to see Ristori in “Mary Stuart.” The house was full, the actress magnificent, and Miss Lisle, in pale, flowing silks and pearls, looked charmingly. Two or three of her admirers were in the box; and when the first act was nearly over there entered Lord Montalien. His eyes lit as they fell on her, hers gave him the briefest, coldest possible glance. She did not like Lord Montalien. The girl’s perceptive faculties were very keen. She knew him to be false and cruel, smooth and deceitful. The expression of his mouth revolted her, the hard, cold glitter of his eyes made her shrink away.

"I hope you found all your friends at Speekhaven quite well," he said to her as the curtain went down.

"Quite," she answered, briefly. "All who remain."

"Ah; you allude, of course——"

"I allude, of course, to my dearest friend, Alice Warren. I told you when I went to Speekhaven I should penetrate the mystery of her flight, and—I have failed."

There was a satisfied smile just perceptible about his mouth—gone in an instant.

"I feared you would. Her father could tell you nothing."

"Nothing that you had not already told me—that your brother traveled with her up to town."

"Then Guy is the man. Are you satisfied now that my suspicions are right?"

"Would you like me to tell you whom I do suspect, my lord?"

"Undoubtedly."

She looked at him—full, bright, dauntlessly, and answered:

"You!"

"Miss Lisle!"

"My lord, your brother Guy was never the man Alice left home to marry. She never cared for your brother—she did for you. Guy may have traveled up with her to London—he acknowledges it, indeed, but he had no part in her flight. He went to Mr. Warren's house, and told him so, and the old man believes him. He tells, frankly enough, his share in the business. He met her at the railway station, he traveled up with her in the same carriage, and at her request he drove with her to her destination. That destination he refuses to tell—she bound him by promise herself not to do so; and Mathew Warren does not urge him to reveal it. He is bitterly, cruelly angry—he never wishes to hear her name—if she came to his door a wedded wife he would not take her in. He will never forgive her—he will not lift a finger to seek her. But I will!"—the blue eyes flashing—"I shall find her, and that before long!"

"May I ask what you mean to do?"

"I shall advertise—I shall employ the best detectives in London—I will move heaven and earth to find her!"

"And when she is found, will she thank you, do you think, for thus forcing her from the privacy she seems to desire?"

"She will forgive me—we loved each other. Lord Montalien, will you tell me the truth, will you acknowledge you know where she is?"

"Miss Lisle, from any other lips the question would be an insult. I know nothing of Alice Warren. Wherever she is,

162 Now I Live, Now My Life is Done!

whosoever's wife she may be, she is not mine. Will you not believe me, when I pledge you my honor, I speak the truth?"

She turned from him, and back to the stage, as the curtain went up on the next scene. Her face was set with an expression new to every one who saw her.

"I shall never rest until I know the truth; I will never desist until I discover the secret. I shall find Alice Warren if she be in England, and the man who promised to make her his wife!"

CHAPTER IV.

NOW I LIVE, NOW MY LIFE IS DONE!

It was the afternoon of the first of November.

That dismalest of months had come in with bitter, easterly wind, with dull fog, and miserable, drizzling rain, that wet and chilled you to the very marrow.

It was about four o'clock, and already the gas flared through the city, glimmering in a ghastly way through drizzle and fog.

At the window of the lodging-house in Gilbert's Gardens, a woman sat looking out at the wretched prospect; at the dark, drifting clouds; at the ceaseless rain, beating heavily against the glass; at the blue-nosed pedestrians, hurrying by, with umbrellas and overcoats, at the one lamp, flaring redly at the nearest corner. A woman, pale, and wan, and haggard, changed almost beyond recognition—Alice!

Only seven weeks had gone by since that warm September night when, for love of Francis Earls court, she had fled from home and friends, and already the end had come. It was the natural ending of all such stories; but how was she to know that! Mad passion for a fortnight, cooling passion for another, satiety, weariness, disgust.

The end had come. It was only the old, old story, told, and told, and told—she had staked all on one throw, and—lost!

She had sat for hours as she sat now, her hands lying heavily in her lap, her haggard eyes fixed on the murky London sky. The room was as pleasant as it is in the nature of London lodgings ever to be. A fire burned in the grate, and on the little center table stood a glass filled with yellow and pink roses. Their fragrance filled the room—their sweetness breathing of the summer dead, and of all she had lost with its fading.

The nearest church clock struck the quarter past four. As

she
spas
"I
sort
Will
SH
look
She
more
sunk
all, a
Lady
Al
alike
soul!
he lik
Be
shrun
pallid
"Al
will h
She
any o
that b
gone
swerv
lover
the bl
of her
Her
had—g
a man
could
in her
St. Et
Alre
him—t
loved
the sau
Lisle h
It wa
ten end
read, n
dying
friendly
and the
of coun

she heard it, she moved restlessly for the first time, and a spasm of intense pain crossed her face.

"He should have been here an hour ago," she said, in a sort of frightened whisper. "Will he not come after all? Will he never come again?"

She got up, and walked over to the mirror on the mantel, looking with piteous eyes at her own wasted face and figure. She had been crying for hours, crying until there were no more tears to flow, and she beheld the natural result—dim, sunken eyes, a bloated and swollen face. It is not given to all, alas! to shed silent, pearly tears, such as you read of my Lady Rowena shedding in her silken boudoir.

Alice had wept for hours, until eyes and heart ached alike. She had dressed herself in her one best dress—poor soul! a dress of blue and white that "Frank" had once said he liked, but it hung loose from her shrunken figure now.

Beauty and youth and brightness had all gone. She shrunk away, almost in horror, from the sight of her own pallid face, her hollowed, dulled eyes!

"And he used to praise my pretty looks!" she said. "What will he think of me now?"

She felt, without being able to think very deeply, on that or any other subject, that her pretty looks were the only links that bound him to her. And her face was faded, her beauty gone in seven weeks! She was not the sort of woman to swerve from the straight path with impunity; but if her lover had been faithful she might at least have forgotten in the bliss of that love. He was not faithful—he had wearied of her in two brief weeks.

Her pretty face and her tender heart were all the gifts she had—good and pleasant gifts, but not likely to long enchain a man of Lord Montalien's stamp. She was not clever—she could not talk to him, could not amuse him, and he yawned in her face three days after that ceremony in the Church of St. Ethelfrida.

Already the fatal spell of a fresher beauty had captivated him—the friend she loved best on earth; the friend who best loved her had taken him from her! The sparkling beauty, the saucy, self-willed, outspoken, graceful audacity of Paulina Lisle held Lord Montalien enthralled.

It was ten days since he had been near Gilbert's Gardens—ten endless, dreary days. She had nothing to do, nothing to read, not a soul to speak to, only her own miserable, never-dying suspicions for company. Until yesterday, when a friendly face and kindly eyes from home had looked upon her, and those roses fresh from Speckhaven had brought a breath of country sweetness to her dingy room. She had written

last night, in her desperation, to her husband; and now, as the rainy afternoon wore on, she waited his coming.

As she turned from the glass, the rapid roll of wheels caught her ear. She darted to the window. Thank God!—oh, thank God! he had come—he was here at last! He sprang from the cab, bade the driver wait, and a mighty double knock a second after made the house shake. Mrs. Howe came to the door in person. She knew that imperious knock well, and was almost as glad to hear it again as her lodger. Two weeks' rent was due, and "Mrs. Brown," her lodger, never seemed to have any money, and spent her time in tears and loneliness. It dawned upon the landlady's mind that all was not right, and that the sooner she got rid of her the better.

"Which a man that muffles himself up to that degree that you never see no more of him than two heyes and a nose, is no better than he ought to be, and must have something to hide. I declare to you, mum, Mrs. Brown, if she is Mrs. Brown, has been lodging with me nigh upon seven weeks, and he a-coming and a-going all that time, and I never once, since the first night, had a good look at his face. A tall and 'andsome man as ever I see; but 'andsome is as 'andsome does, and a millingtary swell he is, I know, and no more plain Mr. Brown than you or me."

She admitted him now, dropping a curtesy, and scanning him curiously. But the passage was dark at all times, doubly dark now, and the tall form of "Mr. Brown" brushed past her, and dashed up the stairs and into her lodger's room.

With a cry of joy, a sob not to be suppressed, she flung herself into his arms.

"Frank! oh, Frank! you have come at last! I thought you were never going to come again."

"You took devilish good care not to let me do that! What do you mean, madam, by writing to me? Did I not expressly forbid you ever to write, or come near my lodgings?"

He turned the key in the door, breaking angrily free from her encircling arms, flung himself into the easy-chair she had placed for him before the fire, and looked at her with a darkly angry glance.

She stretched out her hands to him, shrinking away like a child who has been struck a blow.

"Forgive me, Frank; I meant no harm. I was so lonely—oh, so lonely; and it is ten days since——"

Her voice broke, in spite of her. She covered her face, and her suppressed sobbing filled the room.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned her visitor, "here it is again, before I am two seconds in the house! Tears and scenes, reproaches

and sobs—always the same! And you complain that I don't come to see you."

He seized the poker, and gave the fire a vicious dig. He had thrown his felt hat on the floor beside him, and his thin, sallow face was set in an angry scowl. He looked a very different man from the suave and courteous gentleman who had bent over the chair of Paulina Lisle at the theatre only the night before—very different from the ardent lover who had wooed Alice Warren's fresh face down among the clover fields and fir trees of Montalien.

She swallowed her sobs by a great effort, and coming timidly over, knelt down beside him.

"Don't be hard on me, Frank," she pleaded; "I don't mean to reproach you; but I am so much alone, and I have nothing to do, and no one to speak to, and I get thinking of home, and get low-spirited. Won't you tell me, Frank, why you have stayed away so long?"

He looked at her with hard, cruel eyes.

"Because I have grown tired of coming! Will that do, Mrs. Brown?"

"Frank!"

He was still looking at her, searchingly, pitilessly, not once shrinking from the gaze of the large, horrorstruck eyes.

"You have not improved in my absence, at all events," he said, with a short laugh. "You are actually growing old and ugly. 'Beauty is fleeting'—certainly in your case. If you had looked like this down at Speckhaven, I don't think—well, I don't think I should ever have given you the trouble of coming up to town. Pray, what have you been doing since I saw you last?"

"Nothing," her voice seeming hoarse and unnatural. "Only thinking of you."

"A very unprofitable way of spending your time. And now that you have sent for me, will you have the kindness to inform me what you want?"

"Frank, you ask that question?"

"A very natural question, I think. And in the first place, will you tell me how you discovered my address at all?"

She rose up from her kneeling position, stung to the quick by the insolence, more even of his tone and look than his words. She shed no tears now; she felt cold as death, and her shrinking eyes met his steadily at last.

"I had the right to send for you, my lord—to go to you, if I chose. I am your wife!"

He listened with a smile, his head lying against the back of the chair—a smile of insufferable insolence.

"My wife!" he repeated. "Well, yes, of course, we did go

166 Now I Live, Now My Life is Done!

to the Church of St. Ethelfrida together. But, my dear Alice, let me give you one piece of advice—don't you presume on that little ceremony. Don't you write to me again, and don't visit me until I give you leave. Perhaps you did not hear my question—let me repeat it—where did you find out my address?"

"Your brother told me."

"My brother!"

He started at the words, and then, for the first time, his eyes fell upon the roses on the table. He sprang to his feet.

"My brother has been here?" he cried.

"He has."

She answered him quietly. Her heart felt cold and still in her breast; but she had no intention of disturbing him with "scenes or tears" now.

He strode toward her, grasping her wrist until the marks of his cruel fingers remained—his face white to the very lips, as was his way when really moved.

"And you dared do it! You dared, after all I said, bring him here! Guy, of all men! You dare tell him——"

"I told him nothing. My lord, will you let me go? You hurt me!"

He dropped his hold, looking down at her with a dangerous light in his pale blue eyes.

"How came he here? You must have brought him, or he never would have found you out. Tell me the truth, I command you."

She met his angry gaze with a calm steadiness, quite new in his experience of her.

"He came with me the first night. You remember he traveled up with me from Speekhaven. He was very kind; he was always kind. I don't know whether he suspected our secret or not. I know he advised me to go back while there was yet time."

"I wish to God you had taken his advice!"

"Yes," she answered, still very quietly, "it is a pity. But we won't speak of that, since it is rather late in the day now. It was late that night when we reached London; it was all strange to me; and I was afraid; and I asked him to come with me here."

The pressure tightened on her wrist again; he drew his breath for a moment hard.

"You did! After all your promises—after all I told you—you brought him here!"

"I brought him here; but I told him nothing and I never laid eyes on him since until yesterday."

"He was here yesterday?"

Now I Live, Now My Life is Done! 167

"He was. Frank, do you know they think at home I fled with him—that—that I am—not a wife."

"Yes; I happen to be quite aware of that fact; and what is more, I mean they shall continue to think so. Hear me out, if you please, and don't interrupt. Do you suppose I am going to ruin my prospects by acknowledging my marriage with you? A pretty story, forsooth, for Belgravia, that Lord Montalien has married his bailiff's daughter!"

"Lord Montalien should have thought of that seven weeks ago."

"I know it. No need for you to remind me what a fool I have been. And what brought my precious younger brother here yesterday?"

"Friendship. Only that. Mr. Guy was always the kindest of friends, the noblest of gentlemen. He thought of me—he brought me those flowers from Montalien," her eyes lighting, "because he fancied they would remind me of Anne."

The nobleman seized the roses and flung them into the fire. The girl started forward with a cry; if he had struck her he would hardly have done a more brutal thing.

"Silence!" he said, with an oath. "Glor! What brought him here? Did you dare to tell him that I—"

"I told him nothing—nothing, God help me! I have kept your secret, Lord Montalien, at the price of my own good name. I have broken my mother's heart, bowed my father's head in sorrow and shame, giving up the home where I was happy, the friends who cared for me, for you; and this—this is my reward."

She laid her arm upon the mantel, and bowed her face upon it. But in the dark heart of the man beside her there was neither pity nor remorse.

"Will you swear to me my brother knows nothing—that you have not told him?"

"I have not told him," she reiterated, and did not lift her ashen face as she made the reply.

He turned, and began pacing to and fro up and down the room. He wanted to shake her off, to have done with her for good; to get her out of the country even, and to do that, was it wise to goad her to despair and desperation? He must get rid of her—that was the one inevitable thing to be done; and to get rid of her quietly, without scandal or exposure, she must still think herself his wife. The time to tell her the truth had not yet come. He must get rid of her, and at once; and kindness here would do more than harshness or reprobation. He came over and laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"Forgive me, Alice," he said, "and forget my unkind words. You know, as well as I do, that I love you as dearly as ever."

168 Now I Live, Now My Life is Done!

that I did not mean them; but I am out of sorts and out of temper to-day. I have a thousand things to worry and annoy me of which you cannot dream; and it did startle me to know Guy was here. I am sorry I destroyed your flowers. I shall send you a handsome bouquet to-morrow. Come, look up, and say we are friends again."

She lifted her head slowly and looked at him. Even he, bad to the core, harder than iron, shifted from the night of settled despair in those haggard eyes.

"Do what you will, say what you will, Frank, I can never be other than your friend."

Her voice was broken and low, no tinge of color came to her white face as he stooped and kissed her.

She knew the end had come—her heart never beat with hope while she lived again.

"That is my own little Alice! And now, to prevent a repetition of such visits, you must leave this lodging at once."

"Yes."

"This very evening I will engage another, and to-morrow I will send a cab for you and your belongings. Early to-morrow evening you will be quite ready to go?"

"Yes."

"And as it can't be any particular pleasure to me to keep moving you about from one London lodging to another, for fear of detection, what do you say to going down to the country, or even out of England for a little. You would be better and happier, I am sure. You are used to a country life, and I would come to see you just as often. What do you say?"

"I have nothing to say. I will do whatever you please."

"That is settled, then."

He was delighted with her easy acquiescence. Nothing would be simpler than to send her out of the country altogether and for good.

"To-morrow you will leave here, and within the week you shall go to some pleasant country home, either in or out of England, where you will remain until it is in my power to proclaim you to the world as my wife. You hear, Alice?"

"I hear," she answered, wearily. "Frank!" she looked up at him suddenly, "is it true that Paulina Lisle is in London?"

"Guy told you that among his other news, I suppose?"

"He did. He told me, too, that you were her lover, or that report said so."

"He told you a lie! I visit at the house of Sir Vane Charteris, and I see Miss Lisle, of course." He spoke carelessly enough, but in his heart he recorded a vow to add this to the

men
me
of
jun
Alice
"
mar
"
awa
Alice
wher
And
visit
Hi
then
And
know
procl
life v
night
plain
stupo
this v
The
Bef
landla
in the
almost
"Sh
Howe
The
of the
dingie
scarcel
ntteral
"Wh
glass,
And
pain at
happy
foggy
Montal
the see
ing tree
Francis
softly a

Now I Live, Now My Life is Done! 169

long list of hatred he already owed his younger brother. "I meant to speak to you of her. Why did you write and tell her of your elopement and intended marriage?—and all my injunctions of secrecy and your promise. Was it well done, Alice?"

"I meant no harm. I did not tell her who I was going to marry."

"But you knew she would suspect. You knew she was aware how greatly I always admired you; but I overlooked it, Alice—that and all the rest—and look forward to the day when I can proclaim you to the world as my lawful wife. And now, farewell. To-morrow afternoon, at this time, I will visit you at your new lodging."

His lips touched her forehead in another traitor kiss, and then the door opened and closed, and he was gone. Gone! And Alice, sitting there alone before the fire, knew her fate—knew in her heart that he lied to her—that he would never proclaim her as his wife—that hope was at an end, that her life was done. She touched no food, she had no sleep that night. She lay listening to the beating rain, to the complaining wind, to the hours as they tolled, in a sort of dull stupor of misery. She had loved him, she loved him still, and this was the end.

The cab came early next morning for "Mrs. Brown."

Before leaving the previous day his lordship had paid the landlady, and told her of her lodger's departure. And now, in the dark November morning, she watched her drive away almost with regret.

"She looked like death itself as she bade me good-by," Mrs. Howe said afterward: "it went to my heart only to see her."

The new lodging to which the cabman drove her was in one of the obscure streets leading from the Strand to the river—dingier, poorer, closer than that which she had left. But she scarcely noticed how squalid it was, scarcely noticed how unutterably wretched she herself looked.

"What does it matter," she thought, turning away from the glass, "since there is no one in the world to care?"

And then she lay down, and the dull, gnawing, ceaseless pain at her heart seemed somehow to go, and in its place her happy girlhood came back. The dark, wretched room, the foggy daylight faded away, once more the green fields of Montalieu, rich with golden corn, the meadows sweet with the scent of new-mown hay, the voice of her mother, the waving trees, the golden summer sky, all came back to her; and Francis Earls court's eyes looked love, and his voice spoke softly and sweetly, and his strong arm encircled her waist;

170 Now I Live, Now My Life is Done!

and her eyes closed, and with the smile of a happy child on her face, she fell asleep.

She slept for hours. The afternoon wore on—the roar of the great city, of the busy Strand, were unheard—even the opening of the door, and the entrance of the man of whom she dreamed, failed to arouse her.

He looked at her, as she slept, without one feeling of pity for the heart he had broken, for the life he had blighted. He had tired of her, and he must remove her out of the country that he might marry Paulina Lisle. Nothing remained now but that.

While he stood irresolute whether or no to awaken her, there was a tap at the door, and the landlady, with a startled face, looked in.

"If you please, sir, and asking your pardon for disturbing of you and your good lady, would you come upstairs just a moment? The third-floor-front's a-dying, and a-dying hard, and he says he can't go until he has made his confession. There ain't a soul in the house to go for the parson or doctor, and I daren't leave him alone. Would you be so good, kind gentleman, as to step up to his room while I run for the nearest clergyman?"

The "kind gentleman" addressed stared at her haughtily in amazement at her presumptuous request. What was her "third-floor-front" to him, dying though its inmate might be, that he should trouble himself in the matter.

"He says he has a confession to make about some very great lady he knew once, and about a great crime he helped to commit nearly twenty years ago. He can't die, he says, until he has confessed it. Maybe it's only his raving, but he says the lady's name was Miss Olivia Lyndith."

Lord Montalien swung round, amazed, interested at once.

"Miss Olivia Lyndith," he muttered. "Lady Charteris! Now what the deuce does this mean? Lead the way, my good woman; I'll go up, and hear what your third-floor-front has to say."

He followed her up the dark, winding stairs, and into the stifling attic room, where, on a wretched truckle-bed, a gaunt, emaciated form was stretched. There was no fire in the little room, and the sickly, foggy daylight hardly found its way through the blurred, dirty glass of its one window.

"Here is a kind gentleman, as says he will stay with you, Porter," the landlady said, soothingly. "Now do keep quiet, like a good soul, and I'll run round for Mr. Spearman."

She placed a chair by the bedside, and was hurrying away, but the sick man raised himself on his elbow, and called after her shrilly:

"F
writ
I ear
her t
sleep
down
give
He
eyes.
"I
his lo
"T
She n
man—
hollow
questi
"We
"An
"An
"Is
well?"
"Lac
has ha
never
The
"I kn
dead be
face ha
too late
"Wh
"Her
"You
"No.
first hu
with—I
"Rob
The
delight.
"Thar
he? C
"Not
ble to t
"He
Mr. Ge
right ha
But I'll

Now I Live, Now My Life is Done! 171

"Fetch pen and ink and paper, Mrs. Young. He must write it down and give it to her if she be alive. I can't die, I can't, with the story untold. I'm sorry I ever did it. I see her face so still and white; oh, Lord! so still and white—sleeping and waking, night and day forever. You'll write it down, sir; you look like a gentleman, and you'll find her, and give it to her, if she's alive. Promise me that?"

He glared up in Lord Montalien's face with hollow, wild eyes.

"I don't know of whom you're talking, my good fellow," his lordship answered, coolly. "Who is she?"

"Twenty years ago her name was Miss Olivia Lyndith. She married, Sir Vane Charteris, baronet. You're a gentleman—perhaps you have heard of Sir Vane Charteris?" His hollow eyes were full of burning eagerness as he asked the question.

"Well, yes, I have heard of Sir Vane Charteris."

"And Lady Charteris?"

"And Lady Charteris."

"Is she alive? Tell me that—is Lady Charteris alive, and well?"

"Lady Charteris is alive certainly, but not quite well. She has had some great trouble in her past life, which she has never got over to this day."

The sick man wrung his hands in a paroxysm of anguish.

"I know it—I know it! and I did it! I wish I had dropped dead before I ever consented! and now I am dying, and her face haunts me night and day. But she's alive, and it's not too late yet. Perhaps he's alive too."

"Who?"

"Her husband—him that she loved so dearly."

"You mean Sir Vane Charteris, I presume?"

"No, no, no! She hated him! I mean the other—her first husband—her real husband—him that she ran away with—Robert Lisle."

"Robert Lisle is alive and well."

The dying man uttered a cry—a shrill, wordless cry of delight.

"Thank God! thank God! then it's not too late! Where is he? Can you tell me that? Not in England?"

"Not in England, of course, since he is a criminal amenable to the law. Out in America."

"He is no criminal. It was me that did it—me! And Mr. Geoffrey Lyndith paid me for doing it. I wish my right hand had dropped off when I lifted it against him! But I'll tell you all, and you'll write it down, and Robert

172 Now I Live, Now My Life is Done!

Lisle will come back, and perhaps God will forgive me. Do you think He will, if I confess all—all?"

"Well—let us hope so," replied his lordship, rather out of his depth. "Who are you, to begin with?"

He drew the paper toward him, took up the pen, and prepared to write. He was full of curiosity and interest. What revelation of villainy was this he was about to hear?

"I'm James Porter, and I was valet to Mr. Geoffrey Lyndith twenty years ago. Will you promise, on your honor as a gentleman, to give this paper you are going to write into the hands of Lady Charteris, and no other, when I am dead?"

"I promise. Go on."

The sick man clenched the bedclothes, and began at once, with feverish rapidity:

"I told you I was Mr. Geoffrey Lyndith's valet twenty years ago. It's nigher on five-and-twenty since I first entered his service, and a very good place it was. He was a stern man, he liked to have his own way, but he was free with his money, and a kind enough master. When I had been with him well upon four years, Robert Lisle came as secretary and companion like. I can see him now!" The sick man's eyes looked dreamily before him, as he spoke. "A tall, well-made young man, and the handsomest, I think, I ever saw. There were a great many gentlemen, and baronets, and lords, used to visit Lyndith Court at September and Christmas, but there wasn't one among them, lords and all, looked half as lordly, to my mind, as he did. He was cleverer than master, and wrote his speeches and leaders for our county paper, and letters, and all that. Master set no end of store by him, until he got to hate him; and to them he hated, he was the very devil!

"Master's niece came home from school: and a rare beauty she was, only sixteen, with big black eyes and yellow hair—the kind of beauty you don't often see. She was brought home from boarding-school to live in the house with a young man as handsome and as clever as this Mr. Lisle. And we in the servants' hall just saw how it would be from the first. But master—lawks, sir, it's wonderful how blind the smartest people be about some things; these sort of things particularly—master he was like a mole. They were a-court'ing from the first day, and he couldn't see what was going on under his very nose. I used to watch 'em in the pleasant moonlight nights walking up and down under the trees; and time and again it was on the tip of my tongue to give Mr. Lyndith a hint. But I was a-keeping company with a young woman—the upper housemaid she was, and she wouldn't

hear tell of it. All the women in the house were half in love with this Robert Lisle; his good looks, and his gentlemanlike ways, and his pleasant voice took them all down sor ehov. 'And,' says Lucy, 'our master's old enough and big enough to look after his own niece, and it's not for playing the spy on her you get your wages. He'll find it out soon enough.'

"That week Miss Olivia went to Scotland on a visit, and the week after—I think it was—Mr. Lisle followed her. And Lucy says to me: 'Mind, James, Miss Olivia and Mr. Lisle will be married in Scotland as sure as I'm talking to you. And won't master be tearing mad, when he finds it out?'

'You see, sir, this Mr. Lisle, though he looked and spoke, and had the education of a real gentleman, was only the son of a yeoman farmer.

"Well, sir, Lucy was right—they did get married in Scotland, and came home, not together, but following each other very soon. And to this day I remember what happy, happy faces those two had, how miss danced about the house like sunshine, and her laugh was the prettiest, sweetest music I ever heard. And Mr. Lisle didn't say much or laugh much, it wasn't his way; but somehow, he looked taller, and nobler, and handsomer than ever, and his pleasant eyes seemed smiling for very joy whenever they looked at you. And miss begged hard not to be sent back to school, but to stay at the 'dear old court,' as she called it; and her uncle, who was fond of her in his way, consented. And for four months more they went on together, and he neither saw nor guessed a word of what every one else in the house knew perfectly.

"But it couldn't go on so forever; he found it out at last. He never said a word; that wasn't his sort; he just whisked his niece away from Staffordshire without a word to any one. And when he came back alone, still pleasant and easy, he sent for me, and asked me if I would like to earn five hundred pounds?

"You may guess what my answer was. I was always fond of money, and I wanted to marry Lucy, and set up a public when I'd saved money enough. I would have done a good deal for half or quarter the money; but I did refuse at first when he told me what he wanted me to do. He made me take my book oath never to speak of what passed between us while I lived, and I took it. I never broke that oath till now, but I can't—oh, good Lord!—I can't die with my wicked story untold!

"He told me Robert Lisle had married his niece in Scotland, and that Sir Vane Charteris, to whom she had been

174 Now I Live, Now My Life is Done!

engaged since she was fourteen, would hold him responsible. A Scotch marriage was no marriage, he said, but the law couldn't prove that without the public exposure of his niece, and that Sir Vane would never hear of. Robert Lisle must just be got quietly out of the country for good and all, and Miss Livy married to the baronet as if nothing had happened; and I was to help him to do it.

"That night he would place, in my presence and in Lisle's, a sum of money and a quantity of valuable jewels in the little safe in his library, leaving them in Mr. Lisle's charge, and going away himself as if for a few days' absence. And when he was gone, he would write a letter, as if coming from Miss Olivia, asking her husband to come to her at once. He would go for certain, and take his portmanteau with him. And what he wanted me to do, and would pay me five hundred pounds to do, was to take the money and jewels out of the safe, and sew them up carefully in the lining of Mr. Lisle's portmanteau. They would be found there, and the threat of transportation would make him fly the country. And he gave me the duplicate key of the safe.

"Well, sir—it's a bad thing to tell—I did it. I took the five hundred pounds, and I sewed up the money and jewels in the poor young gentleman's traveling bag. It all turned out as master had foreseen—he got the letter, he packed his clothes, and started for London, and he was taken there and searched, and the valuables found.

"The next I heard, he had left England. I got my five hundred pounds—my wages of sin—and I left Mr. Lyndith's service, and married Lucy, and set up the public-house. But I never prospered. Luck went against me from the first. The money was ill-gotten; it was blood-money—and everything went wrong. I couldn't forget what I had done. It haunted me as if I had committed a murder, by-day and night. I took to drink to drown thought, but I couldn't drown it. I knew I had made two innocent people miserable for life. And two years after our marriage Lucy died; and then I got quite desperate, and the money went, and went; and at last I was ruined outright. And from that day I have been a drunken vagrant, and now I'm dying here, and I couldn't die with it on my soul. Have you got it all down—all—all?"

He raised himself once more on his elbow, looking more like a galvanized corpse than a living being.

"All," replied Lord Montalien. "Are you able to sign this paper?"

"I'll try—give me the pen."

lad
his
clo
dov
own
I
arog
"l
lette
and
that
"I
pock
ligh
"A
Cha
thou
yes!
willi
he o
Whe
less
An
seen
tulle
vision
lodgin
"An
—alas
made
nonen
as Ge
She
and re
The
the fir
contra
"Aw
I first
I woul
wretch
She
sitting
"I tr
went on

Now I Live, Now My Life is Done! 175

The door opened on the word, and Mrs. Young, the landlady, entered with an elderly man, a clergyman.

"Just in time to witness this man's signature," remarked his lordship, coolly. "He is dying, he says," addressing the clergyman, "and has made a deposition which I have taken down. Will you just witness his signature, and affix your own?"

It was done. Lord Montalien folded up the paper, and arose.

"Your wishes, my poor fellow, shall be carried out to the letter." The lady for whom it is designed is known to me, and will receive it at once. Set your mind at rest about that."

He quitted the room, the precious paper in the breast-pocket of his coat, his eyes shining with a green, catlike light.

"And so Paulina Lisle is the elder daughter of Lady Charteris; and inherits in law my lady's fortune of six thousand a year in addition to her father's fortune. Yes, yes! If I had never made the resolution of marrying her, willing or unwilling, I would make it now. Why, she will be one of the richest heiresses in the United Kingdom! Whether you like it or no, you shall be my wife, my peerless Paulina!"

And then a vision rose before him of Paulina as he had seen her last night—shining like a fairy, in pink silk, and tulle puffings, and dewy rosebuds in her golden hair—a vision whose very recollection seemed to light up the dingy lodging-house in Barton street, Strand.

"And now for the other," he thought, opening Alice's door—alas! poor Alice! "What an inconceivable ass I have made of myself about this milk-and-water, insipid, weeping nonentity! But she shall be disposed of as surely and safely as Geoffrey Lyndith disposed of Robert Lisle."

She sat shivering before the smoldering fire as he entered, and rose up without a word as he approached.

The dull daylight was fast fading now, but in the glow of the fire he could see the dead whiteness of her face; such a contrast to that other face—fresh, smiling, rose-crowned!

"Awake, Alice?" he said, kindly. "It is two hours since I first came, and you were asleep on the lounge yonder, and I would not disturb you. I have been sitting since with a wretched sick man, upstairs."

She looked and listened in pale amaze. Frank Earls court sitting two hours with a sick pauper!

"I trust I see you in better spirits than yesterday," he went on. "How do you like your new lodgings?"

176 Now I Live, Now My Life is Done!

"I have not thought about it. They are very well."

Her spiritless voice, her spiritless attitude, told more plainly than words the story of her crushed heart.

"You will remain here quietly for the present; and if I should not be able to come to you as often as you—as I myself would like, you must promise me to be patient—not to write to me again. You promise this, Alice?"

"I promise."

"Of course, I don't like to see you unhappy or solitary or that; but, unfortunately, in our position, it is inevitable. I have made a tremendous sacrifice for you. Don't be less generous. Make this sacrifice for me. Wait until I give you leave to speak. You understand, Alice?"

"I understand."

She answered him as an automaton might, never looking up from the fading fire.

"And you will obey?"

"I will obey."

"On no account must you admit my brother or Stedman, or any of the people we know. Go out as little as possible, and when you do go out, wear a thick veil. In a few weeks, at most, I will find you a pleasant country home, where you will wait, in peace and comfort, until I can bring you forward as—as Lady Montalien! You pledge yourself to all this, Alice, and you will try not to feel lonely and low-spirited?"

She lifted her eyes to his face for the second time since his entrance—such hopeless, hopeless eyes.

"I will try," she answered, in a voice more mournful than death.

"Then, good-by, Alice. Keep up your spirits, and don't be discouraged if I shouldn't be here again for a couple of weeks. Trust me that I will come as soon as I can. Good-by."

"Good-by." She said it as mechanically as the rest, not stirring. He put on his hat, opened the door, turned, came back, stooped and kissed her. For the last, the only time, a pang of compassion touched his heart of stone.

"My poor little Alice!" he said; "good-by."

And then he was gone. Back to that bright other world—back to the velvet-hung, wax-lit world, where lovely Paulina Lise shone a queen! And Alice stood where he had left her, neither stirring nor moving for hours and hours. An outcast—from home, from parents, from friends, from love—alone forever and ever.

CHAPTER V.

AT BRIGHTON.

On the day succeeding this memorable second of November, Sir Vane Charteris took his family to Brighton to spend the remainder of the autumn. He had hired a large furnished house on the East Cliff. The situation was charming—the broad, bright sea spread away and away until it melted into the broad bright sky. On very clear days you saw the bold coast of Dieppe from the windows, and the Chain Pier glimmering in the frosty November sunshine below the Cliff.

Miss Lisle, for whose benefit the removal had chiefly been, enjoyed Brighton amazingly. In the first place, there was the sea, and Paulina loved the sea, pulsing forever through the still chill air, there were long canterers over the golden Sussex Downs, until the young lady's eyes shone like diamonds, and the usually pale cheeks like August roses.

There were the pleasant sunny afternoons, when in the most ravishing of Parisian toilets she loitered along the parade, listening to the band, and the airy, gallant nothings of sundry officers quartered at the Brighton Barracks. She drove to the Dike, in the loveliest little turnout, with cream-colored highsteppers, for which her guardian had given a most fabulous price at Tattersall's, handling the ribbons like "Four-in-Hand Fossbrook" himself, to the admiration of all beholders. She was the chief aim for all the lorgnettes at the pretty little theatre; and she went night after night to the Pavilion, where Patti was now enchanting the Brighton world. She went through the whole course of Brighton amusements—dining, dancing, promenading, theatre-going—and she never grew weary; her bright eye never dimmed nor her smiles faded.

And so Miss Lisle was fairly launched upon the sunny sea of society, for which she had been made. There was only one drawback to all this blissful enjoyment—Lord Montalien, her ogre, who persisted in escorting them everywhere, on being the companion of her gallops over the downs, her drives, her walks, and hanging on the back of her chair at the theatre all the evening long. He was at the baronet's house by night and day; he dined invariably with the family whenever they dined at home, and half worried Paulina into a fever with the zeal and oppression of his devotion. People began to link their names together.

Montalien was a shrewd fellow—always liked money, and

he was going in for Miss Lisle. Deuced deep fellow, a miser at heart, not a bit like the Earls courts—a shabby beggar, too, at bottom—it was a pity so glorious a girl should be flung away upon such a cad!

At the close of the second week Miss Lisle herself rebelled. She had been trying for days back to throw off the yoke, but in vain; there was a quiet power and determination about his lordship that bent most people to his resolute will. But this young lady of eighteen had a will of her own, quite as strong as his when she chose to assert it.

“He’s like the death’s-head at the Egyptian banquets,” she said to Mrs. Galbraith, bitterly; “always present and always spoiling my pleasure. Why does he make pretense of stopping at the Ship Hotel? Why doesn’t he fetch his belongings, and take up his abode at once in this house? He is like one’s shadow, or one’s poodle, following forever, no matter where one goes. Can’t he see he is not wanted?”

“My dear, what language!” exclaimed Mrs. Galbraith. “His lordship’s attentions are most flattering to you. It is plain enough to be seen he is quite infatuated; and it would be a brilliant, yes, a splendid match for you. His income is clear fifteen thousand a year, and the title one of the oldest in Britain.”

“Lord Montalien has fifteen thousand a year, and he is a miser. If he wants me at all he wants my eighty thousand pounds to add to his store. As you seem to be a friend of his, Mrs. Galbraith, suppose you drop him a hint to spare me his company for the future. The more I see of him the more I dislike him.”

“You are more than unjust, Miss Lisle; you are unchristian. I thought you were above repeating such cruel calumnies as these behind his back.”

“I will say them to his face, if you prefer it! I will, I protest, if he does not cease dogging me as he does. What business have people to couple our names? I would die before I would marry him! You call me unjust. I tell you, ‘passionately,’ I am not. I have reason to hate him—I know he is the man who lured poor Alice Warren from her home.”

“Paulina! that person’s name again!” said Mrs. Galbraith, with austerity. “Did I not tell you it was indelicate of you even to allude to her?”

“Yes, you told me, Mrs. Galbraith,” the girl answered, with a hard laugh. “You do your duty by me in every respect. She has been unfortunate, through no fault of hers; she is in misery and poverty, perhaps, and it is indelicate in her oldest friend to mention her name! Poor little Alice!”

"Inrough no fault of hers! I don't understand you. The fault was hers, and she must bear the penalty. You persisted in advertising for her—let that suffice. She is a lost creature, whose name you should blush to mention. And, for the rest, no one thinks of her in connection with his lordship—the unhappy young woman fled from home with his disreputable younger brother."

"Never!" Paulina's eyes flashed fire. "They traveled up to London together; a coincidence—nothing more. Guy Earls court affirmed to Alice's father that he was not the partner of her flight, and Mathew Warren believes him. So do I—so does Captain Villiers."

"Captain Villiers!"

"Yes; he was one of the men stopping in the house at the time; and he is here, you know. Yesterday on the pier I asked him——"

"Paulina! you asked him?"

"Don't faint, Mrs. Galbraith. Yes, I had the shocking audacity to ask him if he could throw any light on the subject—if he believed Lieutenant Earls court to be the man with whom she fled. And he said no, emphatically no. They all admired her—he, Sir Harry Gordon, Lord Montalien, and Guy—Guy, least of all; Guy, in the way of courtship, never."

"Perhaps he told you also whom he did suspect?"

"No, men don't tell of each other; he did not. But unless Alice herself came before me, and told me Lord Montalien was guiltless, I would not believe it. Now you know why I dislike him! His conduct to his brother, too, is abominable. Three times last week Guy was arrested for debt, and taken to some horrid place; a 'sponging-house,' Captain Villiers called it; and not once did Lord Montalien, with his fifteen thousand pounds a year, come forward to aid him. No, he left it to his old maiden aunt. Who could like such a man as that? Why doesn't he pay his brother's debts, as an only brother should?"

"You talk like a child, Paulina. Guy Earls court deserves neither your pity nor his brother's help. He is one of the fastest, most reckless young men of his day, possessed of every vice under heaven, I believe——"

"That will do, Mrs. Galbraith! Who is calumniating the absent now? With all his vices, I believe he is far the better man of the two. He used to have a heart, at least. Lord Montalien, like the goddess Minerva, was born without that inconvenient appendage. And now," pulling out her watch, and with her brightest smile, "if we have done quarreling, suppose we go for a drive?"

"I wish I could see Mr. Earlseourt," she thought, as she lay back in the barouche; "I would ask him about Alice. He went up with her to London, and he may know something. I will never give up—never rest until I find her."

Miss Lisle had her wish that very night. As she, on her guardian's arm, made her way, near midnight, through some crowded assembly rooms, she saw, standing talking to Captain Villiers, Guy Earlseourt.

An eager light of pleasure and recognition came into her face. He was a spendthrift, a gambler—she had heard—he was over head and ears in debt; social outlawry threatened him; the world spoke bitterly of him; his excellent elder brother hated him; and for all this the girl's impetuous, generous heart went out toward him. It was childish, perhaps, but his very misdeeds threw a halo of romance around him. He was Monte Cristo, Mephistopheles, Don Giovanni; and he was so very, very handsome, poor fellow, and he had such a noble air—there was not another man in the room who looked so distinguished as he.

She remembered him as she had seen him last, with the sunshine lighting up his dark face as he bowed good-by. The dark splendor of that Italian face was a trifle dimmed now—"lansquenet after balls, and absinthe before breakfast will tell in the end," as Captain Villiers said to her; he seemed thin and worn, and the great, luminous, pathetic brown eyes looked at you with a tired light. Withal, he was dressed in the perfection of taste—a knot of Russian violets in his buttonhole—and more than one pair of bright eyes beside Paulina's turned upon him with shy admiration as he stood there in that attitude of languid grace.

"I say, Guy! there she is, by Jove! and your brother in her wake, as usual. The Lisle, I mean—prettiest thing the sun shines on. She rides better, waltzes better, talks better, and sings better than any girl I know; and she has eighty thousand; and your brother is making play there in a way that leaves no room for lesser mortals. Look at her! Loveliest woman in the rooms—isn't she?"

Guy looked lazily. He had come expressly down to Brighton to have a look at her; but the rooms were warm, and not even for the beauty of Brighton was he prepared to excite himself. He looked, with languid admiration, at the exquisite face, conscious of his gaze, and drooping a little under it.

"Yes," he said, at last; "you're right, Villiers. She is handsome—always was though, I remember—and thoroughbred as a princess. See how disdainfully she glances at Monti! He has no show, I'm certain; and I'm glad of it."

ft
or
yo
yo
is
ou
an
I
enc
litt
"Ea
"Te
ind
ter
Mis
to-m
S
Miss
at C
with
and
follo
his s
"W
unki
ever,
of A
Sh
Cap
Miss
ence.
ment
way,
her, a
Prio
her lip
He
beside
her ha
saucy
"Bu
membe

It would be a sacrilege to throw such a girl as that away on Frank.

"Suppose you go in and win, yourself, Guy. You could, you know. She talks of you, and remembers you, and pities you for your misfortunes, as she terms it. Eighty thousand is about your figure; and then it would be a pleasure to cut out your brother."

"Well, yes," Guy said, stroking his black mustaches; "if anything could make me enter the list, it would be that; but I don't think I shall add fortune-hunting to my other enormities just yet. Miss Lisle deserves a better fate, poor little girl, than to fall a victim to either of us."

"She is looking this way," the other said, eagerly. "Come, Earls court, let us go and ask her to dance!"

"What! you, too, George, one of her slaves? No; the 'Tenth' don't dance. Not even Miss Lisle's attractions can induce me to the madness of waltzing, with the thermometer at its present height. I don't know that I shall trouble Miss Lisle at all—not worth while, as I return to town again to-morrow."

So Captain Villiers went up alone and wrote his name on Miss Lisle's tablets; and if that young lady wondered a little at Guy's neglect, her face did not show it. She danced with Villiers—with nearly every man who asked her, save and except Lord Montalien; and more than once her eyes followed the tall form of Guy Earls court as he moved in his slow, graceful way through the warm rooms.

"Why does he not speak to me?" she wondered. "How unkind of him! I am determined to speak to him, however, before the evening ends. He must tell me something of Alice."

She went into the music-room presently, on the arm of Captain Villiers, and sat down to sing. The rumor that Miss Lisle was about to sing was enough to insure an audience. She glanced saucily over her shoulder as the apartment filled, and saw, leaning against a column near the doorway, Lieutenant Earls court, and a sudden inspiration seized her, and the song she had sung two years ago at Montalien Priory, while he bent over her, broke like a bird's trill from her lips.

He had drawn near involuntarily—he was standing close beside her when she arose from the piano, and she held out her hand to him at once with her most radiant, her most saucy smile.

"But where is County Guy? I thought you would remember the old song even if you have forgotten poor me."

Mr. Earls court, won't you say 'how do you do' to Polly Mason?"

Guy Earls court was no stoic. He bent above the little hand, and murmured his thanks, at her gracious remembrance.

"I had scarcely hoped for so great an honor," he said, "among the hundreds of new friends, of adorners, who surround the belle of Brighton. You must pardon my not coming forward sooner, and claiming recognition—it was my very great modesty, I assure you."

"The first time I ever heard you credited with the virtue," laughed Paulina, taking his arm. She was at her brightest now: she had had what she so dearly loved—her own way.

"Or any other virtue, I fear. Doesn't Mrs. Galbraith do her duty, and tell you what a monster I am?"

"Mrs. Galbraith does her duty, and tells me what a monster you are. But I have a great deal of courage—thanks to my early training; and I'm not afraid of monsters. Mr. Earls court, I have been wanting to see you very much, to speak to you upon a subject, the one trouble of my life, and I can't here, among this crowd. Will you take me somewhere where we can talk undisturbed?"

Her perfect innocence, and the nearness of the subject to her heart gave her courage, verging upon boldness, perhaps. But she did not mean to be bold, and she went with him out on the balcony—deserted by all save themselves.

"You know what I want to talk to you about, I suppose, Mr. Earls court?" she began, impulsively. "Where is Alice Warren?"

The blue, earnest eyes were curiously watching him. Was he guilty? No, guilt never looked back at her as he looked.

"I wish I knew, Miss Lisle. I don't, I assure you. I am afraid our poor little friend has come to grief."

"Mr. Earls court, you know that some people say—say," her face drooped a little, "that she fled with you."

"I know it. It is not true. We were up to town together—that was the first I knew of her flight, and she asked me to see her safe to her destination. It was night, and she was afraid—alone in London."

"And you did?" breathlessly.

"I did. I went with her to the place, a lodging in Tottenham Court Road, and left her in charge of the landlady. That was nine weeks ago."

"And you have never seen her since?"

"Yes, once; nearly a fortnight ago. Upon my return from Germany I went to the place a second time. She was still there—only the pallid shadow of the blooming Alice you

knew. But she told me nothing, and I asked no questions. She was known in the house by the name of Mrs. Brown."

"I will go to London to-morrow and find her," cried impetuous Paulina. "Oh, Mr. Earls court, I felt sure you could tell me something. I am so glad, so thankful for this!"

"Miss Lisle, I am sorry to dash your hopes, but it is too late. She is gone!"

"Gone?"

"The following day I returned again. I pitied her very much, Miss Lisle. Her wan, wretched face, her tears, made me miserable. I went back, and she was gone. The gentleman, the servant said, had called after I had left, and Mrs. Brown looked dreadful when she went away, and he paid the landlady, and told her Mrs. Brown was about to leave London. Next morning a cab came for her and took her and her things away. I could learn no more—the servant knew nothing of her destination."

Paulina's face looked very blank.

"Oh, Mr. Earls court, tell me who this man is—this bad, bad man, who has lured her away from her home—who promised faithfully to marry her, and make her happy? You suspect—you must suspect—tell me who it is!"

"Pardon me, Miss Lisle; not even to you may I breathe my suspicions."

"It is your brother—I know it is—he always admired her—years ago, when he saw her first, he was struck by her. And he denies it; but I have vowed to discover the truth, and I shall!"

Her handsome lips set themselves in a resolute line—her blue eyes flashed in the starlight through her passionate tears.

"You are a true friend, Miss Lisle, and they say women do not know the meaning of the word friendship for each other."

"I love Alice like a sister. Those I have once liked I like always, let them do what they will."

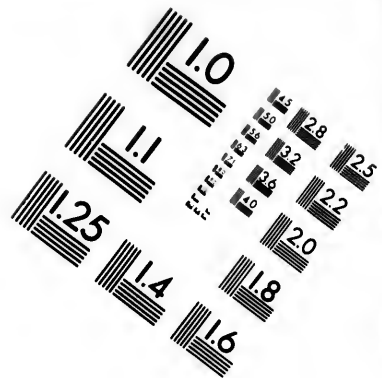
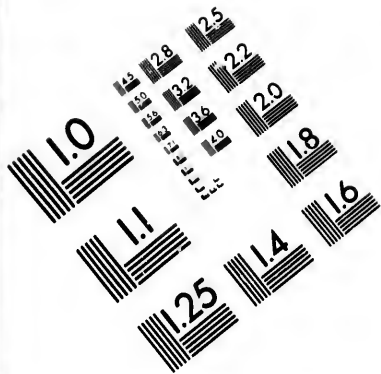
"Your friends are fortunate people," Miss Lisle. You should add me to the list; it would be a splendid opportunity of exercising your charity. I don't deserve a friend, I am quite aware, still I think it would be pleasant to have one."

"I am your friend," she answered, quietly.

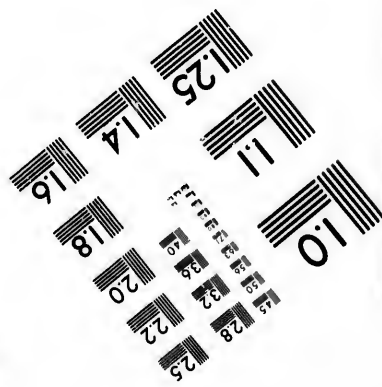
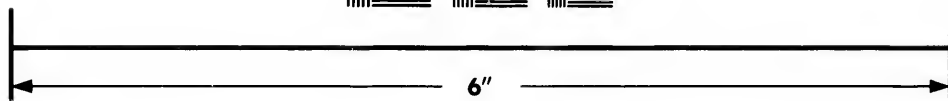
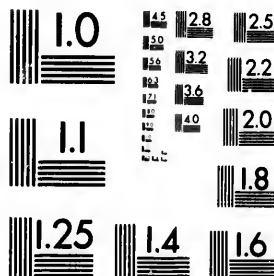
"What! in spite of all the atrocious things Frank, Sir Vane, Mrs. Galbraith and the world must have told you of such a black sheep as myself?" with his rare smile.

"In spite of all. If one deserts one's friends because they are unfortunate, I would not give much for friendship."





**IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)**



**Photographic
Sciences
Corporation**

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503



"Unfortunate!" he smiled again. "That is a mild word to apply to such a ne'er-do-well as I am. Still, I thank you, Miss Lisle; I will not soon forget your kind indulgence."

She glanced at him, looking very haughty and handsome in the dim light. Then her head drooped—she began playing nervously with her tassels. He was in debt; she had more money than she knew what to do with; she felt a great compassion for him stirring in her heart; if he would only let her help him.

"Mr. Earls court," she faltered, "they—say—you are in debt," words coming slowly and painfully. "If I am your friend, will you not let me—oh, don't be hurt—don't be offended, please—but won't you let me help you? I have so much money. I don't want it, and it would make me so happy if only you would——"

He made a sudden, swift motion that stopped her.

"Not a word more, Miss Lisle! From my soul I am grateful to you, but you must see it is impossible. Believe me, I will not readily forget your generosity of this night, unworthy of it as I am."

He was more moved than he cared to show.

She shrank away a little, feeling pain, pity, embarrassment in his presence.

"I am unworthy of your compassion—remember that, Miss Lisle. All they have told you of me is true. Whatever has befallen me is merited. I have wrought my own ruin. And the end is very near. *Facilis descensus Averni!* And I am at the bottom of the pit. Well, the descent at least has been pleasant, and when oblivion comes there is nothing to do but let the waters close over my head; to go out to the exile I have richly earned; to accept my fate and sink from sight; and when the finale comes—a shot in a gambling hell most likely—to cover my face and die with dignity. Am I boring you with a sermon? and you shiver, while I selfishly keep you here in the cold. Don't waste your pity on me, Miss Lisle; I don't deserve it; let me take you back to the ballroom."

She was shivering, but not with cold, and she was very pale in the glaring gaslight when she re-entered the warm rooms. He resigned her with a low bow to her next partner. The tears were hardly dry on her long lashes yet as she was whirled away in the redowa, tears not all; perhaps, for Alice Warren

Five minutes after Lieutenant Earls court quitted the ball. By the first train next morning he quitted Brighton, carrying with him the memory of the sweet, impassioned face upon which the stars had shone.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH MISS LISLE IS DISPOSED OF.

Miss Lisle was destined to have still another *tele-a-tete* that memorable night. The redowa over, she sent her partner for an ice—only a pretext to get rid of him, however. The place was stiflingly warm, it seemed to her now; the dances had been interminable, the commonplace nothings of the young officer insufferably stupid.

She passed along unobserved, as she fancied, to the half-lit, wholly deserted music-room, and throwing herself into a seat by the window, looked moodily out at the coming dawn.

The stars had set; faint streaks of gray in the east betokened the down of another morning. The ball was breaking up already.

Mrs. Galbraith was looking for her, no doubt; but she never thought of that long-suffering chaperon. Her heart was full of a great pity for the man who had gone—sentimental and undeserved, you will say; but she was only eighteen, and he was so very handsome. Had Mr. Earls court been the hapless possessor of a pug nose and dull gray eyes, he might have gone to his ruin without causing Miss Lisle a second thought, but the pale, dark face was simply perfect, and the large, brown eyes pathetic in their dark, dreamy lustre, although their owner might be musing on the odds for the Derby, or whether the bailiffs might not pounce upon him the instant he returned to London.

As she sat there lost in thought, a voice at her elbow spoke:

"I have been searching for you everywhere, my dear Miss Lisle. I have come to reproach you—you have treated me with merciless cruelty all night."

She looked around angrily at the sound of the voice she detested most. Was she never to be rid of this man?

"Lord Montalien gives himself a great deal of unnecessary trouble," she answered, in her iciest voice, and ignoring the reproach altogether.

"Miss Lisle, you have danced with every man in the rooms, I believe, but myself. What have I done?"

"Nothing whatever. Like Caesar's wife, my Lord Montalien is above reproach."

"How bitterly you say that! Miss Lisle, do you hate me?"
Miss Lisle was silent, playing with her fan.

186 In Which Miss Lisle is Disposed Of.

"Again I ask, Miss Lisle, what have I done?—At least I have the right to know that!"

"And again I answer, Lord Montalien," replied Paulina, struggling with another yawn—"nothing! Your conduct in every phase of life is exemplary. Will that satisfy you? I hear Mrs. Galbraith bleating after her lambkin in the distance, and must go."

"Wait one moment!" his lordship impetuously exclaimed—"only one instant! I can bear this suspense no longer!—I must speak to-night! Paulina, I love you! Will you be my wife?"

He bent above her, his eyes glowing, his thin, sallow face flushed. The excitement of the chase had carried him away; her very disdain, hardly concealed, spurred him on. He knew perfectly what her answer would be—yet he spoke.

She rose up and looked at him, neither surprised nor embarrassed; then she turned away.

"You honor me by your preference," she said, in her coldest voice. "At the same time, I do not think you expect me to say anything but 'no!'"

She moved a step away, but he came before her, his arms folded, that pale glow in his eyes still.

"Miss Lisle, I am to understand you reject me?"

She bowed her head.

"You do not love me?"

"I do not love you."

"But, Paulina, pause—think. I offer you one of the oldest titles in England; and my position and income are such as to prevent the most malicious from calling me a fortune-hunter. And I love you to distraction—I would serve for you as Jacob served for Rachel. I will give you time, only do not—do not utterly reject me."

His voice broke, he turned away; his acting was perfect, but it was acting, and a faint, cynical smile curved the girl's perfect lips.

"My lord," she said, and her sweet, clear voice rang silvery and distinct, "let us understand each other. You do not love me, whatever your motive in asking me to be your wife. My feelings in regard to you I have not striven to conceal. Before you spoke to me you knew perfectly what my answer would be. I believe you to be, in spite of everything you have said, the betrayer of Alice Warren—I feel it—I know it, as surely as we stand here. Let there be an end of this farce then, at once and forever—cease to persecute me with attentions as unwelcome as they are useless."

She had fairly roused him, fairly angered him, as she

meant t
critical

"Take
when re
Much as
I know
brother,
whom sh

"My
Galbraith

"Pass,

cruelty,

better y

any pur

set very

take my

you are

my offer

"The

defiance.

me, Lord

speak on

He on

"A ch

But sh

her eyes

and hat

"A ch

teeth. "

row."

He st

though r
hand to
him as s
her wrap
then Si
Montalie

He wa
scene in
cussed t
for app
leaned s
beauty i
—Miss I
never sp
would se
The p

Of.

In Which Miss Lisle is Disposed Of. 187

meant to do. His open enmity was better than his hypocritical devotion.

"Take care!" he said, under his breath, as he always spoke when really moved; "even you may go too far, Paulina. Much as I love you, even from you I will not endure insult. I know nothing of Alice Warren or her miserable story. My brother, of whom you speak so tenderly, is the man with whom she fled."

"My lord, will you let me pass?" I repeat I hear Mrs. Galbraith's voice."

"Pass, Miss Lisle," he said; "I forgive and overlook your cruelty, and will still venture to hope on. If you knew me better you would know I am not a man easily turned from any purpose on which I have set my heart, and my heart is set very strongly on winning and wedding you. Will you take my arm to the dressing-room? You will not? Ah, well, you are excited now. The day may come when I will repeat my offer, and you will listen more graciously."

"The day will never come," she retorted, in a blaze of defiance. "How dare you address such insolent words to me, Lord Montalien? You are less than man; I will never speak one word to you again as long as I live!"

He only smiled.

"A child's threat, my peerless Paulina."

But she had swept away like an outraged young empress, her eyes flashing fire, her whole form instinct with anger and hatred.

"A child's threat," she thought, setting her white, small teeth. "He shall see whether or no I can keep a woman's word."

He stood at the carriage door when she reached it as though nothing had happened, and courteously held out his hand to assist her to enter. Her eyes flashed their fire upon him as she rejected the help proffered, and sank back among her wraps in the remotest corner. Mrs. Galbraith followed, then Sir Vane, and, to her unspeakable disgust, Lord Montalien.

He was completely himself again—no trace of the stormy scene in the music-room showed on his placid face. He discussed the ball with Mrs. Galbraith, his brother's unlooked-for appearance there with Sir Vane, and once or twice leaned smilingly forward to address a remark to the sullen beauty in the corner. Dead silence followed those remarks—Miss Lisle could keep her word as well as he. "She would never speak to him again," she had said in her passion; it would seem she meant to keep her word.

The pallid dawn was already overspreading the sky when

188 In Which Miss Lisle is Disposed Of.

they reached the East Cliff. His lordship followed them into the house. Miss Lisle and Mrs. Galbraith went at once to their respective apartments, and Sir Vane, yawning very much, looked well disposed to follow; but his lordship laid his hand familiarly on his shoulder, and detained him.

"Rather an unseasonable hour, I know," he said, blandly, "but could I have a word with you in private, Sir Vane, before you retire?"

The baronet looked at him in surprise, and led the way toward his study. A fire burned in the grate, two easy-chairs were placed before it, a pair of wax lights on the mantel. By their light the baronet saw that his lordship looked as widely awake, as little sleepy, as though it had been high noon.

He flung himself impatiently into one of the armchairs, and pulled out his watch.

"Half-past five, Montalien," he said; "and I'm infernally sleepy. Look sharp about it, will you, or I shall be as fast as a church before you are half through."

"I have no such fear, my dear Sir Vane; you will not go to sleep until you have heard every word, I am quite sure. Can you guess, in the least, what it is I wish to say?"

"I am no Oedipus, but I may venture to surmise, it is something about my ward."

"Precisely, Sir Vane."

"I noticed she cut you dead all night, and in the carriage coming home. Have you and she had a quarrel? She's the devil's own temper, I believe, when her blood's up."

"Quite right in every respect, Sir Vane. We have quarreled, and she has the devil's own temper. Now who do you suppose she inherits that unhappy disposition from? Not her mother, surely—Lady Charteris, it seems to me, was the gentlest of created beings."

The baronet rose from his chair—his dark face turning ~~Now~~.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "What has the name of Lady Charteris to do with Miss Lisle?"

"Sit down, Sir Vane; pray don't excite yourself. I merely said Paulina must inherit her temper and headstrong disposition from Robert Lisle, Lady Charteris being the most tractable of wives, the most yielding of women."

"Lord Montalien, what am I to understand——"

"That I know all," his lordship interrupted, tersely. "That Lady Charteris—nay, give her her rightful name—Mrs. Robert Lisle, is Paulina's mother!"

The baronet sank down in his seat, livid with amazement and consternation.

"By
make

"By
Lisle
thinks
one so
Paulin
your d

He
a very

"If
sit."

"Th

is qu

as well

ne ne

is tall

knew

the mo

The

with r

Lady

exile, a

never

himself

of kno

"Thi

smooth

some t

perhap

ing. I

your m

Geoffre
salet in
The
"Ah"
man d
made i
only w
Lyndit
kind o
sort of
The lo
nervou
later n
By the

"By what right," he demanded, hoarsely, "do you dare make this insinuation?"

"By the right of knowledge, by the right of truth, Paulina Lisle is the elder daughter and heiress of the lady the world thinks your wife. Thinks, only, for she has never for one second really been that. Robert Lisle is her husband. Paulina Lisle is her daughter and heiress, as I said, and your daughter is——"

He paused. Sir Vane sprang from his chair once more, a very devil of fury in either eye.

"If you dare!" he cried, "I will throttle you where you sit."

"Then I will not dare," returned Lord Montalien, with a quiet smile, that was like oil thrown upon fire. "Sit down, Sir Vane, sit down, and don't you lose your temper, as well as your ward. It is only a weak man's folly—a wise one never permits himself to get angry. Sit down, and let us talk this matter out quietly and clearly if we can. I knew you would be interested, and even at half-past five in the morning would not fall asleep."

The baronet sank back in his chair, literally trembling with rage and terror. He had thought his secret so safe—Lady Charteris shut up in a madhouse, Robert Lisle in exile, and Duke Mason afraid to speak, bound by promise never to reveal it. And here, in the hour when he thought himself safest, the last man alive he would have suspected of knowing it, started up, aware of the whole truth!

"This has taken you by surprise, Sir Vane," continued the smooth tones of his lordship, "and yet I have known it for some time. It is no clever guesswork, no supposition, as perhaps you may think. I happen to know what I am saying. I happen to be able to prove it, if necessary. Carry your mind back twenty years ago or so to the lifetime of Mr. Geoffrey Lyndith, and try if you can recollect a very useful valet in his service, by name James Porter."

The baronet gave one inarticulate gasp at the name.

"Ah! I see you do remember. Perhaps you thought the man dead. Well, he is dead now, and the deposition he made in his dying hours is in my possession at present. I only wonder a clever man, such as I take the late Mr. Lyndith to have been, should be so weak as to intrust this kind of secret to a servant. Believe me, we should do these sort of things ourselves, Sir Vane, or leave them undone. The lower classes, you will find, as a rule, are troubled with nervousness—conscience, I think they call it—and sooner or later make a clean breast of the whole affair. Porter did. By the merest accident—one of those accidents that rule the

190 In Which Miss Lisle is Disposed Of.

lives of all of us—I came upon him in his dying hours, and took down his deposition. I have that document safe. I wonder what Robert Lisle or—your wife—let us call her your wife—would not give for it? You comprehend now, Sir Vane, that your secret is your secret no longer?”

“What do you want?” the baronet asked, in the same hoarse voice.

“I want to marry Paulina Lisle.”

“And to claim the fortune of Lady Charteris?”

“No, Sir Vane! if I did I should not ask your aid. I promise to resign all claim upon Lady Charteris’ estate, to hand over to you Porter’s confession, on condition that you compel Paulina to marry me.”

“Compel!”

“Bring all the influence you and your sister possess to bear upon this willful girl; let fair means be tried until patience ceases to be a virtue. Then take her to ‘The Firs.’ I will go with you; night and day I shall plead my suit, until, as constant dropping wears a stone, she yields at length.”

The baronet arose, and the two men coldly shook hands and separated.

* * * * *

“Mrs. Galbraith, who is to take us to the concert to-night?”

Miss Lisle looked up from *Le Follet* to ask this question. It was the evening succeeding the ball. Dinner was over, and, for a wonder, Lord Montalien had not dined at the East Cliff.

“Yesterday morning,” pursued the heiress, “it was decided we were to go with Sir Vane. Two hours ago Sir Vane left by the express train for London. Now, who is to take us to the concert?”

The concert of which the young lady spoke was a concert of more than usual interest for her. Her love for music amounted to a passion, and to-night the Signor Carlo Friellson was to make his first appearance. Her heart had been set upon going, as Mrs. Galbraith very well knew.

“Lord Montalien, of course,” she said, in her smooth, even voice; “I expect him every moment; and really, it is almost eight, and quite time to dress.”

Miss Lisle’s eyes fell once more upon the pages of *Le Follet*, and Miss Lisle’s lips set themselves in that resolute line that Mrs. Galbraith very well knew meant “breakers ahead.”

“Paulina, dear, you heard me?” in her most dulcet tones.

“Maud
concer
early.”

“Don
shall n

“Not
Paul

chaper

“I sh

anywhe

to dine

of my

the the

to driv

no fail

told Lo

of him-

differen

go to t

shall n

And

could sa

spoken,

moved

Lord

went.

Paulina

“As t

solitude

frantic

Woul

Paulina

rang a

“Quic

make m

Her e

ous Pol

Jane

under t

dress he

Paulina

ing pin

golden h

ears, sof

fan of p

roses lay

slim, fa

In Which Miss Lisle is Disposed Of. 191

"Maud, ring for Paulina's maid. It is time to dress for the concert. There will be such a crush, that it is best to be early."

"Don't trouble yourself, Maud," said Paulina, quietly; "I shall not go."

"Not go, Paulina?"

Paulina laid down *Le Follet*, and looked across at her chaperon with steady blue eyes.

"I shall not go, Mrs. Galbraith. More—I will never go anywhere again with Lord Montalien. If he had come here to dine to-day, I should have left the table. It is quite out of my power to forbid him the house, or Sir Vane's box at the theatre, or you from picking him up whenever we go out to drive, but what is in my power to do I will. It shall be no fault of mine if people couple our names together. I told Lord Montalien last night pretty plainly what I thought of him—now I tell you. Do not let my whim make any difference in your plans. You and Maud are both dying to go to the *debut* of this new Mario. Go, by all means—I shall not!"

And then she went back to *Le Follet*. All Mrs. Galbraith could say was of no avail. Miss Lisle's ultimatum had been spoken, all the eloquence of men and angels would not have moved her.

Lord Montalien called, and Mrs. Galbraith and Maud went. He listened, with his calm smile, to the story of Paulina's headstrong caprice.

"As the queen pleases," he said, with a shrug; "a little solitude will do her no harm. In half an hour she will be frantic that she has not come."

Would she? The instant the carriage drove away Paulina jumped up, flung *Le Follet* across the room, and rang a peal for her maid that nearly broke down the bell.

"Quick, Jane," she cried; "dress me in two minutes, and make me as pretty as ever you can."

Her eyes were dancing now. It was little, wild, mischievous Polly Mason once more.

Jane was a well-trained English lady's maid, and nothing under the canopy of heaven ever surprised her. She did dress her young mistress in ten minutes, and to perfection. Paulina looked at herself in the glass, and saw that the flowing pink silk, and the long trailing cluster of lilies in her golden hair were exquisite. Diamond drops sparkled in her ears, soft illusion veiled the snow-white bust and arms. Her fan of pearl and rose silk, her bouquet of lilies and blush roses lay side by side. She looked like a lily herself—tall, slim, fair.

192 In Which Miss Lisle is Disposed Of

"Now my opera cloak. Quick, Jane."

Jane flung it over her shoulders, and the hood over her head. Miss Lisle drew on her gloves, gathered up her shimmering silken train, and swept out of the house with that dancing light in her eyes, that provoking smile on her lips.

She tripped down the front steps and along the lamplit street for a few yards. Then she rang the bell of a large house, and was admitted by a footman.

"Is Mrs. Atcherly at home?" she asked.

"What! Paulina!" exclaimed a lady, in the act of crossing the hall, in full evening dress—"here! alone! and at this hour! I thought you were going to the concert?"

"So I am, dear Mrs. Atcherly, if you will take me? I would not miss it for a kingdom. You are all ready, I see—how fortunate I am not to be too late."

"But, my love—Mrs. Galbraith——"

"Mrs. Galbraith has gone, and Maud and Lord Montalien. I'll tell you all about it as we go along. Please don't let us be too late."

Mrs. Colonel Atcherly, a stately matron, her daughter and her husband, descended to the carriage. On the way Paulina whispered the story of her insubordination into the elder lady's ear.

"You know how I detest Lord Montalien, Mrs. Atcherly. I couldn't go with him, and I should die—yes, I should, if I missed hearing the Signor Priellson. What will they say when they see me?"

"That you are a hare-brained damsel. What a lecture Mrs. Galbraith will read you to-morrow!"

They reached the pavilion. The curtain had fallen upon the first act as the Atcherly party swept along to their box. Sir Vane's was nearly opposite, and the glasses of Lord Montalien and the baronet's sister fell together upon wicked Paulina.

"Good Heavens!" Mrs. Galbraith gasped, "can I believe my eyes!"

Lord Montalien burst out laughing. Though the joke told against him, yet Mrs. Galbraith's face of horror was not to be resisted.

"It is Paulina!" cried the lady. "Lord Montalien, is it possible you can laugh?"

"I beg one thousand pardons," the peer said, still laughing. "It is the best joke of the season! And, egad! she is more beautiful than ever I saw her!"

"She has the grace at least not to look this way. How dare she do so outrageous a thing! I will never forgive her."

All the lorgnettes in the house turned to the Atcherly box

—many to the great heiress.—many more to the noble and lovely head. Captain Villiers left his seat in the stalls and joined her, and until the curtain fell upon the last act an animated flirtation was kept up. Then Miss Lisle flung her bouquet to the successful tenor, and took the Guardsman's arm to the carriage.

"Mrs. Atcherly," she said, laughingly, "your goodness emboldens me to ask still another favor. Will you keep me all night? Perhaps, if Mrs. Galbraith sleeps on her wrath, it will fall less heavily upon me to-morrow."

Miss Lisle did not return home all night. Next morning Sir Vane returned, and was informed of the rebellious and unheard-of conduct of his ward.

The baronet's anger was scarcely less than that of his sister. He went at once for her; and no death's-head ever looked more grim than he as he led her home.

"And now, Miss Lisle," he asked, sternly, "may I demand an explanation of this disgraceful conduct?"

"Disgraceful, Sir Vane! I don't quite see that; I went to the concert because I wanted to go to the concert, and I did not go with Mrs. Galbraith because Lord Montalien was her escort. I hope that is satisfactory!"

"It is not satisfactory. I repeat it; your conduct has been disgraceful."

"Sir Vane, you may use that word once too often. Neither now, nor at any future time, shall Lord Montalien appear in public with me."

"Lord Montalien has done you the honor to propose to you. It is my desire—my command—that you shall accept him."

Miss Lisle smiled quietly and took a seat.

"Lord Montalien has laid a complaint against me, has he, and my guardian's power is to be brought to bear in his favor? Sir Vane, take my advice and spare yourself a great deal of useless rhetoric and breath. If Lord Montalien were the ruler of the world, and my life depended on it, I would lay my head on the block sooner than marry him! I hope that is conclusive! I will never step across his threshold, or sit at the same table with him. I will not go down to Montalien at Christmas. I hope that is conclusive!"

"Then hear me," cried her guardian, white with anger. "Until you do speak to him, sit at the same table with him, and consent to marry him, you shall remain in your room watched. The escapade of last night shall not occur again. Solitary confinement, perhaps, will teach you obedience. Now go!"

Miss Lisle rose at once. He had expected an outburst of indignant protest and passion, but who was to judge this

194 "A New Way to Pay Old Debts."

girl? She got up with a provoking smile on her face, and walked straight out of the room. In the doorway she paused.

"I have only one request to make," she said, still with that provoking smile; "please don't feed me on bread and water. I shouldn't like to grow any thinner, and do be kind to poor little Pandore (her poodle). For the rest, Sir Vane, I hear but to obey."

She went up to her rooms. She had three on the sunny southern side—bedroom, dressing-room and sitting-room. She glanced around. Heaps of books and magazines were everywhere, heaps of Berlin wool, and beadwork, heaps of music and a piano. She rang the bell, and when her maid came she peeped out through a crevice in the door.

"Jane," she said, with solemnity, "I'm a prisoner here, and to prevent the possibility of my escape I am going to lock myself in! You will fetch me my meals, and when you want anything, Jane, you will rap, you know, and tell me through the keyhole."

Sir Vane had followed her and heard every word of this whimsical speech.

"What is to be done with such a girl as that?" the baronet demanded of his sister; "she is afraid of nothing—imprisonment, solitude—nothing, I say. Hear her now!"

Miss Lisle was seated at her piano, and her high, sweet singing echoed through the house.

"Paulina Lisle is dangerous," Mrs. Galbraith said, with emphasis; "that girl is capable of anything when fully aroused."

Mrs. Galbraith was right. She and her brother were speedily to learn of what Paulina Lisle was capable!

CHAPTER VII.

"A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS."

It was the twentieth of December.

Francis, Lord Montalien, rose from the luxurious dinner in his bachelor apartments, prepared by a first-rate French artist, and walked into his reception-room. Lord Montalien's lodgings were on the sunny side of St. James street, and rather more luxurious, if possible, than the apartments of a young duchess. He had but come from a funeral a few hours before, the funeral of his rich grandaunt, Miss Earls court. After the funeral the will had been read in the lawyer's office the will that, to the utter amaze of everybody save the lav

yer and legatee, left every shilling she possessed to her elder nephew, Lord Montalien. Guy had been cut off without even a guinea to buy a mourning ring, "for his evil courses," the will pointedly said—the shameful courses which, for the first time, had brought disgrace upon the name of Earls court.

In that hour of triumph the elder brother had cast, in spite of himself, one glance of triumph at the disinherited favorite. Guy stood perfectly calm—it was his death-warrant he heard read, but not a muscle moved; his handsome face looked as serenely, as coolly indifferent as though he had half a million or so at his banker's. And Lord Montalien had set his teeth with an inward oath—he could not conquer him—in the hour of his downfall he rose above him still.

"Curse him!" he hissed; "I always hated him for his d—d patrician beauty and languor, his *air noble*, as the women call it, and his insufferable insolence, and I hate him more now, in his utter downfall, than I ever did before. I wish he were here, that I might for once throw off the mask and tell him so."

The master he served seemed inclined to let him have his way in this as in all other things. The wish had scarcely taken shape, when the door was flung open, and his groom of the chambers announced "Mr. Earls court."

Lord Montalien paused in his walk, and, crossing over to the chimney-piece, leaned his arm upon it, and looked full at his brother, that exultant, Satanic smile bright yet on his face. He had this last desire, as he had had all others; the man he hated, and whom he had helped to ruin, stood before him, in the dark hour of his life.

Guy came slowly forward and stood directly opposite to him, at the other end of the mantel. He, too, wore mourning, his face was very grave, very haggard, very pale. Dark circles surrounded his eyes, but that noble air, which his brother so hated, had not left him. He looked handsomer, nobler, now in his utter downfall, beyond all comparison, than the wealthy, the well-reputed Lord of Montalien. And Francis Earls court saw it and knew it.

"Well, Guy," he began, slowly, "and so the worst has come. Have you visited me to congratulate me, or to ask my sympathy for your own great misfortune? Who would have thought Miss Earls court would have had the heart to disinherit her favorite?"

The mocking tone, the exultant look, were indescribable.

Guy lifted his dark eye and looked steadily across at him.

"It must have been a tremendous blow," the elder continued; "it was your last hope. Perhaps, though, it is not

196 "A New Way to Pay Old Debts."

your last hope; perhaps you have come to me to help you in your hour of need."

"No, Frank," Guy said, quietly, "I have fallen very low, but my misfortunes, or evil courses, which you will, have not quite turned my brain. I have never asked you for a farthing yet, and I never will."

"And yet, you remember after our father's death, I told you to come to me in your hour of need, and I would assist you. You were your father's favorite, Guy; you are the son of the wife he loved; he left you all he had to leave. I wonder how he would feel if he saw you now?"

"We will leave his name out of the discussion, if you please. And as neither now nor at any past time I ever troubled your purse or your brotherly affection, you're hitting a man when he's down is in very bad taste, to say the least of it. I have neither come here to-night for sympathy nor money. I know how much of either I would get or deserve to get. Shall I tell you why I have come?"

"By all means—to say farewell, perhaps, on the eve of your lifelong exile. What place of refuge have you chosen—Algeria, Australia, New Zealand, America? I should really like to know!"

"I did not come to say farewell. I came to speak to you of—Alice Warren."

The elder brother started at the unexpected sound of that name. Not once had he seen her since the night he had visited her in Barton street.

"Alice Warren," he said, with an oath; "what has Alice Warren to do with it? Do you expect me to look after your cast-off mistress when you are gone?"

"I expect nothing of you—nothing—how often must I repeat it? And Alice Warren is no mistress of mine—of any man's, I believe in my soul. Whatever she is, you are the scoundrel who has led her astray, under promise of marriage. Hear me out, my lord; I have come to be heard, and will. If you have one spark of manhood left, you will atone in some way for the great wrong you have done an innocent girl. You will not leave the fresh face you wooed down in Lincolnshire exposed to the disgrace of London gaslight."

"I shall do precisely as I please in this, as in all other things. It is refreshing, really, to hear you, of all men, the defender of female innocence, of soiled doves, such as Alice Warren."

"At least no innocent girl's ruin lies at my door, no man's betrayal. I repeat, if you have one spark of manhood left, you will atone for the wrong you have done her."

"As how?" with his sneering smile; "by a real marriage—"

make the bailiff's daughter my Lady Montalien? May I ask when you had the pleasure of seeing the lady last, and if she commissioned you to come here and plead her case?"

"I saw her two hours ago, and she commissioned me to do nothing of the sort. I was walking along the Strand with Gus Stedman, and we came face to face with poor Alice. I should not have known her—she has become such a wretched shadow of herself. If ever a heart was broken, I believe hers to be. By Heaven, Frank, it is a cruel shame—if you had murdered her in cold blood you could not be more guilty than you are!"

The sneering smile never left the other's face, though he was pallid with suppressed passion. He took up his cigar case and lit a Manilla, though his hands shook as he did it.

"And she told you, no doubt, a piteous story of my betrayal and my baseness—or is all this accusation but the figment of your own lively brain?"

"She told me nothing; she is true to you, false as you have been to her. We scarcely exchanged words—she seemed to have something to say to Stedman, and I walked off, and left them. It is of no use your wearing a mask with me. When Alice Warren came up to London last September, poor, credulous child, it was to become your wife."

"You are right!" exclaimed Lord Montalien, suddenly; "and I will throw off the mask with you, my virtue-preaching younger brother! In that other land to which your—misfortunes are driving you, you might, with pleasure to yourself and profit to your hearers, turn Methodist parson—the role seems to suit you amazingly. I shall deal with Alice Warren exactly as I please, and for marriage, I shall marry Paulina Lisle!"

"Poor Paulina," Guy said, bitterly. "May Heaven keep her from such a fate!"

"You believe in Heaven? At least it has not dealt very kindly by you. I shall marry Paulina Lisle and her fortune; and it will be the delightful occupation of my life to break that high spirit while you are breaking stones on the roads out there in Australia. For Alice Warren, she will fare none the better for your advocacy. Let us speak of yourself—I really feel an interest in your fate, though you may not believe it. You have sent in your papers to sell, I suppose? You are not mad enough to try and remain in England?"

Guy bowed his head in assent, and turned to go.

"Pray, do not be in such haste—I have not half finished what I desire to say to you. Have you chosen as yet the place of your outlawry?"

198 "A New Way to Pay Old Debts."

"The place of my outlawry is a matter that in no way concerns you."

"Very true; and what does it signify—America, Australia, Algeria—it is all the same. But don't you feel a curiosity to know how you came to be disinherited? Most men would, I think; and you were such a favorite with old Miss Earls-court, as with all women, young and old, indeed."

"Through your brotherly kindness, Frank, no doubt."

"Quite right—through my brotherly kindness. But for me you would to-day be heir to our lamented maiden aunt's large fortune, able to snap your fingers in the faces of the Jews, and marry Paulina Lisle yourself, if you desired it. She was ready to forgive you, seventy times seven, to pay your debts to the end of the chapter, and leave you all when she died—but for me!—but for me! Shall I tell you, Guy, how I did it?"

"If you please."

"By means of the girl whose case you have come here to plead—by means of Alice Warren. Your gambling, your drinking, your mad extravagance in every way, she was prepared to forgive and condone, but not the luring from home, under pretense of marriage, and ruin of a young and virtuous girl, whose father all his life had loved and served you and yours! I went to her two weeks ago, my brilliant, careless Guy, and I told her this. I made her believe this, the only thing that could have ruined you; and that night she tore up the will that left you all—you hear—all!—and made me her heir!"

He paused. Satan himself, triumphing over a lost soul, could not have looked more diabolically exultant. For Guy, he listened, his elbow on the marble mantel, his calm, pale face unmoved, his eyes fixed steadfastly on his only brother's face.

"You did this," he said, slowly. "I know you always hated me, but I did not—no, I did not think, base as I know you to be, that you were capable of this. Frank," with a sudden change of tone, "will you tell me why you have hated me? I have been a worthless fellow, but I never injured you."

"Did you not?" Lord Montalien ground out, with a deep oath. "Why, curse you, I believe I have hated you from your cradle! You were the Isaac, I the Ishmael; you the petted, the caressed, the admired—I the unlicked cub, the unloved son of an unloved mother! I have hated you for that beauty which women have so admired, for the talents and accomplishments that have rendered you a favorite with men; and I swore to have revenge—and I have had it. Your

brilliant life is over; you are a beggar; you go forth to exile and outlawry and disgrace—to starve or work in a foreign land! And the title, and the wealth, and the good repute are mine! Has more got to be said? I will marry Paulina Lisle before the next London season, and Alice Warren may go, as you have gone, to perdition. Mr. Guy Earls-court, permit me to wish you good-night!"

He rang the bell.

"Show Mr. Earls-court to the door," he said to the servant, "and admit him here no more!"

He could not forbear this last insult. With one look—a look not soon to be forgotten—Guy went forth, never to cross that threshold again.

"And now for Berkeley Square and Paulina!" exclaimed Lord Montalien, taking up his greatcoat. "We will see what frame of mind that obstinate little beauty is in to-night!"

But he was not to go yet. The door opened once more, and the groom of the chambers appeared, with a disturbed countenance.

"My lord, there is a young person here who says she must see you. I have remonstrated——"

He stopped aghast. The young person had had the audacity to follow him, and stood now upon the threshold. It was Alice!

"That will do, Robinson; I will see this woman! Go!"

The groom of the chambers vanished, closing the door after him, and dropping the heavy curtain of crimson cloth that effectually shut in every sound; and Alice, wan as a spirit, covered with snow, with wild eyes and ghastly face, stood before Lord Montalien in all his splendor. His face was literally black with rage. He hated her, he loathed her, he had forbidden her in the most emphatic manner ever to write to him or intrude upon him, and she had had the audacity to force her way here!

"How dare you!" he said, under his breath, as he always spoke when his passion was greatest—"how dare you come here?"

She was trembling with cold. She was miserably clad and fatigued, but he offered her no chair, did not bid her approach the fire. She remained standing near the door, her face, awfully corpse-like, turned upon him.

"Why have you come here?" he thundered. "Speak at once—why have you dared to come here?"

"I have come for justice, Lord Montalien. I am your wife, and you leave me to starve! I am your wife, and an outcast from home and friends! Frank! Frank!"—her voice

200 "A New Way to Pay Old Debts."

rising to a shrill cry—"I have not seen you for six weeks—I had to come here—I should have gone mad or died if I had not come."

"It is a pity you did not!" he brutally answered. "Go mad and die—the sooner the better; but don't come tormenting me with the sight of your miserable, white face."

She clasped both hands over her heart and staggered as though he had given her a blow; her lips moved, but no sound came forth.

"What do you mean by coming here for justice, as you call it?" he went on. "Justice means money, I suppose. Well, here are ten guineas—take them, and pay your bill, and begone!"

She rallied again; after an effort or two words came from her ashen lips:

"I came for justice, and I must have it—I am your wife—your lawful, wedded wife—why, then, are you trying to marry Paulina Lisle?"

He strode a step toward her, then stopped.

"Who has told you this?" he cried, with suppressed fury.

"Mr. Stedman. I met him to-day—he told me you were engaged to marry Paulina Lisle, and would marry her. Frank, it must not, shall not be! I can bear a great deal, but not that. I love Paulina; she shall never be ruined as I have been. You shall own me before the world as what I am—your lawful wife, or I will go to her and tell her all."

There was that in her face, in her eyes, in her tone, a firmness, a resolution; he had never seen there before. The crushed worm had turned; he knew she meant what she had said.

"You will do this!" he exclaimed, hoarsely.

"I swear I will! My heart is broken, my life ruined—that is past hope—you hate me, and wish to cast me off. But she shall be saved—my good name shall be saved. Unless before this year ends you promise to proclaim me as your wife, I will go to Paulina Lisle and tell her all."

"Then go!" he burst forth, in his fury; "go—weak, driveling, miserable fool! My wife! Why, you idiot, you have never been that for one hour, for one second. The man who married us was no clergyman, but a worthless, drunken vagrant, who entered into the plot with Stedman and me. My wife! Faugh! I was mad enough, but never half mad enough to do that! Now you know the truth at last—no more my wife than any streetwalker in London. Go to your friend, Mr. Stedman, and he will indorse my words."

There was a chair near her—she grasped it to keep from

fall
awa
"A
a
unti
now
—I
Th
"N
per;
Sh
the c
"G
in a
for y
quiet
Sh
the m
way,
the l
bitter
"So
ish in
nine!
The
all in
his w
time,
"D
gerin
upon
many
What
fellow
stead
Miss
born
what
and s
fortab
a nigh
out th
He
lien d
"Th
in a c

falling, and in the height of his mad fury he had to shift away from the gaze of the large, horror-struck eyes.

"Not his wife!" she whispered; "not his wife!"

"Not my wife, I swear it! I did not mean to tell you until I had got you quietly out of the country, but as well now as later. And, mark you—if you go near Paulina Lisle—I will—kill you!"

The last words came hissing through his set teeth.

"Not his wife," she repeated once more, in a sort of whisper; "not his wife!"

She turned blindly toward the door, groping like one in the dark. He lifted the curtain, and opened it for her.

"Get a cab, and go home," he said. "I will call upon you in a day or two, and see what can be done. I will provide for you, have no fear of that. Here is the money—go back quietly and wait until I come."

She did not seem to hear or heed him. She never noticed the money he offered. She went forward in the same blind way, the servant looking at her curiously, and passed from the luxurious wealth and light of those costly rooms to the bitter, drifting snowstorm without.

"So much the better," muttered his lordship; "if she perishes in the storm it will save me a world of trouble. Half-past nine! The devil's in it, if I cannot go to Paulina now!"

The devil was in it—he was apt to be, horns and hoofs and all in the same room with Francis, Lord Montalien. Before his wraps were on, the door was flung open for the third time, and Mr. Stedman announced.

"Didn't expect to see me, old boy!" his visitor said, swaggering in with easy familiarity. "Going out, too, to call upon the lovely Paulina, no doubt. Well, I won't detain you many minutes. So let us sit down and be comfortable. What a cozy crib you have here, Frank, and what a lucky fellow you are! All Miss Earls court's money left to you, instead of that unfortunate beggar, Guy. And now the rich Miss Lisle is going to marry you, they say. It's better to be born lucky than rich, but when a man's both lucky and rich, what an enviable mortal he is! Ah! the world's a seesaw, and some of us go up and some of us go down! How comfortable this coal fire is such a night—the very dickens of a night, I can tell you. By the by, who do you think I met out there just now in the storm?"

He looked cunningly at Lord Montalien, but Lord Montalien did not speak. His face was set in an angry frown.

"That poor, little, unfortunate Alice of yours. I put her in a cab—she didn't seem to know where she was going, and

202 "A New Way to Pay Old Debts."

paid the driver to take her home. I believe, in my soul she would have perished before morning."

"I wish to Heaven she had, and you with her!" burst out the badgered peer. "What the deuce brings you here, Stedman? Don't you see I'm going out?"

"Now, that is inhospitable," murmured Mr. Stedman, reproachfully; "and to such a friend as I have been to you, too. Didn't you tell me I had a claim upon your gratitude you would never forget when I chose to call upon you? The time has come. I leave England in three days, to seek my fortune in Australia; and I have called upon you to-night, Lord Montalien, for a check for three thousand pounds."

Lord Montalien laughed scornfully.

"Three thousand demons, perhaps!" he said.

"No, my lord, one of them I find quite enough to deal with at once. I want three thousand pounds, and I mean to have it before I quit this room!"

"You are mad or drunk—which?"

"Neither, most noble lord. Your secret is worth the money."

"What secret?" with a scornful stare.

"That Alice Warren, the bailiff's daughter, is your lawful, wedded wife!"

"What!"

Mr. Stedman looked up at him with an exultant smile of power.

"That Alice Warren, whom ten minutes ago you turned from your doors to perish in the snow, is your lawful, wedded wife, as fast as the Archbishop of Canterbury's license and a clergyman of the Church of England can make her! That is your secret, my lord! You thought I would be your cat's-paw, run my head in a noose to oblige you—do your dirty work, and take a 'thank you' for my pains. That was your mistake. You are as tightly married to Alice Warren as though the ceremony had been performed under the roof of St. George's, Hanover Square. You can prove my words if you like, easily enough—Alice Warren is Lady Montalien."

The two men looked at each other, and Lord Montalien knew he spoke the truth. In the waxlight his face was deadly pale.

"Stedman," he said, "why have you done this?"

"To wipe out an old debt of six years' standing, my lord. You know to what I refer—to Fanny Dashon. You thought I had forgotten, didn't you?—that was your little mistake. The debt was cleanly wiped out on the night you married the bailiff's daughter. Now will you give me your check for three thousand pounds or not?"

"... I do not?"

"If not, I will go straight from this room to Paulina Lisle, and tell her the whole story. To obtain information of her friend she will give me at least one thousand, and my revenge will be worth the other two. I think, of the two courses, I really should prefer it."

Lord Montalien, without a word, opened his checkbook and wrote an order for three thousand pounds.

"What surety have I," he said, "that you will not still go to Miss Lisle when I have given you this?"

"My promise, my lord, which I will keep. Give me the check, and I swear to leave England, and keep your secret inviolate to the end of my life."

Without a word his lordship passed him the slip of paper. Mr. Stedman folded it up with a satisfied smile.

"Thanks, my lord, and farewell. I will detain you no longer."

He took his hat and approached the door. Then he turned round for a second, and looked at Lord Montalien standing like a statue.

"My lord," he said, "it wasn't her fault. Don't be too hard on her when I am gone."

"Good-night, Mr. Stedman," his lordship answered, icily; "I know what I owe her, and how to deal with her."

And then he was alone. Alone? No! Unseen tempters, dark spirits, filled the room. He threw off his overcoat and walked up and down. Hour after hour struck—it was long past midnight, and still he never paused in that ceaseless walk. Hour after hour wore by—morning dawned, white and cold, over London—firelight and waxlight had flickered and died away.

And with the morning, Lord Montalien knew how he meant to deal with Alice.

CHAPTER VIII.

"CAMILLA'S HUSBAND."

Sir Vane Charteris and his family had been back two days in the house in Berkeley Square. The Christmas festivities at Montalien had been postponed indefinitely, all through the headstrong disobedience of that willful girl, Paulina Lisle.

"I will never go to Montalien Priory of my own will," she said; "and if you take me by force, I will run away and seek refuge with Duke Mason, an hour after we get there."

"Her devilish determination I never saw equaled in old or young!" Sir Vane said to the last day of his life.

And indeed there was truth in the forcible remark. She had kept her rooms, to the surprise of everybody for a fortnight at Brighton—having her meals sent up to her, not seeing a soul but her maid Jane. The weather had been dismal throughout, and with plenty of new books and new music, Paulina could not feel very lonely. The Brighton world began at last to ask so many questions about its bright favorite that at length Sir Vane sent up his own man, with a polite request that Miss Lisle would join them that day at dinner. Miss Lisle's prompt answer was characteristic:

"Tell Sir Vane Charteris, Brownson, with my compliments, that I have stayed a prisoner here for two weeks to please him—I shall now stay two more to please myself!"

With which the door closed emphatically in Brownson's bewildered face. And Miss Lisle would have been as good as her word had not the baronet whisked his whole family back to town.

London was deserted now by their world, but Mrs. Atcherly, Paulina's friend, had a country seat at Twickenham; and on the twenty-second of December was to give a grand ball, to be preceded by private theatricals; and to these theatricals and to this ball Paulina had promised faithfully to go.

But Sir Vane ruled it otherwise.

"If Mrs. Atcherly should happen to call," he said to his sister, "tell her Paulina is indisposed, and unable to attend. If she thought she was to be taken to 'The Firs,' she would throw herself upon the Atcherlys protection, as soon as not, and the old colonel is a veritable Don Quixote about women."

Mrs. Atcherly did call on the twenty-first, and was told, in Mrs. Galbraith's smoothest way, poor Paulina would not be able to attend—the child had been indisposed since a fortnight before they left Brighton.

Was the list of Miss Lisle's enormities never to be filled? The drawing-room door opened as Mrs. Galbraith spoke, and the young lady herself walked in, her cheeks glowing, her eyes sparkling, the very impersonation of excellent health and spirits.

"Not so indisposed, Mrs. Galbraith, that she cannot greet an old friend. And, dear Mrs. Atcherly, I will go to Twickenham to-morrow night if I have to walk there!"

"I am so glad. Remember, Mrs. Galbraith," rising to go, "we shall assuredly expect you and Miss Lisle."

Mrs. Galbraith turned passionately to Miss Lisle the instant her visitor had quitted the house.

M
still
"y
of t
see
over
morr
Sh
libra
her
"D
Firs'
"N
that
shall
Elean
"The
the h
take
day a
you b
"Sh
leave
He
In l
horrib
They
and m
with a
compa
it his
might
Impris
them?
"Sor
dressed
least id
Never,
She
it as t
thinki
filled w
dress o
gold ha
marble
told of
Sir V

Miss Lisle lifted one hand, with a haughty gesture, that stilled the rising tempest.

“Mrs. Galbraith,” she said, in a voice that rang, “enough of this! I am no child to be whipped and put to bed, as you see fit—no poor, timid, spiritless creature, to be tyrannized over by you, or your brother! I shall go to Twickenham to-morrow night as surely as to-morrow night comes.”

She swept out of the room superbly. As he passed the library—the door ajar—she was suddenly checked by hearing her own name from the hated lips of Lord Montalien.

“Does Paulina know yet you are going to take her to ‘The Firs’ for the winter?” he asked.

“Not yet. I tell you, Montalien, the determined will of that girl is past belief! She is capable of anything. She shall not know her destination until we are fairly started—Eleanor will fabricate some story to satisfy her. Once at ‘The Firs’ I have no fear. It will be all our own way then—the house is as lonely and desolate as a tomb; and I will take care she does not pass the gates. You will be with her day and night—if you cannot make her consent to marry you before spring, why then—”

“She shall consent, by fair means or foul. She shall only leave ‘The Firs’ as my wife.”

He rose as he spoke, and Paulina flitted away.

In her own rooms, she sank down, white and cold. What horrible plot was this they were concocting against her? They were going to imprison her at “The Firs” for months and months, that dreary house Mrs. Galbraith ever spoke of with a shudder. And Lord Montalien was to be her constant companion, and by fair means or foul she was only to leave it his wife. Her heart grew sick within her. Her own will might be strong, but that of those two men was stronger. Imprisoned there—friendless—how could she hope to outwit them?

“Something must be done to-night,” she thought, as she dressed herself for Mrs. Atcherly’s ball. She had not the least idea what, but something must be done to avert her fate. Never, never, never! would she go down to “The Firs.”

She was thinking this as her maid dressed her—thinking it as they drove rapidly through the cold, moonlit night—thinking it as she entered Mrs. Atcherly’s pleasant rooms, filled with pleasant people. She was looking beautiful in a dress of silver-blue moire, with diamonds sparkling in her gold hair, on her marble throat and arms. She was pale as marble herself, but there was a feverish fire in her eyes that told of the unrest within.

Sir Vane, Lord Montalien, even Maud, attended this party

to witness the theatricals. Bills printed on white satin were passed around. The play was "Camilla's Husband." "Camilla," by Miss Atcherly, and the young artist, who is the hero of the piece, by Guy Earls court.

"His last appearance on any stage," laughed his brother to Sir Vane, "before he goes forth into the outer darkness, to be seen and heard of no more. He was a'ways a sort of pet with those people. He has sold out, you know, and must leave England within the week, or the Jews will be down upon him, and all his brilliancy, and all his beauty, will be wasted sweetness on the desert air of a debtor's prison."

"How you do hate your brother," Sir Vane thought; "and you do not possess even the common decency to conceal it."

Perhaps many of those who read this have seen the play called "Camilla's Husband." A young lady, persecuted by a tyrannical guardian, makes her escape, and asks the first man she meets to marry her.

The first man is a strolling artist, who consents, marries her, receives a purse of gold, is told he is never to see or seek her again, and she disappears. Of course it ends, as it ought to end, in the artist saving her life, and eventually winning her love and herself.

Paulina Lisle sat watching the progress of the play, led away from the great trouble of her life in its interest. How well he played, she thought; how magnificently he looked! How like Camilla's fate was to her own! Oh! if she could but cut the Gordian knot of her difficulties by asking somebody to marry her too!

It was the last scene of the last act. Camilla is hopelessly in love with her artist, and that moment is drawing near when she shall fling herself into his arms and declare that "Happy am I, since you are Camilla's husband."

Guy was playing superbly; and when, in the last moment, he opens his arms, and his wife falls into them, the whole house burst forth into a tumult of applause, in the midst of which the curtain fell, and the play was over.

"How well he acted," a voice near Paulina said, as a young officer of the Guards arose with a military friend, "for a man irretrievably ruined. His debts are enormous; and his old aunt has died, and left all to that cad of an elder brother. What a pity the days of Faust and Mephistopheles are over! Guy Earls court would sell his soul to the Evil One, I verily believe, without a moment's hesitation, for twenty thousand pounds! He must leave England in a day or two, and forever."

The speaker passed on; but his light-spoken words had been heard and heeded. In that instant, as she listened, it

all
cour
man
SH
the
inter
reun
plim
cour
her
men
ulate
He
saw
palle
did i
fever
"V
SH
"I
me o
W
arm
half-
it w
room
a vel
"N
knew
Sh
frigh
"Y
"I
"W
"T
"F
"T
ica."
"Y
"N
"T
no w
tine-
sweat
come
Th

all flashed upon Paulina like a lightning gleam. Guy Earls-
court was the man—the man to marry, and save her. The
man to take half her fortune and leave her forever.

She leaned against a slender pilaster; the room, the lights,
the faces swimming before her. Her eyes were fixed with the
intensity of insanity upon the face of Guy Earls-court, sur-
rounded by all the women in the room, receiving their com-
pliments and congratulations, with his usual negligent,
courtly grace. All her liking, all her friendship for him, all
her pity, vanished. He was hardly a man, only the instru-
ment, the automaton, who was to save her for a certain stip-
ulated price.

He turned laughingly away at last from his admirers, and
saw her. How strangely, how wildly she looked! The deadly
pallor of her face, the burning brightness of her eyes, what
did it mean—was she ill? He approached—the spell of those
fevered eyes drawing him to her.

“What is it?” he asked.

She caught his arm.

“I want you,” she said, in a breathless sort of way. “Take
me out of this room.”

Wondering, amazed, curious, he drew her hand within his
arm and led her through several rooms to a sort of small,
half-lit boudoir. He was the friend of the house, and he knew
it well. A clouded light, like moonlight, filled this small
room, flowers made the air heavy with perfume. He dropped
a velvet curtain over the doorway, and turned to her.

“Now?” he said. Something uncommon was coming, he
knew not what.

She looked at him; the burning light in her eyes almost
frightened him. Was she in the first stage of a brain fever?

“You are going to leave England?” she asked, abruptly.

“I am.”

“When?”

“In three days.”

“For where?”

“The new world. I am going to seek my fortune in Amer-
ica.”

“You will never return to England—never, never!”

“Never, in all probability.”

“Then what can it matter to you! It will make your fate
no worse, and it will save me. You shall have half my for-
tune—do you hear—forty thousand pounds—if you will
swear to keep the secret, and never to come back, never to
come near me, never let the world know I married you.”

The words burst from her wildly—incoherently.

He looked at her in blank amaze. Was Miss Lisle going mad?

"Oh, you don't understand," she cried. "I am like the woman in that play—I am not mad, though they will drive me so in the end. I tell you they are going to make me marry Lord Montalien, and I hate him! I hate him! I will kill myself first!"

A light began to dawn upon Guy. By some subtle instinct he understood her at once.

"They—meaning Sir Vane Charteris and Mrs. Galbraith, I suppose—are going to make you marry Lord Montalien?"

"Yes. You know 'The Firs'—that desolate, abandoned old manor-house, on the Essex coast? They are going to imprison me there until I consent. They will do with me as was done with my mother, compel me to marry a man I abhor. And there is only one way of escape."

"And that is to marry some one else."

He was entering into the spirit of the thing now. Mad escapades of all sorts had been the delight of his life. What could be better than to finish his career in England by the maddest escapade of all. He understood her as few men would have done, and pitied her intensely in this hour of her desperation.

"Miss Lisle," he said, "will you marry me?"

He had spoken the words for her! She gave a sort of gasp of intense relief.

"I will—if you consent to my conditions."

"What are they?"

"That you accept half my fortune, and in the moment of our marriage leave me forever."

"The first is easy enough—the second—well, not so pleasant. Still, to oblige a lady in distress——"

There was a small Bible, bound in gold and pearl, on the table. She snatched it up and held it open to him.

"Swear," she cried; "swear, by all you hold sacred, never to molest me, never to claim any right as my husband, never, come what may, to betray my secret, to leave me at the church door. Swear!"

He took the book without a second's hesitation, and touched it with his lips.

"I swear!" he said.

She drew a long breath of relief. The cold dew was standing in great drops on her white face. She sank down in a chair and hid her face in her hands, with a dry, choking sob. The young man stood and looked at her with a feeling of intense pity.

"Poor child!" he said, very softly; "it is hard on you. And now—when is it to be?"

"They mean to start for 'The Firs' by the earliest train, on Christmas Eve. Once there, all is lost."

"Then we must be beforehand with them. Gad! what a triumph it will be over Frank!" He laughed as he spoke—ruined, and exiled, Guy Earls-court could still laugh. "Let us see. Will you be married in a church in this city, Miss Lisle, at daydawn, Christmas Eve?"

"Not in a church! such a marriage in a church would seem a mockery—a sacrilege—anywhere else."

"Then, by Jove! I have it! What do you say to a marriage before a registrar? You walk into an office, very much like any other office, and you see an official, very much like any other official, and a few words are said, a little signing and countersigning, and the thing is over. A marriage before a registrar between the hours of eight and twelve in the forenoon, with open doors, in the presence of two witnesses, etc., etc. Nothing can be more simple, and you will leave the office as legally married in the eye of the law (what you want, I take it) as though a dean and chapter had done the business. There will have to be a little fibbing about your age; I will arrange that. Will that suit you?"

"Perfectly. My maid will accompany me, and I will go directly home when the ceremony is over, and tell them there that I am out of their power at last. If you will call at the house, a couple of hours later, Sir Vane will pay over to you the sum I have promised."

He smiled slightly.

"I shall call, Miss Lisle. And now as to the hour. We must be very early, in order to be beforehand with them. Say between eight and nine? Can you be ready so early?"

"I could be ready at midnight to save myself from your brother! At eight o'clock I and my maid will steal from the house and meet you wherever you say."

"My cab shall be in waiting at the corner. The coachman will do for the other witness. Is your maid to be trusted?"

"I think so, when—well paid."

"And you will not change your mind—you will not fail?"

He would not have had her fail for worlds now. The romance, the piquancy of the adventure, fired his imagination. Of the future, in that hour, he never thought; just at present it looked a capital practical joke.

"Am I likely to fail?" she cried, bitterly. "Mr. Earls-court," turning to him with sudden passion, "I wonder what you think of me!"

"I understand you!" he answered, respectfully. "Desper-

ate cases require desperate remedies. Against two such men as Lord Montalien and Sir Vane Charteris you stand no chance. Your marriage with me will save you at least from a marriage with him, and you may trust me to keep my oath."

 CHAPTER IX.

ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

Over the fire, in her dingy lodgings, on the night preceding Christmas Eve, a bloodless, attenuated shadow of a miserable woman crouched. It was Alice, but Alice so changed that her own mother, had she by any chance entered, would have failed to recognize her. Alice, with every vestige of beauty, of youth, of health, gone—as utterly miserable a woman as the dull London light fell on.

It was snowing without, and was cold. She had drawn a little shawl around her, and crouched with her hands outstretched to the blaze. The few articles of summer clothing she had brought from home, in September last, were all she had yet.

September last! only four short months! Heaven! what a lifetime! what an eternity of misery it looked to her!

How she had reached home that night, after she left St. James street, she never knew. Some one put her in a cab; and when, after a day and a night of stupid, painless torpor, she awoke to consciousness, she found herself again in her own poor room, and the landlady's face looking half-compassionately, half-impatiently at her.

"It was my luck to have my lodgers always a-falling sick on my hands, and a-dying with their bills unpaid, like that Porter upstairs; and it does make a person hard, I confess," Miss Young afterward owned, with remorse.

And then memory and consciousness slowly came back, and she recollected all. She was not Frank's wife—she was the lost creature they thought her at home, and Frank was going to marry Paulina. No; he should never do that. She scarcely felt anger, or sorrow, or even pain now; beyond a certain point suffering ceases to be suffering, and becomes its own anæsthetic. She had reached that point—she was past hope, past care, past help. She would find out Paulina, tell her her story, save her from a like fate, and—die.

Some such thoughts were in her mind as she crouched shivering over the fire. The wintry twilight was fast filling the room with its creeping darkness, when the door suddenly opened, and, without a word of warning, Lord Montalien stood before her.

She had never thought to see him again in this world. She looked up with a low, strange cry.

"Frank!"

"Yes, Alice, Frank!—Frank came to beg your pardon for the cruel, thoughtless words he spoke the other night. Frank come back to tell you he loves you, and to ask you to forgive him for what he said."

"There is no need. I am not your wife," she answered, in a slow, dull way. "I had rather you had not come. I only want to see Paulina, and die in peace."

"You want to see Paulina? And why?"

"To tell her all—to save her from you, Frank! Poor Polly! She used to be so bright, so happy, you know, always laughing and singing; it would be a pity to break her heart. Mine is broken; but then, it doesn't so much matter about me."

She drew a long, tired sigh, and leaned her head on her hands. Then suddenly she looked up in his face.

"Frank!" she said, in a voice of indescribable pathos, "why did you treat me so? I loved you, and I trusted you, and I thought I was your wife!"

It might have moved a heart of stone; he had no heart, even of stone, to be moved.

"You foolish child," he said, with a slight laugh, "you are my wife—my only wife, as truly as ever you thought it. Do you really believe the angry words I said to you the other night? Silly Alice! I was angry, I own—I did not want you to come to my lodgings, and I spoke to you in my anger, as I had no right to speak. You are my wife, and I myself will take you to Miss Lisle, if you wish it."

She rose up, her breath coming in quick, short gasps.

"Frank! you will! Oh! for Heaven's sake, don't deceive me now! I couldn't bear it!"

"I am not deceiving you—I am telling you the truth. You are my wife, and you shall leave this miserable hovel, and at once. Early to-morrow morning I will come for you, and I will take you first to Paulina, and from her straight down to Montalieu. Your Christmas shall be a happy one yet, Alice."

She took a step forward, staggered into his arms, and lay there, so still, so cold, that he thought her fainting. He shrank, too, from her clasp with a shudder, and placed her hurriedly back in her chair.

"Compose yourself, Alice!" he said, looking away from her. "Can you be ready as early as eight o'clock, or even before it, to-morrow morning?"

"Whenever you come for me, Frank, I can be ready. Oh,

bless God! bless God! and I never thought to see you again, my darling."

Morning dawned—the morning of Christmas Eve. Thousands of happy people awoke in the great city to wish each other "Merry Christmas," but I doubt if among them there was one happier than this poor creature, in her bleak lodging, waiting for the coming of her idol. She paid the landlady, dressed herself in the sickly dawn, and stood by the window watching. It was snowing fast—the wind blew cold and shrill, and her garments were wretchedly thin. The landlady pityingly made some such remark to her. But Alice only laughed.

"I shall feel no cold, Mrs. Young; and I shall soon be beyond feeling cold, or ill, or lonely, any more."

She had uttered a prophecy—poor Alice. As the hopeful words passed her lips a one-horse vehicle drove up to the door, and she saw Frank, muffled beyond any recognition but her own, sitting therein.

She gave a little cry of delight.

"Good-by, Mrs. Young," she said; "and thank you for your kindness when I was ill."

She ran downstairs and out of the house. The man leaned forward and helped her up beside him. And then the whirling wilderness of snow shut them from Mrs. Young's sight.

He did not speak one word. The wind and the snow were driving in their faces, rendering speech impossible. The morning light was still dull and pale—the city clocks were only tolling eight as they quitted the Strand. He drove across one of the bridges, and out to some dismal waste ground in the neighborhood of Battersea, a remote and forgotten tract, as wild, and lonely, and forsaken as an African desert. And here for the first time he spoke:

"There is something the matter with the horse," he said; "you must get out."

He sprang out himself and gave her his hand to descend. They were close upon some deserted brickfields, and he made a motion for her to follow him.

"Come out of the storm," he said; there is a place of shelter near."

He seemed strangely familiar with the desolate locality. He led her to a sort of dry-ravine, so hidden away among rubbish and the debris of the forsaken brickyards as to render entering almost an impossibility. She shrank away in almost nameless fear.

"Frank!" she cried, in a frightened voice. "I can't go into this hideous place. Oh, my God, Frank! what are you going to do?"

"To take your life!—you fool—you babbler!" he answered, in a horrible voice, between his clenched teeth. And before she could utter one word, one cry, there came a flash, a report, and Alice fell like a stone at his feet.

There was a pause of a second. Had death been instantaneous? No; by a mighty effort she half raised herself, and clasped her arms around his knees.

"Frank!" she whispered: "Frank!" and the old deathlike devotion looked out of her glazing eyes. "Frank—you have killed me—and I loved you so—I loved—you—so! Oh, God, have mercy on me—and forgive—"

She fell down with the sentence unfinished—dead.

He knew she was dead. He dragged the body away into the darkest depth of the cavern, piled up the rubbish and heaps of waste bricks again. Thousands of people might pass that dreary tract and never notice this frightful place.

And then he was out again in the light of day, with the white snow whirling around him, and his horse standing with bowed head exactly as he had left him.

"Now for my handsome, high-spirited Paulina!" he thought, as he leaped in and drove away. "All things succeed with me, and so shall this! In my vocabulary there's no such word as fail!"

CHAPTER X.

A MAD MARRIAGE.

Paulina did not find it difficult to "buy over" her maid to secrecy, and on the morning of Christmas Eve they set out together for the appointed place of meeting.

Guy was waiting, pacing up and down by a four-wheeled coach.

"Punctual!" he said. "It is eight precisely, Miss Lisle; I hope you are well wrapped; the morning is bitter. Take my arm—the walking is dangerous."

She declined with a gesture—clinging to Jane.

"Go on, Mr. Earls court; we will follow you."

He led the way to the cab and held the door open for them to enter. Then he closed it and sprang up beside the driver, solacing himself with a cigar.

They stopped abruptly at last, the cab door opened, and Guy stood ready to help them out.

"This is the place," he said, briefly; "allow me."

He half lifted Paulina down, drew her hand within his arm, and led her up a flight of dark stairs, and into a dark

and grimy office, where a fire burned in a round stove and a dirty little boy was sweeping.

"Where is Mr. Markham?" Guy asked the boy.

The door opened on the instant, and a lively little red-faced man came in.

"Kept you waiting, sir? No?" as Guy answered impatiently; "well, I am lucky for this once! Now, then, if the lady will stand up, and the witnesses approach, we'll do your little job for you in a twinkling."

Her heart was throbbing with almost sickening rapidity now—throbbing so that she turned sick and faint once more. She looked about her for a second with a wild instinct of flight, but it was too late. Guy had led her forward—how firm, how resolute his clasp seemed!—and she was standing before the legal official, answering, as she was told to answer, and hearing Guy's clear, deep tones as in a dreamy swoon. She heard, still faintly and far off, it seemed, the solemn words, "I pronounce you man and wife," and then she was signing her name in a big book, and feeling rather than seeing the little red-faced man staring at her curiously, and knew that she was the wife of Guy Earls court!

The registrar placed a slip of paper in her hand.

"Your marriage certificate, madam," he said, with a bow; "permit me to offer my congratulations, Mrs. Earls court."

The clocks of the district were striking nine as they left the office and re-entered the cab; and once again Guy mounted to his seat with the driver, to face the December blasts, and smoke a second consoling cigar. As before, Paulina sat in dead silence during the homeward drive.

Thirty minutes' rapid driving brought them to Berkeley Square. In front of Sir Vane Charteris' mansion the cab stopped, and Mr. Earls court assisted them to alight. Then Paulina directly addressed him for the first time.

"I shall tell Sir Vane Charteris, the moment I enter, what has taken place," she hurriedly said; "and if you will call, within an hour or so, the other business of paying over the forty thousand pounds will be transacted."

"I will call," Guy answered, briefly, "if I may see you for a moment to say farewell."

She bent her head in token of assent, and flitted up the steps. From the library window Sir Vane Charteris had watched the whole extraordinary proceeding, utterly astounded. What did it mean? Had this reckless girl outwitted them after all? He came forth into the hall. She flung back her veil for the first time, and met his angry, suspicious gaze with flashing, fearless eyes. The sight of him

re
fi
me
fro
—
sla
me
F
ever
had
"
foll
prou
her
Earl
"I
An
as tw
then-
and
power
"I
clear.
marry
to mar
heard
alive
man I
escape
the eve
power.
"On
worth
"No
howeve
leave n
think, s
—do yo
had me
betray
In an h
the hal
days he
She t
tained b

restored all her audacity, all her desperate courage and defiance. Weakness and faintness were wholly gone now.

"Miss Lisle," he demanded, sternly; "what does this mean?"

"Sir Vane Charteris," she retorted, meeting his swarthy frown without flinching, "it means that you are outwitted—vanquished—that you are no longer my tyrant, nor I your slave. It means that at last I am out of your power—it means that I am free!"

His dark face turned yellow with rage. As plainly as he ever understood it after, he understood on the instant what had taken place. She had married Guy Earls court.

"Go into the library," he said, briefly, and she went. He followed her, and closed the door. She stood before him, proudly erect, her eyes alight, her haughty head thrown back, her resolute face white as death. "You have married Guy Earls court?"

"I have married Guy Earls court!"

And then, for fully five minutes, they stood face to face—as two combatants in a duel to the death. It was all over then—rage as he might—storm as he would—it was done, and not to be undone. She was married, and out of his power—her fortune her own—he could do nothing—nothing!

"I am married," Paulina said, her voice ringing hard and clear. "To escape one brother I have asked the other to marry me. You hear that, Sir Vane Charteris—asked him to marry me—driven to it by you and Lord Montalien. I overheard your plot to carry me off to 'The Firs,' and bury me alive there, until I should be forced into a marriage with a man I hate. Sir Vane Charteris, if there had been no other escape, I would have escaped by death. Guy Earls court, on the eve of his exile, has married me, and freed me from your power."

"On the eve of his exile, Paulina! The husband of a lady worth eighty thousand pounds need hardly think of exile."

"No; in his place you certainly would not. Mr. Earls court, however, happens to possess the manliness and generosity to leave me free in the hour that makes me his wife. Do you think, Sir Vane, I am going to let the world know my secret?—do you think I would have married Mr. Earls court if he had meant to remain in England? He has sworn never to betray the secret of our marriage, and he will keep his oath. In an hour he will be here, and you are to make over to him the half of my fortune—forty thousand pounds. In two days he leaves England, and—forever."

She turned to quit the room. The bewildered baronet detained her.

"For Heaven's sake, Paulina, wait! I don't understand—I can't understand. Do you mean to say this marriage is no marriage? That Guy Earls court leaves you free and forever? That he goes from England never to return, while you remain here?"

"Precisely! You can't comprehend such generosity as that, can you? You would act very differently under the circumstances, and so would his immaculate brother, Lord Montalien. But there are true men. This marriage shall never be made public if you keep the secret—my maid is sworn to secrecy, and I shall still be Miss Lisle and your ward in the eyes of the world. If, however, you prefer it otherwise—then I shall take care to show you as you are to society—a guardian so base, so tyrannical, that he drove his ward to the maddest step ever woman took. Now choose!"

She stood before him in her beauty and her pride, more defiantly bright than he had ever seen her. He knew her well enough to know she would, to the letter, keep her word. He came forward suddenly, and took her hand.

"I will keep your secret, Paulina," he said; "and I beg you to forgive me if I have been harsh. I have been driven to it—I have indeed—I am in Lord Montalien's power, and he forced me to do this. I will keep your secret—from him, from my sister—from the world. Let things go on as though this strange marriage had never taken place; you are free to do in all things as you will—I, in the eyes of society, your guardian still. I am sorry for the past; I can say no more. Paulina, will you try to forgive me?"

"I will try," she answered, bitterly, and gathering her mantle about her, quitted the room.

She went up to her own, threw off her wraps, fell on her knees by the bedside, and buried her face in the satin coverlet. She shed no tears, though her heart was full; she only lay there—sick, tired, numbed, as though she never cared to rise again.

No one disturbed her; the minutes went by, the morning with its life and bustle wore on. At half-past eleven Jane tapped at the door.

"If you please, Miss Paulina, Sir Vane sends his compliments, and would you step down to the library. Mr. Earls court is there."

She rose up slowly, painfully, and went down. It was due to him she should go, but if he had only spared her this.

Sir Vane admitted her, and locked the door the instant she entered. Another figure, taller, slighter, stood leaning against the mantel staring moodily into the fire. At him Paulina did not dare to look.

"You kindly fortun do it." She "Th If I h day m at pres refuse lower genero decline probab comes turn w bond." She "You "If I certain Never, cret. again, half br Paulina speed' He h beauty her, ha his gen heart w she lov She agony life ha "good for a smiling the roo They she los would a thous knew she cou them.

"You told me, my dear," the baronet said, in his most kindly voice, "that Mr. Earlscount was to accept half your fortune. There must be some mistake—he utterly refuses to do it."

She turned to him with startled eyes. Guy smiled.

"That part of the compact was not in the bond at least. If I have served you I am content. I can only hope that the day may never come when you will regret more than you do at present this morning's work. For the money, I distinctly refuse it. I have fallen very low; but I find there is still a lower depth than that to which I have sunk. To accept your generous offer would be a degradation you must permit me to decline. I leave England in two days forever, in all human probability; but if, at the other side of the world, the day comes when my wrecked fortunes are retrieved, and I can return with honor, I will return. That, too, was not in the bond."

She looked at him—trembling—white to the lips.

"You will return," she slowly repeated.

"If I can, with credit to myself—with my debts paid; most certainly. But you need have no fear; I will keep my oath. Never, come what may in the future, shall I betray your secret. Whether oceans divide us, or we stand side by side again, will make no difference. If I have saved you from my half brother, I am satisfied—I ask no more. And now, Paulina, for the sake of old times, say 'farewell, and good speed' before I go."

He held out his hand, the smile that lit it into such rare beauty bright on his face and in his eyes. He stood before her, handsomer, nobler than any man she had ever beheld, in his generous renunciation—his great self-sacrifice; and her heart went out to him—and in that moment she knew that she loved the man she had married.

She gave him her hand—her proud head drooping in an agony of shame, of remorse, of pity, of tenderness. If her life had depended on it, she could not have spoken even the "good speed" he asked. Her fingers, icy-cold, were clasped for a second in his warm, firm grasp—one half-sad, half-smiling look from the brown eyes, and then she had fled from the room.

They had parted—perhaps forever—and in the hour that she lost him, she knew that she loved him with a love that would last a life. She was his wife, but she would have died a thousand deaths rather than say, "Guy, don't go!" and she knew how utterly unavailing the words would have been, if she could have crushed down her woman's pride and spoken them. **It was as fixed as fate that he should go. And so**

she had taken her leap in the dark—taken it blindly, desperately—to save herself from a worse fate. And the hour of her bridehood was the hour of her widowhood—in the fullest sense of the words, she was wedded, yet no wife!

Two days after the *Oneida* steamed down the Solent from Southampton, bearing away to his long exile Guy Earls court.

it was
Up an
restlessly
eyes fixed
of the of
the time
ley, of t
Colonel
all the b
had dar
beard an
sky with
proportio
younger
his brow
plowed a
Up an
that tho
"Who
If anyth
picture?
walk ovc
his prop
He ste
Southern
stirred t
for any
with a le
"Go to
quite ab
The se
The c
table. I
from the
manship
and look

ly, des-
hour of
e fullest

nt from
Earls court.

PART FOUR

CHAPTER I.

AFTER SIX YEARS

It was a hot night in Virginia.

Up and down a long, bare-looking room, an officer paced restlessly, his hands crossed behind him, his brow bent, his eyes fixed on the floor. The room was the private apartment of the officer commanding the cavalry division stationed for the time at this outpost, and the officer was Colonel Hawksley, of the —th. He was a very tall, very fair man, this Colonel Hawksley, with a face so thoroughly Saxon that not all the bronze of foreign suns could hide his nationality. He had dark, close-cropped, brown hair, a magnificent tawny beard and mustache, and eyes blue and bright as the Virginia sky without. He was a man of six-and-forty; magnificently proportioned—a model for an athletic Apollo—looking younger than his years, despite the silver threads streaking his brown hair, and the deep lines that care or thought had plowed along his broad brow.

Up and down, up and down, Colonel Hawksley paced, with that thoughtful frown, for upward of an hour.

"Who is he?" he muttered, half-aloud; "what is he to her? If anything, why is he here?—if nothing, how came he by her picture? The night is fine; he is sufficiently recovered to walk over. I have half a mind to send for him, restore him his property, and ask——"

He stopped to glance out at the night. The great, bright Southern stars blazed in a cloudless sky, not a breath of air stirred the hot stillness—it was certainly quite fine enough for any one to venture out. The colonel rang a handbell, with a look of decision. An orderly appeared.

"Go to the hospital, and request Lieutenant Earls court, if quite able, to wait upon me here."

The soldier touched his cap and withdrew.

The colonel glanced at a little package lying upon the table. It was a gold repeater, set with jewels, and hanging from the slender gold chain a locket of rare beauty and workmanship. The officer took up this locket, touched the spring, and looked long and earnestly at the face within. A beauti-

ful and noble face, and a graceful, girlish throat—the photograph of Paulina Lisle.

“What is he to her?—how comes he to wear her portrait? Does he know?—but, of course, he doesn’t! It is strange—strange.”

It was somewhat. The circumstances were these: A battle had taken place five weeks before; and during the heat of the engagement, Colonel Hawksley’s attention had been attracted by a young officer of his own troop, whose cool courage and superb fighting rendered him conspicuous, even in that hour. The battle had raged from early morning until dark, and all day long, where the fire was hottest, and the blows fell thickest, the dark face and tall form of Lieutenant Guy Earls-court had been foremost. And at last, as victory turned in their favor, half-a-dozen tremulous blows aimed at him at once had hurled him from his saddle. “Killed,” the colonel thought, with a passing pang of regret, beyond a doubt.

It looked like it when they carried his senseless form into the hospital, and among the list of “killed” returned after the fray was the name of “Lieutenant Guy Earls-court.” But he had not died. Covered with wounds from head to foot, there was not, as it turned out, one of them mortal—not even very dangerous.

In five weeks Lieutenant Earls-court was able to quit his bed, and walk about, for a few moments at a time, in the hospital yard.

On the day succeeding the battle, while he still lay senseless, his colonel had visited the hospital expressly to make inquiries after him. The young man had fought so daringly, his coolness had been so remarkable, and something in his general air and manner marked him different from his comrades. He lay terribly like death now, but the rare beauty of his face, that had made him the pet of boudoirs in another land, that had made scores of high-born beauties smile upon him, was unmarred still. Whiter, colder than marble, he lay—the breath scarce stirring his bloodless lips.

“Poor lad!” Colonel Hawksley said, looking down upon him with real regret; “he fought like a lion yesterday. Who is he, and where does he belong?”

No one knew. Except his name, and that he had entered the ranks as a private, there was simply nothing whatever known of his story.

“Look here, colonel,” the nurse said; “this belongs to him, and should be taken care of until we see if the poor fellow recovers. His name is on it—engraved here on the case.”

She handed him the gold watch and chain and locket.

Either intentionally or by accident, she touched the spring in

handling
ley, with
amaze up

It was
wore one
quisite f
in this—

This s
Paulina.

He exa
the crest
“Semper

Colone
Who was
army as
ture and.

“He lo
and jet-bl
recovery,

The co
recovery
dozen wor

no longer,
to summo
Fifteen

came to t
“Come-
time into

court sto
“You s
“I did,

stand. I
ing into t
“None

are pretty
week.”

The col
liked the
“Hardly

his arm i
bloodless,
“I have

that we ca
want mos
other.”

The wo
taken a se

handling it, and the locket flew open. And Colonel Hawksley, with a startled exclamation, caught it up, and looked in amaze upon his daughter's fair, proud face.

It was a vignette of Paulina Lisle beyond a doubt. He wore one near his own heart, a later picture, in which the exquisite face looked older, graver, less brightly smiling than in this—but the same.

This stranger was an Englishman, then, and had known Paulina.

He examined the watch closely. Beside his name, above the crest of a noble house—a mailed hand, and the motto, "*Semper Fidelis*."

Colonel Hawksley's interest deepened to intense curiosity. Who was this young man who had entered the ranks of their army as a common soldier, and who wore his daughter's picture and the crest of an English nobleman?

"He looks like an Englishman, in spite of his olive skin and jet-black hair and mustache. Heaven send him a speedy recovery, or I shall perish miserably by curiosity."

The colonel's prayer was heard—Lieutenant Earls-court's recovery was astonishing in its rapidity, considering his dozen wounds. And on this night suspense was to be borne no longer, and Colonel Hawksley had dispatched the orderly to summon the invalid hero to his presence.

Fifteen minutes wore away. Then the orderly's knock came to the door.

"Come in," the colonel cried, flinging himself for the first time into a chair; and the door opened, and Lieutenant Earls-court stood before him, with a military salute.

"You sent for me, colonel?"

"I did, sir. Come in and take a seat; you are unfit to stand. I trust there has been no imprudence in your venturing into the night air?"

"None whatever, colonel, I am happy to say. My scratches are pretty well healed—I shall be fit for service again in a week."

The colonel smiled—he liked the bold, soldierly spirit—he liked the look and manner of the man altogether.

"Hardly, I fear," he said, and indeed the lieutenant, with his arm in a sling, and his dark face still terribly thin and bloodless, did hardly look like it.

"I have been very anxious for your recovery, lieutenant—that we can't spare so brave a fellow, for one reason; that I want most anxiously to ask you a few questions, for another."

The wounded lieutenant listened in grave silence. He had taken a seat at the desire of his officer, and the lamplight fell

full upon his handsome, pallid face, while that of the elder man was in the shadow. What does it matter now whether they wore the blue or the gray? They were both Englishmen, and fought for the cause with which their sympathies lay.

"I have a portion of your property in my possession," continued Colonel Hawksley, "given in charge to me on the day after the battle. Permit me to return it to you, and to own that, by the merest chance, I saw and recognized the face you wear in that locket."

Guy Earls court took his property. To be very much surprised at anything would have been in direct opposition to all the codes of his life. His face betrayed none whatever now.

"Recognized it, did you? I shouldn't have thought that. A very handsome face, colonel—is it not?"

Colonel Hawksley produced from an inner pocket a photograph, and handed it to him.

"I received this from England some three months ago. The face you wear is younger, but the same."

Guy Earls court looked long and earnestly at this second picture—of what he felt his calm face showing no sign whatever. It was Paulina, six years older than when he had seen her last, more beautiful in her stately womanhood even than the bright, girlish face and form he remembered so well.

He handed it back with a bow and smile.

"Years mar some of us; they but add to Paulina Lisle's crown of beauty. It's six years since I saw her, and she has changed; but I should recognize that face anywhere. It is not the kind of face one sees every day."

His colonel watched him as he spoke—keenly—closely—but his serene countenance kept his secrets, if he had them, well.

"Mr. Earls court," he said, abruptly, "I am going to ask you seemingly a very impertinent question, which, of course, you are at liberty to answer or not, as you choose. What is Paulina Lisle to you?"

Guy smiled—perfectly unembarrassed.

"An acquaintance, colonel, whom I met in all about half-a-dozen times in my life, who doesn't in the least know that I have the audacity to wear her picture. I was guilty of petty larceny—abstracted it from a friend's album on the eve of my departure from England. I admired Miss Lisle very much, as all men must who have the happiness of knowing her, and I fancied I could not bring with me to my exile a fairer memento of the life I left. That is the history of her picture in my locket."

With
given
quietly
"And
might
"A d
Lisle, w
gether
some br
"Abo
house?"
"A w
"You
"Und
"May
country
"Six y
"I am
perhaps;
feel a si
—your n
I wonde
Montalie
His lie
interest,
his fathe
Hawksley
recogniti
"You
leaning
like him,
"Well,
"Your
"Yes,
name is
our fath
squander
land six
story. I
as poor a
Colone
of wonde
"And I
"Well,
off the g
dozen yea
off my in

With the infinite calm which nature and habit both had given him, he replaced the watch in his belt and waited quietly for his companion to speak.

"And this is all?" Colonel Hawksley said. "I fancied you might have been——"

"A discarded lover? No, colonel, I never was that. Miss Lisle, with her great beauty, and her great fortune, was altogether above my humble reach. One might as soon love some bright particular star, etc."

"Above your reach, and you wear the crest of a noble house?"

"A whim, perhaps, like wearing Miss Lisle's portrait."

"You are an Englishman, at least."

"Undoubtedly, colonel."

"May I ask how many years since you first came to this country?"

"Six years, precisely, next January."

"I am afraid my questions are intrusive—impertinent, perhaps; but I am an Englishman myself, and, somehow, I feel a singular interest in you. You remind me—your voice—your manner—of one whom I knew twenty-two years ago. I wonder if you knew him—he was a man of rank—Lord Montalien."

His lieutenant looked at the speaker, suddenly, with a new interest, a new intelligence in his glance. At the mention of his father's name all became clear. Why, the very name of Hawksley might have told him, taken in connection with the recognition of Paulina's picture, this man was her father!

"You knew Lord Montalien?" Colonel Hawksley said, leaning forward. "Your face shows it, at least. You are like him, yet unlike. Was he anything to you?"

"Well, yes; he was my father."

"Your father?"

"Yes, colonel. You were not aware, perhaps, our family name is Earlseourt? My elder brother took the title upon our father's death, and I—well, I may as well own it—I squandered my patrimony and was obliged to fly from England six years ago, over head and ears in debt. That is my story. I came to this country to retrieve my fallen fortunes, as poor a man as ever landed at the New York docks."

Colonel Hawksley listened, his eyes lit up, his face full of wonder and eager interest.

"And have you retrieved them?"

"Well, partly. I have managed in those six years to pay off the greater half of my debts. I fancy it will be half a dozen years more, however, before I have sufficiently cleared off my incumbrances to return."

"You mean to return?"

"Decidedly—as soon as I can."

"May I ask in what way you have succeeded in doing even so much?"

Guy laughed.

"By quill-driving, colonel. I was always a Bohemian—the life suited me, and I turned journalist, magazine writer, book-maker—all that there is of the most literary. I believe I have contributed to half the periodicals of America and London. You may, by chance, have lit on the *nom de plume* of——"

He mentioned a name famous then, far more famous now, in the annals of fictional literature.

"What!" Hawksley exclaimed; "are you the author of 'Paul Rutherford's Wife?'"

"I am."

"And of 'Gold and Glitter?'"

"Yes."

"Why, you should have realized a fortune from the sale of those two works alone. Their popularity over here has been something immense."

"They have paid tolerably well—if they had not I should not have been able, as I have told you, to pay off the larger portion of my debts. My extravagances in the past make my very hair rise now. I'm a reformed character, colonel; there was great room for improvement, too, I assure you. I pursued my scribbling here in camp; it passes one's leisure hours, and as far as remuneration goes, I find the pen decidedly 'mightier than the sword.'"

"Mr. Earlseourt," the colonel said, "you are one of the cleverest novelists of the day." Mr. Earlseourt bowed with gravity. "You are destined to become a famous man, and I am proud to have made your acquaintance. It was as your father's ward, then, you first met my—Miss Lisle?"

"Your daughter, colonel—the confidence may as well be mutual. Of course, I know you are Robert Lisle."

"Ah, yes; I suppose my history is familiar to you from your father."

"And from others. Were you not rather surprised, colonel, when you discovered upon whom my father pitched as his successor in your daughter's guardianship? Now I should imagine Sir Vane Charteris would be the last man alive you would wish to place in power over Paulina."

A dark flush crept up over the pale bronze of the colonel's face.

"And why?" he asked.

"Shall I really answer that question, colonel? You see I

have had time to think since I came out here, and I have managed to connect past events pretty clearly. I remember my father telling your story at the dinner table, and Lady Charteris—poor Lady Charteris—falling in a dead faint at the mention of your name. I look back, and remember hearing she was forced to marry Sir Vane. I know they were totally estranged from each other, that the shadow of a life-long sorrow lay upon her, and I knew she was your wife and Paulina's mother."

Colonel Hawksley bowed his face on his hand. Even in the shadow Guy could see how greatly he was moved.

"Why do you remain here?" he asked. "Why have you not long ago gone back and rescued her from a fate worse than death. You were her husband, not he; you had the right. Why not have returned and claimed her long ago?"

"Heaven knows! There have been times, of late years, when I have thought myself the veriest coward and idiot to be hunted down as I was, to desert her to her tyrants. But I lay under a criminal charge which I could not disprove—and she was his wife, and I was made to believe loved him. And there would have followed exposure, and——"

"Better exposure than such misery as she has been made to suffer. Colonel Hawksley, do you know she is the inmate of a madhouse now?"

"Yes," the word dropped slowly, heavily from his pale lips, "I know."

"Your daughter told you. I wonder you did not return to England when you first learned that Sir Vane Charteris had been appointed her guardian."

"I did not know it for many months after. She wrote me from France—telling me of the change, and that she was satisfied—that I was in no way to trouble myself about her. Then the war began, and I came here, and I shall remain until the end. Why should I return now? England holds nothing but bitter memories for me."

"Have you no wish to see your daughter?"

"Every wish. When she is some good man's wife I shall ask her to come across the ocean to visit me."

"Have you no wish to clear the blot off your good name—to disprove the false charge brought against you by Geoffrey Lyndith?"

"It would be impossible after all these years."

"I don't see that." Guy said, coolly; "more difficult things are done every day. London detectives are clever, and you are rich enough to pay them well for their work. Geoffrey Lyndith is dead—you are free to return if you will—if for no other's sake, for that of your wife."

Colonel Hawksley rose up, passionately.

"Do you think I could bear to see her," he said, "like that? Why, good Heavens, the thought of her as she is now nearly drives me wild."

"Insane, you mean. Well, now, I am not so sure of that either. Every one is not insane who is shut up in a mad-house."

"Young man, what do you mean?"

"Simply this—that whatever Lady Charteris may be now, she was no more insane than you or I when placed there first."

"Great Heaven!"

"Sir Vane Charteris is a man capable of a very villainous deed—I am quite sure of that; and up to a few weeks before the fact of her madness was announced no one ever thought of doubting her ladyship's perfect sanity. They were estranged for years and years before the birth of his only daughter, I believe, but perfectly civil to one another. Lady Charteris fainted, as I have told you, when my father related your story at the dinner table, after his appointment as Paulina's guardian. That night, it transpired, she fled from the Priory to the house in Speckhaven in which Duke Mason lived, and Sir Vane followed and brought her back. It was a stormy night, I recollect, and whether from the wetting she received, or her excitement, she was taken very ill. As soon as she was able to be removed, Sir Vane took her up to town to place her under the charge of the ablest physician. The next news we heard was that she had gone insane, and was placed in a private asylum. No one was permitted to visit her, not her own daughter Maud, but in spite of the baronet's care, the form of her lunacy transpired. She refused to acknowledge Sir Van Charteris as her husband—said her rightful husband was alive and in a foreign land. Now, think, whether or no this statement was the utterance of insanity."

"Great Heaven! my poor, heartbroken Olivia. If I thought—if I thought this were true——"

"You would return. It is true! Does Lady Charteris still live?"

"She does. Paulina mentioned her in her last letter. She had asked Sir Vane to allow her to visit her—little dreaming she is her own mother."

"And he refused, of course; and will go on refusing to the end of the chapter. Poor lady! she needs some friend to go to her deliverance, in the power of such a man as Vane Charteris."

The colonel paused abruptly in his walk, came over, and laid his hand heavily on the younger man's shoulder.

"Earlscourt," he said, "I will go back to England as speedily as may be, and you shall accompany me, and aid me in the task of recovering and reclaiming my wife. Heaven grant we may not be too late."

"Amen! But it's out of the question that I should return. Those little floating bills, you know—and the Jews do come down on a fellow like the wolves to the fold. I shall have to write at least two more highly popular novels before I can face the Israelites of London."

"Come with me," Hawksley said, earnestly; "I ask it as a favor. For your debts you will accept a loan from me until those two new novels are written. You will not object—I take it as a personal favor your coming. England will be like a strange land to me after a score and more years. You will come?"

He held out his hand—Guy placed his therein.

"I will go, colonel—thanks all the same for your kindness. And now, with your permission, I'll retire—I don't feel quite as strong as Samson, and——"

He reeled slightly as he spoke—faint and giddy from weakness and recent loss of blood. The colonel hastily poured out a glass of wine and held it to his lips.

"I should not have brought you out—you will be the worse for this. My servant shall accompany you to your quarters—you are not fit to walk over that distance alone. Good-night."

"Good-night, colonel."

The orderly, with the wounded lieutenant, crossed the moonlit sward on their way to the temporary hospital. And long after Guy Earlscourt lay asleep, with his handsome head pillowed on his arm, a smile on his lips, dreaming of England and Paulina, Colonel Hawksley paced to and fro in his apartment, thinking bitterly of his wasted life and of the fate that had held him and the wife he loved apart.

"My darling!" he said, "my darling! and you always loved me—always were faithful—I know it now. And I—ah, Heaven! why did I not brave all that those plotters could do, and claim you. But the day of retribution is at hand, and let those who stand between us take care!"

CHAPTER II.

A BELLE OF FIVE SEASONS.

"Paulina!"

There was no reply. The lady addressed sat absorbed over
 a book

"Paulina," rather louder, "it is almost five, and quite time to drive. Do you hear?"

"Well, yes, I hear, Maud," and Paulina Lisle lifted a pair of serene, sapphire-hued eyes from her book; "but I really don't think I shall go. It is very pleasant here by the fire this chilly May afternoon, and my book interests me, which is more than I can say for the ride, or the ring."

"What!" cried Maud Charteris, "not even when this is the first day of Lord Heatherland's return from Scotland; and you have not seen him for a fortnight. You are sure to meet him in the Park, and all I've got to say is, that I hope, when I'm engaged, I'll be a little more anxious to see my *fiancée* than that. But then, of course, it is an understood thing that the beautiful Miss Lisle, the belle of London, has no heart. I don't suppose it is at all a necessary adjunct to a future duchess."

There was just the slightest tinge of envy in the tone of Miss Maud Charteris, as she said these last words. She would never be a duchess, and she knew it. She was a small, sallow-complexioned girl of one-and-twenty now, very pale and sickly, with eyes like sloes, and dead, black hair, and a look of Sir Vane Charteris all over her wan, fretted face.

The eyes of Paulina Lisle fell suddenly and rested on the fire with something like a smothered sigh.

"No heart, Maud!" she repeated, slowly; "I sometimes think it would be better for half of us if that impossibility could occur, and we were born without heart, without memory, without conscience. Our past enormities would not then rise up to embitter our whole future lives."

Miss Charteris pulled out her watch impatiently.

"I didn't come here to talk metaphysics, Miss Lisle. Aunt Eleanor sent me to see if you were ready to drive." She was in elegant carriage costume herself as she spoke. "You don't really mean to say, Paulina, that a new book, no matter how interesting, is a stronger attraction to the reigning beauty of the season than a drive along the Lady's Mile, at the fashionable hour, on a lovely May day? Don't tell me so, for I couldn't believe it."

"It is perfectly true, nevertheless. My book is intensely interesting, and the daily drive at the same hour, in the same place, seeing the same faces, acknowledging the same bows, becomes after five seasons—well, to speak mildly, rather monotonous."

"What's your book, Paulina?"

"'Under the Southern Cross,' by the author of 'Paul Rutherford's Wife' and 'Gold and Glitter,' the two best novels of the day, you remember. Even you, Maud, who

never read anything except the *Court Circular* and the *Morning Post*, read them."

"I remember. They were books of English society, and I read them because they were so true to nature, to reality. Half the books of that class are the most wretched caricatures. This man, evidently, knows what he is writing about. They were charming stories. Do you know, Paulina, the heroine of the first was very like you!"

"Like me! Is that a compliment to me or Margaret Rutherford, I wonder?"

"To you. Paul Rutherford's wife was a bewitching creature, and I am perfectly sure she was drawn from real life—from you, Miss Lisle."

"Let me see," said Paulina, with a smile; "as far as I can remember, she was an impulsive, headstrong, rebellious, passionate woman, with good impulses, I grant, but spoiling everything by her reckless impetuosity. Yes, I suppose, that was like me—in the past, Maud." A flush rose for a moment over the perfect pallor of her face. "I shudder—I sicken when I think of my desperate deeds of the past. Good Heaven! what a perfectly wild, perfectly reckless little outlaw I was! There, Maud, don't look so disgusted, dear child. I will run away and dress and prose no more."

Miss Charteris walked away to the door with a peculiarly sarcastic smile on her pale, thin lips.

"Does she ever talk to the Most Noble the Marquis of Heatherland like this, I wonder?" she said. "Does she confess to him those heinous crimes and secrets of the past?"

"Lord Heatherland is a thousand times too good for such a woman as I am—no one knows that better than I, Maud."

"But you don't care a fig for him all the same, Paulina; and, in spite of your fine romance and second-hand sentimentality, you are marrying him for his rank and his coronet, just as I or any of us in Vanity Fair would do. Paulina Lisle, you're a—it's not a very elegant word, but exceedingly expressive—you're a humbug!"

With which Maud Charteris quitted the room, and Paulina was alone.

The half-sisters (still ignorant they were such) were considerably attached to each other.

Maud, with envy and bitterness in her heart for the other's great beauty, had yet a sort of liking and admiration that even her own sex yielded Paulina.

Look at her, sitting there in a low chair before the fire, and see what Paulina Lisle has become at four-and-twenty! She is dressed in her morning *negligee* of silver-gray, a band of linen at her throat and wrists, and the bronze brown hair, rip-

pling low on the perfect forehead, gathered in a shining coil at the back of the stately, small head. She is tall, she is grandly proportioned, every movement is instinct with grace and majesty, the throat, the arms, are marble fair—she is one of those exceptional women which all men think beautiful.

A beautiful and graceful lady, she sits here, with softly-brooding eyes and lips a little parted, even in repose, thinking very kindly, if not lovingly, of the man whom in three weeks she is to marry—the Marquis of Heatherland, only son of the Duke of Clanronald. She would fain sit and wait for his coming here, but Mrs. Galbraith has issued her decree, and with the gentle temper that has grown habitual to her of late years, the sacrifice of self she has learned to make, she rises with a low sigh, and goes forth into that brilliant May-time world, of which she is one of the acknowledged queens.

It has taken three volumes to record half a dozen months of her life—the past half a dozen years may be rendered in as many pages.

That eventful Christmas, six years ago, to the great surprise of Mrs. Galbraith, was neither spent at "The Firs" nor at Montalien Priory, nor did Paulina become the wife of Lord Montalien. Miss Lisle, by her own desire, had been taken to France instead, and spent the winter with one of her late school friends.

Lord Montalien and her guardian had quarreled, not loudly nor violently, but the quarrel was none the less deep and deadly.

"You can do your worst, my lord," Sir Vane had said, not without dignity. "I have changed my mind—my ward shall not be forced to marry you."

And Lord Montalien had gone away baffled, black with suppressed fury and rage.

"If the day ever comes, Sir Vane Charteris," he had said, "when I can repay you, trust me not to forget this debt."

And then he had gone abroad, and had not once returned to England since.

Paulina's secret was kept. Neither Mrs. Galbraith nor Lord Montalien dreamed of it.

Her Grace the Duchess of Clanronald, a handsome, haughty dowager of seventy-five, had taken a great fancy to the girl's fair face, and presented her; and the *Morning Post* recorded Miss Lisle's diamonds and general splendor of appearance, together with her most remarkable beauty. And then followed her first brilliant London season; and those few who had known her the preceding year saw and wondered a little at the growing change in her.

At the close of the fourth London season, the Duchess of

Clanronald carried Miss Lisle away to her distant Highland castle, to spend the autumn and winter. She liked Paulina, with a liking that grew stronger with each year. At Clanronald Castle Miss Lisle encountered, that autumn, her grace's only son, the Marquis of Heatherland. He had been absent in the East for the past seven years, and had come home on a flying visit to his mother before starting for Equinoctial Africa. He came home, a grave, weather-beaten man of seven-and-forty, with every intention of leaving again in a week, and he met Paulina Lisle, and his fate was fixed. He fell in love with her, as scores of other men had done before him, and Equinoctial Africa and gorilla hunting were forgotten. In three days his infatuation was patent to the whole house.

Two days after the marquis proposed, and was rejected!

He was a man of few words. He took his rejection as quietly as he took most things.

"And this is final?" he asked, slowly. "There is no hope, Miss Lisle?"

"There is none," she answered. "I esteem you, I respect you highly, my lord, but I will never marry—never!"

There was that in her face that told him she meant it: There was infinite pain in it, too. It gave her no pleasure, yielded her no triumph—these rejections. She felt like a cheat, like an impostor; she felt shame—humiliation unutterable. She a wedded wife, and men constantly asking her to marry them! It was part of her punishment, richly deserved but very bitter.

She went up to her room after he left her, slowly, wearily, sick at heart. A packet of American papers, that should have reached her two months before, lay on the table. She opened the packet with eagerness—there was mostly news of her father there—very often mention of another name; quite as eagerly looked for. The papers were three months old, they gave the details of a long and terrible battle, the lists of killed, wounded, and missing. And almost leading the list of killed she read the name of Lieutenant Guy Earls-court.

Yes, there it was. Guy Earls-court—killed! The room swam round her, a hot mist came between her eyes and the paper. Killed! His image rose before her as she had seen him first eight years before—"beautiful with man's best beauty," when she had danced with him under the waving trees of Montalieu, during that bright June day. As she had seen him with the sunshine on his dark face, as he rode up to her carriage to say good-by on the day she left Speckhaven for school. As she had seen him last in the library of

Sir Vane Charteris' house, when he had refused the money she proffered, and had gone forth penniless to his exile. Killed! And then the mist cleared away, and she forced herself to read. There was a brief paragraph concerning him—very brief and eloquent. He was an Englishman, and he had fought like a lion during the whole day. And it had been newly discovered he was the anonymous author of those two books which had created such a sensation in the literary world, "Paul Rutherford's Wife" and "Gold and Glitter."

The paper dropped from her hands, she sank down on her knees and buried her pale face in them. Long before she arose they were wet with her tears—tears that came fast and thick from a stricken heart. She had loved him, and he was dead.

Miss Lisle left the Highland Castle abruptly enough next day—no doubt because she had rejected Heatherland, every one said. She looked so pale, so cold, so wretched, that the duchess had not the heart to be too severe upon her—the young woman must be mad, simply that.

She went home—home to Speekhaven—to Duke, and passed the winter as though she were once more "Polly Mason," and all her wealth and grandeur but a dream. She was in trouble—those faithful friends saw that, and asked no questions, only too happy to have her with them once more. When April came Sir Vane came with it, and took her back, and the world saw no change in her. And for the first time for many years the Marquis of Heatherland appeared in society—his old madness strong upon him still. He had no hope—but to look upon her face—to hear her voice, were temptations too great for him. They met once more, and how it came about need not be told. He proposed again, and this time was accepted.

She was proud, she was ambitious—she liked and esteemed him highly.

"I will be your wife," she said, simply. "Your faithful wife I know, your loving wife I hope—in time."

He asked no more. He lifted the fair, small hand to his lips gratefully, gladly, and she was betrothed to the Marquis of Heatherland.

Mrs. Galbraith and her two young ladies came back from the Park to dine and dress for a reception.

They had met Lord Heatherland, and shaken hands with him, and he was to be at the reception also. The marriage was to take place in three weeks; he had hurried everything on and she had consented. Why should they wait?

And she was to be a duchess. The title poor Duke had given her long ago in jest, was one day to be hers in reality.

The
mar
"I
look
to b
is a
S.
blue
brow
ful
min
and
"I
tuna
thou
wife
all h
Th
and l
"I
be a
passe
blush
dead
her v
Earls

Gr
shade
man
and
span
looki
Sh
stant
swan
in he
ing,
inter
to h
far-c
"P
sake

The present duke had been bedridden for years, an old, old man—she would not long be Marchioness of Heatherland.

"How strange it all seems," she thought, with a half-smile, looking at her image in the glass. "I, little Polly Mason, to be in three weeks' time Marchioness of Heatherland. It is almost like a fairy tale!"

She was looking beautiful to-night, her best, in a dress of blue satin and point lace overskirt, diamonds in her gold-brown hair, and running like a river of light about the graceful throat. She was looking beautiful, and an octogenarian minister, sprightly as a schoolboy, came up to shake hands, and congratulate her.

"I have been telling Heatherland what an unspeakably fortunate fellow he is! I think he is as fully sensible of it, though, as I am. If it were not for my eighty years and one wife already, Miss Lisle, Heatherland should not have had it all his own way."

The Marquis of Heatherland was by her side. She blushed and laughed with her own frank grace.

"I can imagine no age at which your excellency would not be a dangerous rival," she said. The words had but just passed her lips, and she was turning away, with the smile and blush still lingering, when she stopped suddenly. Had the dead arisen? There, standing a few yards away, gazing at her with grave thoughtfulness, she saw, face to face—Guy Earls court!

CHAPTER III.

HELD ASUNDER.

Guy Earls court! No myth, no illusion of the senses, no shadow from the dead, but the living, breathing, vigorous man! Somewhat thinner, somewhat browner, somewhat worn and grave, as if he had thought and suffered much in the span of the past six years, but as surely as she stood there looking at him—Guy Earls court!

She did not cry out, she did not faint, though, for an instant, the rooms, the lights, the faces, the flitting forms, swam giddily, and there was the surging roar of many waters in her ears. She stood there stock still, her great eyes dilating, every drop of blood leaving her face. Dimly, after an interval—of five seconds, in reality—of five hours it seemed to her—the voice of Lord Heatherland, sounding faint and far-off, came to her ear:

"Paulina, you are ill—you are going to faint! For pity's sake, sit down a moment while I go for a glass of water!"

She caught at the back of a chair he placed for her, and saw him hurriedly disappear.

Then, by a mighty effort, she collected her dazed senses, and turned, still dizzily, to leave the room.

On the very instant of her recognition Guy Earls court had turned slowly away and disappeared in an inner apartment.

She made her way—how, she never afterward knew, sick and dizzy as she felt—out of the crowded rooms through an open window, and on to the piazza. There she sank down, half-crouching, half-sitting, in her gay ball dress, while the wind of the cold May night blew upon her uncovered head and death-white face.

Her cold hands clasped themselves over her pale face, her brain ceased to think, a sort of stupor, partly of cold, was creeping upon her, she crouched there in her laces and diamonds, as miserable a woman as the great city held. Oh, Heaven! to be able to retrieve the past—to recall the work of the long-gone Christmas eve. How long she had been there she never knew, probably not more than twenty minutes—an eternity of suffering it seemed to her.

A hand was laid on her shoulder—a voice sounded in her dulled ears.

“Paulina! Good Heaven! what, are you here? Do you know you will get your death?”

She looked up—to his dying day he never forgot the dumb, infinite misery of that first glance. It was the Marquis of Heatherland’s anxious face that bent above her.

“What is it, Paulina?” he cried; “are you mad to expose yourself like this in the cold night air?”

She rose up slowly, shrinking from his touch, and feeling for the first time, with a shiver, how cold it really was.

“I am not mad,” she said, in a slow, dull voice, strangely unlike the soft, musical tones that had been one of her chief charms, “only miserable—the most miserable creature on earth, I think. My lord, let me tell you now, while I have courage—that I retract my promise—that I can never be your wife.”

The words dropped spasmodically from her lips, with intervals between. She did not look at him, her eyes staring straight before her into the blue bright night. He listened—not understanding, bewildered, anxious, incredulous.

“Take back your promise—not be my wife!” he repeated. “What is the matter, Paulina? Are you taking leave of your senses?”

“It sounds like it, I dare say,” she answered, with a heavy, heartsick sigh; “but no, my senses, such as they are, or ever were, remain. Oh, my lord, how can I make you understand

—what a base, base wretch I must seem to you. I cannot—do you hear me, Lord Heatherland? I cannot be your wife!”

“I hear you, Paulina,” he said, growing almost as white as herself, “but I cannot understand. Will you be good enough to explain?”

He was a man of strong self-command, of powerful will. He folded his arms over his chest and waited to hear what she had to say, only the gray pallor of his face betokening in any way what he felt.

“I cannot. Think I have changed my mind, think I am a heartless coquette, think anything you will, only release me. Let the world think it is you who cast me off—I deserve it—and—and what does it matter? In a day or two I shall leave England, and forever.”

Her voice broke in with a hollow sob—if she could only die, she thought, and end it all.

“At least I have not deserved this, Paulina,” the grave, sad voice of the marquis broke in. “If you claim your promise—your promise is yours. But oh, Paulina! my bride—my wife—it is hard—it is cruel—it is bitter as death.”

It was the first, the last, the only time she ever saw him so moved. She fell down on her knees before him and held up her clasped hands.

“Forgive me! forgive me!” she cried; “you shall know all, cost what it may—the wretch, the impostor I am. You thought you knew my whole history—that it was only my pride or my indifference that caused me to refuse so many offers before I accepted you, and you honored me for it. Ah, my God! how utterly unworthy I am of your respect—of any good man’s—Paulina Lisle was, and is. Six years ago, my lord, I was pledged by the strongest ties to a man who quitted England—forever as I thought. You remember the day I left Clanronald so hastily—the day after that on which you first proposed? On that day I read the account of this man’s death in a foreign paper. I don’t know that I loved him—I can’t tell—at least the news of his death had power to move me as nothing else had power to do. Then you know what followed. Next season we met again, and again you renewed your offer, and—I accepted. I did not love you, my lord—but I thought myself free—and I knew it would be easy to love one so good, so kind, in time. You deserved better than that, and my pride and ambition have received their rightful punishment. My lord—oh, how shall I tell you?—this very night I have discovered that the man I speak of—whom I thought dead—to whom ties I could not break if I would, bind me—is alive and in London!”

The broken voice stopped—the pale, tortured face dropped

into her hands. She still knelt before him—drooping—in a strange, distorted attitude of pain. He had listened without a word, without a movement, the dull pallor still blanching his face—his arms still folded. When she ceased, all that was great, that was noble in the man's nature was stirred. She had done him a wrong, perhaps, but she was the woman he loved, and she knelt before him in her great trouble. He stooped and tried to raise her up.

"Not here, Paulina! not here," he said; "kneel only to your Maker."

"Yes, here, here!" she cried, wildly; "here on my knees at your feet! Oh, my lord, you cannot forgive me—but you might pity me if you knew what I suffer."

"I do pity you," he answered, gravely, "from my soul. Rise, Miss Lisle—I command it!"

She rose at once.

"And this is all?"

"This is all."

"Let me try to understand it, if I can. You are bound by promise to marry this man of whom you speak—you mean to marry him?"

"My lord, I will marry no one. I have told you I mean to leave England and him forever in a day or two. Of my own free will I would never look upon his face again."

"Then you do not care for him, this man to whom you stand pledged?" with a thrill of new hope in his tone.

Her face dropped—she turned it far away from him in the starlight.

"Paulina, you hear me. Do you or do you not care for this man?"

"I—I am afraid I do."

He paused at her answer. The hope that had arisen crushed out in his faithful heart forever.

"You care for him," he said, after that pause; "and you tell me in the same breath that you are going to fly from him, that you will never be his wife. Miss Lisle, you have told me part of your secret, but not all. Nay," as she was about to speak, "tell me no more—I do not ask it; I free you utterly and entirely from this moment. The woman whose heart is another man's is sacred from me. I would no more ask you, knowing this, to marry me, than I would if you were already a wife. And I will try to be just, and forgive you, if I can. You have done wrong, by your own showing, in not telling me this at first, but you could not foresee what has happened. The secret you have confided to me shall be kept inviolable—the world shall be told you have rejected me, in justice to myself, since you found you could not love me.

No more need be said, I think, and you have been here far too long already. Take my arm, Miss Lisle, and let me conduct you back to the house."

The dignity of the man rendered his request not to be disputed. In all her life she had never admired him; never respected him as she did at this instant. How generous, how noble every one was—the marquis—Guy—while she—oh, words are weak to tell how utterly degraded she was in her own sight—how bitterly she despised herself. All her pride was crushed to the very earth. She took his arm, and in dead silence they walked back to the crowded rooms. What a mockery it all seemed! the music, the smiling faces, the brilliant dresses, the lights, the roses, and those tortured human hearts! They walked through the midst of their friends, and no one noticed much change in either. Miss Lisle looked very pale—paler than usual, but she never had much color, and her five seasons' experience had taught her not to wear her heart on her sleeve. The marquis led her to a seat, stood silent for a moment, looking down upon her, then held out his hand.

"Paulina!" it was the last time that name ever passed his lips, "will you say good-by?"

She lifted her eyes to his face—almost for the first time since he had found her on the piazza. How pale he was—pale to the lips.

"You are going away?"

"I shall start for Africa to-morrow. I am such an old traveler that I can pack up for the other end of the world at five minutes' notice. And, as every one who goes to Central Africa does not invariably return, I should like you to say good-by and good speed, before we part."

They sounded almost like the last words Guy had spoken to her when she had seen him last.

She laid her hand in that of Lord Heatherland, but she did not speak—she could not.

"Good-by," he repeated.

Her uplifted eyes, full of speechless pain, answered him. One close, warm pressure of her cold hand, and then the man she had pledged herself to marry had passed forever out of her life.

If she could only go home—a wild desire to fly away from this house and those people, and hide herself forever, came upon her. Where was Mrs. Galbraith, where Maud, or Sir Vane? She looked around, and for the second time was frozen by the sight of Guy Earls court.

He was approaching her, her old friend Mrs. Atcherly on his arm, Mrs. Atcherly chatting gayly and volubly as they

came up. Low as the words were spoken, Paulina's strained ear heard them:

"To be married in three weeks' time, you know, to the Marquis of Heatherland—by far the most brilliant match of the season. She is good enough and beautiful enough to marry a prince, I think. And do you know, Guy," laughingly, "I used to fancy—to hope, only you were such a shocking wild boy, that you and she—you understand? But Heatherland will make her a much better husband than you ever would, or ever will make any one, Master Guy."

"Mrs. Atcherly, don't be vituperative. I've turned over a new leaf—several new leaves, and whoever the lady is who has the honor and bliss of becoming Mrs. Earls court, she will be blessed beyond her sex. For Miss Lisle I have had always the profoundest and most hopeless admiration."

She heard the carelessly spoken words, and her heart hardened and revolted against him. How dared he speak of her in that light and flippant tone, when his coming here had broken her heart, blighted her life? Her eyes brightened, a faint tinge of color came back into her face. She looked at him straight—a hard, cold, steady glance.

"Paulina, my child," cried the gay voice of Mrs. Atcherly, "here is a surprise for you, a resurrection from the dead—the prodigal returned—a prodigal no longer. Guy, I don't think there is any need of an introduction between you and Paulina."

"Not the least, I hope, Mrs. Atcherly," Guy answered, bowing low.

She had not offered him her hand; her face looked cold, hard as stone; no smile of recognition passed over it. The coldest, slightest, haughtiest bend of the head acknowledged him. She spoke, and her voice sounded as hard and icy as her look.

"It is a surprise. Months ago I read of Mr. Earls court's death in an American paper. But, perhaps, it was another Guy Earls court."

"No, I fancy not," Guy said, coolly; "I was the man whose obituary you read. It was rather a close thing, but good nursing brought me safely through it, as you see."

He was not one whit dashed by her freezing hauteur—her repellent tone. He stood there before her the most coolly self-possessed man in the room; heedless whether the Marquis of Heatherland's affianced bride smiled or frowned. She saw it with silent, suppressed anger, unjust as it was strong.

"When did you arrive?" she asked.

"Only this afternoon; and on the ground of old friendship

ventured to intrude here to-night. Beside, I wished to see you!"

"To see me?" with a fine lady's stare of insolent wonder; "and what can Mr. Guy Earls court, after his six years' exile, possibly have to say to me?"

A smile curled his mustached lips—a smile of amusement at her look and tone.

"Nothing whatever concerning myself—with all his presumption he does not presume so far as that. I came as the messenger of another person, in whom I think even the future Lady Heatherland may be interested."

Her fingers tore in half her costly lace handkerchief. This storm of contending feelings within her was growing more than she could bear.

"I know of no acquaintance of yours, Mr. Earls court, in whom I take the slightest interest. I have no idea what you can mean!"

"No," he said; and again the amused smile that half-maddened her played around his mouth; "not even Colonel Robert Hawksley."

She barely repressed a cry.

"My father!" she exclaimed; "what of him?"

"Ah! I thought you would be interested," still smiling. "Colonel Hawksley is here, Miss Lisle, and I am his messenger."

Paulina caught her breath; she arose and looked at Guy, flushed, eager.

"Here!" she cried, "here! my father! at last! Oh, Mr. Earls court, where is he—take me to him? At once! at once!"

"Restrain yourself, Miss Lisle—at once would be impossible. And his presence here must for a time be a dead secret. Above all, Sir Vane Charteris and his family are to be kept in total ignorance. He bade me give you this—it explains everything, and tells you where to find him. Conceal it quickly—here is Mrs. Galbraith."

She thrust the letter he gave her into the folds of her dress, just in time to escape Mrs. Galbraith's keen, black eyes. As on that other night, she came noiselessly upon them—this time with a bland smile on her face.

"Ah, Mr. Earls court! so happy to welcome you back. Such a surprise, Paulina, love, is it not? and a celebrated author and hero and everything. Everybody is talking of you and your books, I assure you."

"Everybody does me too much honor, Mrs. Galbraith. Miss Lisle, adieu."

He bowed with his old, negligent, courtly grace—his old.

careless smile, and sauntered away. Paulina looked, with an inexplicable expression, after the tall, graceful form, and saw the daughter of the house, Lady Edith Clive, flutter smilingly up to him, with both hands outstretched in glad welcome. She turned abruptly away, and looked no more.

"Mrs. Galbraith," she said, "I want to go home."

"Certainly, Paulina, love—but where is Lord Heatherland?"

"Gone long ago. Order the carriage at once; I am tired and sick to death of it all."

Mrs. Galbraith looked at her in astonishment. What was the matter? Where and why had the Marquis of Heatherland gone, and what meant all this unusual, angry impatience?

Sir Vane came up at the moment, his florid face a shade or two less florid than usual, and his small, black eyes looking strangely startled.

"Paulina!" he exclaimed, in a half whisper, "do you know who has come?"

"Yes, I know."

"But, good Heaven, Paulina, what is to be done? You showed me the paper that spoke of him as dead, and now here he is back again. And there is Lord Heatherland, and the settlements prepared, and the wedding day named. Paulina, what is to be done?"

"Go home, the first thing," with a hysterical laugh. "Let me alone, Sir Vane Charteris; I am not fit to talk to you or any one to-night."

He looked at her, and noticed, for the first time, the ghastly pallor of her face, the dusky fire in her eyes. He gave her his arm, without another word, and led her to the carriage. On the way home not a word was spoken. Mrs. Galbraith sat in silent surprise, but asking no questions. Maud lay back half asleep—Sir Vane kept inwardly repeating: "What the deuce will she do?" And Paulina, in a corner of the carriage, sat white and cold, with only a dull, sickening sense of misery in her heart. Her father had come—was here! At any other time those tidings would have driven her half wild with delight, but even this news had little power to move her now.

They reached home. She toiled wearily up the stairs to her own luxurious apartments. Her French maid, English Jane's successor, sat waiting for her young mistress, half asleep in a chair. Paulina dismissed her at once.

"You may go to bed, Odille—I shall not want you this morning."

The girl departed, yawning. The moment she was gone

Paulina locked the doors, drew a chair close to the waxlights, and took the letter Guy Earls court had given her from the corsage of her dress. She knew that bold, manly hand well; she tore it impetuously open and read its brief contents:

Charing Cross Hotel.

Tuesday, May 11th, 1869.

My Paulina:—You see I have answered your prayer at last—I am here—here to redress the wrongs of the living or to avenge the dead—here, after two-and-twenty years, to reclaim your mother—my wife.

My young friend, Guy Earls court, has persuaded me, convinced me that this way lies my duty. He has urged me also to tell you all, and claim your woman's wit and aid in my undertaking. The hour has come when it is time for you to learn who your mother really is—that you have been kept in ignorance so long may have been a fatal mistake. My daughter, have you never suspected? You have met her, known her. Think! Shall I tell you her name at once? Paulina, she whom you knew as Lady Charteris was Olivia Lyndith, five-and-twenty years ago, Robert Lisle's wife, and your mother.

The letter dropped from Paulina's hand, with a low, startled cry. A thousand things rushed on her memory to convince her of the truth of her father's words. The night in Lyndith Grange, where my lady had kissed and cried over her, the midnight visit to Duke's cottage, and, above all, a vague, intangible something that had always drawn her to the unhappy lady. How stupid, how blind she had been, not to guess the truth before!

The letter went on:

I never knew, until a few months ago, the terrible fact that she was not insane when shut up in a madhouse. Mr. Earls court told me. I have returned at the earliest possible moment, and I will never rest until I have found, have reclaimed her. Heaven be merciful to human error. I may be too late to save her, but I meant it for the best. You will come to me here—I long to see you, my darling—my Olivia's child.

You will ask for "Mr. Hawksley," and you will keep the fact of my presence in England a dead secret. Do not, in any way, show to Sir Yane Charteris that you suspect or know the truth. We must be subtle as serpents in dealing with a serpent. Mr. Earls court goes to the Countess of Damar's ball to give you this to-night—to-morrow, at the earliest possible hour, I shall expect you here. Until I see you, my own dear child, adieu.

She knew all at last—at last. The mystery that for the past eight years had been the unfathomable mystery of her life was solved. Her mother was found.

The reading of the letter had calmed her. She held it to the lighted tapers and watched it burn to ashes. Then she extinguished them.

The rosy dawn of the sweet May day was lighting the east

already as she drew back the curtains of silk and lace and flung wide the casements.

The sun arose, another busy day had begun for the great city, and Paulina Lisle, in her floating satin and laces and diamonds, sat there pale and spiritless—utterly worn out.

The breakfast bell rang. She began slowly unclasping the jewels, unloosing her rich dress. Then she threw on a dressing-gown, and rang for her maid.

“Clear away those things, Odille, and fetch me a cup of tea here.”

The girl, with the nimble fingers of her craft, put away the ball robe, and diamonds in their casket, and brought up Miss Lisle’s breakfast.

With an effort she swallowed a few mouthfuls, drank the tea, and then pushed aside the scarcely tasted meal.

“Dress me for the street, Odille, and be quick. I am going for a walk. If Mrs. Galbraith inquires for me you can tell her so.”

Odille unbound the shining tresses, and built up her young lady’s chignon with practiced rapidity. In fifteen minutes Miss Lisle stood attired in a walking costume of quiet gray, a close veil over her face. It was no unusual thing for Paulina to start for a brisk morning walk at the hour when all fashionable people were asleep; and Odille was in no way surprised.

It was just eleven as she hailed a cab, and gave the order to the driver:

“Charing Cross Hotel.”

Her heart throbbed with almost sickening rapidity as the hansom flew along the many streets.

At last, at last—in ten minutes she would be face to face with her unseen father!

CHAPTER IV.

WORKING IN THE DARK.

In his room at the Charing Cross Hotel, Robert Hawksley sat alone by the open window, smoking his meerschaum, and waiting for his daughter’s coming with that grave patience that long habit had made second nature.

There was a tap at the door and a waiter entered.

“A lady to see Mr. Hawksley,” he announced; and then a stately figure appeared close behind him, veiled and simply dressed, but looking a “lady” from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot.

The waiter disappeared, closing the door behind him.

Robert Hawksley arose, laying down his pipe—the lady flung back her veil, and father and daughter stood face to face.

For the space of five seconds they stood in dead silence looking at each other. She saw a man bronzed and weather-beaten, but handsomer and nobler it seemed to her than any other man she had ever known—save one. He saw a beautiful and graceful young lady, with soft, sapphire eyes, and gold bronze hair rippling low over that broad, white brow, with sweet, sensitive lips, and a little curved, spirited chin.

They were strikingly alike, too—eyes, hair, features—the most casual observer might have told the relationship.

He smiled—a smile of great content passed over Colonel Hawksley's bearded lips, and he came forward with both hands outstretched.

"Paulina! my daughter!"

"My father!"

He drew her to him and kissed the pure white brow, and the first meeting was over without scenes or exclamations.

For long they talked together, relating the grim actualities that had made up their lives and speculating as to what might have been.

Presently Robert Hawksley touched upon Guy Earls court.

"I wonder," he said, "if your hatred of Lord Montalien extends to Guy? I hope not, for I have grown as fond of him as though he were my own son."

Her face flushed all over—a deep, painful, burning red.

"I have no reason to dislike Mr. Earls court," she answered, the words coming with an effort; "he did me a great service once—a service few men would have rendered."

"You must have been equally astonished and delighted when he appeared so suddenly before you last night at the Countess of Damar's ball."

"Very much surprised beyond a doubt, since I thought him dead. Do you not know that his death was announced many months ago in one of the American papers you sent me?"

"I did not know it. And you really thought him dead until he appeared like a ghost before you? Not that Guy much resembles a ghost at present. It was as close a thing as ever I saw—he had half a hundred wounds, and fought through the campaign like a lion. It was while he lay sick in the hospital, almost to death, that I found your picture in a locket attached to his watchchain, and discovered that he knew you, and was a countryman."

That deep flush rose up once more on Paulina's fair face.

"My picture!" she said. "How came he by that? I certainly never gave it to him."

"He told me as much afterward—owned that he purloined it as a souvenir of England and you, to carry into his exile. Ah, he is a brave lad, and a gallant one. He saved my life once at the risk of his own."

"Tell me about it—father."

Her voice was strangely soft and tremulous—her face drooped forward on her father's shoulder, something vague and sweet stirring in her heart. It was a theme Robert Hawksley liked well—the young man had grown as dear to him as a son. He told her, while the moments went by, stories of his bravery, of his generosity, of his genius, of his irreproachable life—of how nobly he had redeemed the past.

"I believe, at the worst, his greatest crimes were but the thoughtless follies of youth. Guy Earlseourt has the noblest nature of any man I know. He could not stoop to do a mean or dastardly thing. His comrades idolized him—his officers respected him. I believe he is a true genius, and destined to make a shining mark in the literature of his day."

An interval of silence followed—his daughter's face was still hidden, but it was to hide the tears that were falling now.

And this was the man she thought capable of selling his manhood for her money—the man who had sacrificed his life to save her from his brother!

"I don't see the need of our spending the first hours of our meeting in talking altogether of Earlseourt—fine fellow though he be. It strikes me I should like to hear something of yourself."

She lifted her face, and laughed a little bitterly.

"A most unprofitable subject. I am a fashionable lady, wrapped up in dressing, dancing, driving—rather a striking contrast to the sort of life you have been speaking of."

"And engaged to the Marquis of Heatherland?"

"No."

"No? Why, I saw in the *'Morning Post'*—"

"Very likely—still even the press is not infallible. Such an engagement did exist, but it has ceased."

"It has ceased! May I ask—since when?"

She flinched a little under his grave, steady, kindly eyes.

"Since last night."

"Did you love Lord Heatherland, my daughter? The world speaks well of him."

"And he deserves all the world can say—he is one of the best men I ever knew. But—I never loved him. I don't know that I ever loved any one—that I am capable of it. I am hard, and selfish, and worldly, and ambitious, and all evil things—unworthy to be any good man's wife. I shall never

marry—you need not look at me in that way—I mean it. My engagement with Lord Heatherland has ceased—what I am now I will go to my grave. When we find my mother—ah! why should we talk of anything but her!—we three will leave this London life, and all pertaining to it, and grow old, in peace, somewhere out of the world.”

Her voice gave way in a sort of sob. Not capable of loving any one, when she knew that she loved Guy Earls court dearly—dearly, and that she had loved him from the first—ay, in the days when Allan Faue, the artist, had whiled away in her company that rosy summer eight years gone.

“Let us talk of my mother,” she repeated. “What do you propose to do—how to find her?”

“I shall set detectives on the track at once, and remain quietly here to await events. Can you come to see me often, Paulina, or will it inconvenience you too much?”

“I shall come to see you every day at this hour, if you like. I am in every way my own mistress, free to come and go as I choose. And now, as it is close upon two o’clock, I think I had better return. They might possibly fall to wondering what had become of me.”

He led her to the door, and they parted with a handclasp. He was never demonstrative, and her relationship was new as yet to Paulina.

Guy Earls court had made up his mind not to re-enter society upon his return to London. He had learned how hollow and empty it all was—he had learned a healthier kind of life in the past six years. But he found himself quite a “lion,” the hero of the day; society sought him—crowds of invitations poured in upon him from the highest in the land. Many were old friends whom he could not well refuse. So he said to himself, half ashamed of this yielding; but was that solely the reason? Wherever he went he saw the proud, beautiful face of the girl who was his wife. His wife! what a pang—half pain, half remorse—it gave him! He should not have taken advantage of that hour of madness, he thought, when she had besought him to save her—when, carried away by the excitement of the private theatricals, she had become his wife. It was blighting her life, he could see. She hated him, and took little pains to conceal it. Night after night he left those gay assemblies where she shone a queen by right divine of her peerless beauty and grace, vowing, in his passion, never to return, and yet—when to-morrow came, the temptation to look once more upon that perfect face, though colder than marble to him, was irresistible, and he yielded. And she never dreamed, in the remotest way,

how with his whole, strong heart, and for the first time in his life, he was growing to love her.

Miss Lisle was almost as much an object of interest to society just now as Guy himself. She had broken off her engagement with the Marquis of Heatherland at the eleventh hour—positively refusing the best match of the season—and a prospective duke. Lord Heatherland had gone abroad, but before his departure he had taken care to let the clubs and the drawing-rooms of Belgravia know that it was by Miss Lisle's own express desire the match had been broken.

"I admire her above all women, and I always shall," had been his words. "It is the great misfortune of my life that she cannot care for me strongly enough to be my wife."

It created a profound sensation. People said very hard things of Miss Lisle behind her back, called her a heartless jilt, who would end, no doubt, as she deserved, by being an old maid. But they looked upon her with new interest, as a woman capable of trampling under foot a ducal coronet; and the beautiful heiress was more sought after than ever.

Nearly a fortnight had passed. She visited her father every day—but her mother's hiding-place had not yet been discovered. She met Guy perpetually—day and night, and with the rest of the world saw the marked preference Lady Edith Clive showed him. They rarely spoke—a formal bow in passing was the only greeting they exchanged, but in her heart she knew she was intensely jealous. He could not, would not, marry the Lady Edith; her secret now and forever was safe; but who was to tell he might not learn to love her? She grew restless and miserable—the world began to say she was regretting the step she had taken with the marquis—that she was approaching five-and-twenty, and growing quite faded and *passe*. She was sick at heart—sick, body and soul longing unspeakably for the hour when her mother might be found, and she herself free to quit England and him forever.

It was close upon the last of the second week, that, making her morning visit to her father, she found him pacing up and down his hotel sitting-room—flushed, excited, anxious.

"You have found her!" was Paulina's first cry as she looked upon his face.

He had found her—or rather the detective in his employ had. The private asylum was at Cheswick—he held the address in his hand—Lady Charteris was in tolerably good health, both mentally and bodily, and the medical superintendent had been expecting the baronet every day for the past three weeks to come and take his wife home. The asylum was a thoroughly respectable institution, and Lady

Charteris, as had learned, was almost entirely restored, and ready at any moment to leave.

"You must go to Cheswick at once, Paulina," her father said. "You will introduce yourself as the patient's daughter, sent by Sir Vane, to bring her home. Here is a note I have written—a pretty good imitation of his handwriting, I think, in which he says illness prevents his accompanying you. You must lose no time—I have arranged everything. When you quit the asylum, you will take the first train for Lincolnshire. Go to your old friend, Duke Mason's—I will follow. On the way you can break to her the news of my arrival—prepare her to meet me at the cottage. Once there, and with me, let Sir Vane Charteris claim her if he dare!"

Paulina listened breathlessly—took the note, and entered the cab her father called. Ten minutes, and she was speeding along rapidly Cheswickward, fully prepared for the part she had to play.

The part was so easy, it required little duplicity to go through with it. Miss Lisle met the medical superintendent, and announced herself as Lady Charteris' daughter. She gave him her father's forged note—he read it as a matter of course—bowed low before the stately, beautiful woman, and led her at once to his patient. Paulina's heart beat fast. How was she to tell her mother might not betray her in her first surprise? She paused as the doctor was about to open the door.

"Stop," she said; "my mother has not seen me for many years. The shock may be too much for her. Do you go in, and tell her I am here, and let us meet quite alone."

"As you please, Miss Charteris," the polite superintendent said; "you can wait here."

He ushered her into a sunny apartment. She stood, her back turned to the door, looking out of the window, trying to calm her rapid heart-throbbing. She was not kept waiting long. In three minutes the door opened, she turned slowly round—mother and daughter stood alone together!

Those six years of misery and imprisonment had done their work upon the wife of Robert Lisle. Her face had blanched to a dead waxen whiteness—her golden hair had turned to silver. The great black eyes looked out from the bloodless face with a frightened, terrified appeal. She stood on the threshold irresolute—trembling—she did not recognize this tall, Juno-like young lady with the lovely face and large, pitying blue eyes.

"Are you?" she faltered; "no, you are not Maud." She drew away, trembling violently all over. "I don't know you," she said; "did he send you here?"

Paulina came over, put her strong young arms about her, and looked down into that frightened face with a brave, loving smile.

"I am not Maud," she whispered with a kiss; "I am Paulina Lisle—mother—dear little, suffering mother. No, don't cry out; you will spoil all. I have come to take you away, and Sir Vane Charteris knows nothing about it. Don't wait to ask questions now—and be calm—don't excite suspicion. I am going to take you away—the doctor thinks I am Sir Vane's daughter—don't deceive him. Go, get ready at once—every second is precious, and be calm—for all our sakes try and be calm."

She was calmer than Paulina had hoped. Her eyes lit up—hope flashed over her face. "I will," she answered, firmly; "wait for me here."

She left the room—in ten minutes she was back, accompanied by the medical man.

"I can safely pronounce Lady Charteris perfectly restored, Miss Charteris," he said, blandly. "I told Sir Vane so, weeks ago, and have been expecting him daily. Amusement and change of air are all she requires now. And how about the luggage?"

"You will wait until Sir Vane visits you in person," Paulina said quietly, drawing her mother's arm within her own. "He will probably be sufficiently restored by to-morrow."

They were at the door—she could hardly credit her own success. The bland superintendent bowed low, as he bade adieu to the baronet's beautiful daughter, and assisted my lady into the cab. The moment after, they were whirling away far from the asylum, where for six long years this poor, pale woman had been incarcerated.

Paulina leaned forward to give the driver his order, then she turned and clasped again that weak, frail form in her arms.

"You look bewildered, darling mother—oh, how easy, how natural the name comes! It is sufficient to bewilder you, or me, the rapidity with which this has been managed. I know all, you see—that you are my mother—everything. Who do you think has told me?" She kissed again, with a smile, the appealing face—"my father."

"Your—father!"

"And your husband—your only, your rightful husband, mother—Robert Lisle."

She clasped her wasted hands—she tried once or twice before the words she wanted to say would quit her pallid lips:

"Robert—my Robert! he is alive still!"

"Alive and well, dear mother; and—now try and bear good

news as
to claim

There
and kis

"Poo
You ar
baronet
that!"

"Pau
here?"

For
"Tel
hear su

"My
and hi

Her
both h

"Mo
a jour

Duke
Then

Meant
there

By
term c
remov
prison

sanc
entra

cover
be re

never
At of

and p
had a

Of
conv

peate
abro

Van
last

for
trust

out
desc

news as bravely as you have borne misfortune—coming home to claim you.”

There was a faint, low cry; Paulina drew her closer to her, and kissed her again and again.

“Poor little mother! Yes—coming home to claim you. You are his wife, you know—he has the right—that wicked baronet, none. He is coming! mother! mother! think of that!”

“Paulina,” her mother said, with a sort of cry, “he is here?”

For an answer, Paulina held her closer.

“Tell me,” Olivia said; “tell me, Paulina—I can bear to hear such joyful news—Robert is here!”

“My father is here. Nothing can ever come between you and him again.”

Her mother fell back, nearly fainting. Paulina caught both hands, and looked straight, almost sternly, into her eyes.

“Mother, if you faint, I will never forgive you. You have a journey to take—we are going down to Lincolnshire, to Duke Mason’s. My father will follow by the next train. Then I give you leave to faint, if you will insist upon it. Meantime I am going to fasten this veil over your face; there is no telling whom we may meet at the station.”

* * * * *

By one of the fatalties which rule our lives, and which we term chance, Sir Vane Charteris had chosen that very day to remove his unfortunate captive from the asylum to another prison. She had been received in all good faith—she was insane most likely for the time, and for weeks after her entrance raved in delirium of a brain fever. Upon her recovery, she had been at times wildly excited, demanding to be released, crying out she was no wife of Sir Vane’s, and never had been, that her true husband had been in America. At other times she would lapse into sullen despair and gloom, and pass whole days in speechless misery. So the first years had gone.

Of late, however, even the people of the asylum became convinced of her perfect sanity, and the physician had repeatedly urged the baronet to remove his wife—to take her abroad, and give her amusement and change of air. Sir Vane had delayed doing so to the last possible moment. At last a happy thought struck him. He would fit up “The Firs” for her reception, employ a thoroughly unprincipled and trustworthy woman to take care of her, and leave her to drag out the remainder of her wretched existence in the dreary desolation of that desolate coast. It was bleak; sea fogs and

east winds were abundant, the house was damp and draughty—death, no doubt, would speedily rid him of a hated incumbrance. He longed intensely for her death, and the sole reversion of her fortune to Maud—the time was very near, he thought now.

He drove up to the asylum in a four-wheeled cab—he meant to take his wife straight to Essex. He was admitted, and met the doctor in the hall.

“What!” the superintendent exclaimed. “Sir Vane, so soon after his messenger? And your note said you were ill. Yours has been a speedy recovery.”

“What note? I don’t understand you. I have come for my wife.”

“Your wife! My dear Sir Vane, of course you know your wife has gone!”

“Gone!” The baronet started back blankly. “Gone! Do you mean dead?”

“Heaven forbid! Lady Charteris’ health, considering all things, is remarkably good. Is it possible?—but no, I cannot have been duped. Here is your own note, demanding her release.”

He handed the baronet the note Paulina had given him, with an injured air. Sir Vane read it through, turning the hue of ashes, with mingled amaze and rage.

“This note is a forgery. I never wrote it—so poor a forgery, too, that I am amazed any one could be stupid enough to be deceived by it who ever saw my hand. Do you mean to tell me, Dr. Harding, that Lady Charteris has left your asylum?”

“Left an hour ago,” replied the doctor, sullenly.

“With whom?”

“The bearer of that note.”

“Who was the bearer of this note?”

His thoughts flew to Lord Montalien—to Lord Montalien, who never forgot nor forgave, and who fully meant to place the paper he held in Olivia’s hand, should he ever succeed in finding her.

“A young lady—your daughter.”

“My daughter! Impossible!”

“She announced herself as Lady Charteris’ daughter—the same thing, I take it.”

“Will you tell me what she was like? I left my daughter Maud ill at home of a headache.”

“She was tall, the finest figure and most classically beautiful face I ever saw. She had dark-blue eyes, and gold-brown hair, and the manners of a lady in waiting.”

“Paulina!” the baronet cried, under his breath; “the very

last person
the drove

“Cityw
me, Sir V

“Every
been a fo

With

Where co
she had

thought
erlys, th

taking th
upon hin

“She’l
She wou

that girl
and I n

He lo
an hour

cab to
Paulina

at the I
paper w

easily b
he had

“Curs
she was

He re
inquiri

left tw
peculia

officials
questio

proach
ticket,

for clo
flowing

he kne

He c
ert Lis

wife, a
Of wh

Monta
posture

see th
He to

last person I should ever think of. Do you know which way the horse drove upon leaving here, Harding?"

"Cityward—I know no more. Do you really mean to tell me, Sir Vane, there is anything wrong about all this?"

"Everything is wrong. It is an infernal plot. You have been a fool, and I am a ruined man."

With that answer Sir Vane strode out of the house. Where could Paulina possibly have taken her mother? How she had found her he did not then stop to inquire. He thought over the people he knew in London; except the Atch-erlys, there was not a family whom he could imagine her taking the sick lady to. A sudden, swift inspiration flashed upon him.

"She'll take her to Lincolnshire, to her old home, of course. She would never attempt to keep her in London. To think that girl has been plotting against me, for months, perhaps, and I never suspected it."

He looked at his watch—an express train would leave in an hour. He gave the driver his order, and fell back in the cab to think. Not pleasant thoughts, by any means. If Paulina took her to Speckhaven, Lord Montalien, at present at the Priory, would hear of it at once, and hand over the paper which implicated him for bigamy. His marriage could easily be proven illegal, Maud illegitimate, and the father he had coveted so go absolutely to Robert Lisle's daughter.

"Curse her!" he muttered; "why did I not poison her when she was in my power?"

He reached the London terminus, and was about to make inquiries concerning the passengers by the mail, which had left two hours before. Paulina's commanding beauty and peculiar grace could not fail to attract the attention of the officials, even at a crowded London railway station. But the questions he would have asked upon his lips, as he approached the ticket office, for standing there, taking his ticket, was a man he knew well. A man he had not seen for close upon a quarter of a century, but whom, in spite of flowing beard, of foreign bronze, of the slouched sombrero, he knew at once—Robert Lisle!

He drew back among the crowd. All was clear now. Robert Lisle had come back, a rich man, no doubt, to claim his wife, and expose the villainy that held them apart so long. Of what use was it to follow now—the game was up—Lord Montalien's revenge was all that was needed for his exposure and disgrace. And yet he determined to follow—to see the play played out—to face his fate without flinching. He took his ticket and his place in a different compartment

from that of Robert Lisle, and London was left behind like a smoky dream.

Into the fresh country, where the young grass and cowslip were bright—into the rustic heart of Lincolnshire, the express train flew. It was close upon six, and the afternoon sun was slanting westward as they rushed into the Speckhaven station. Still keeping out of sight, the baronet watched his rival. Robert Lisle took a fly—the baronet took another—remaining well in the rear. Duke Mason's house was the destination of the foremost, the other followed. Robert Lisle sprang out and entered the little garden gate, with rapid steps approaching the house. Sir Vane Charteris also dismounted, also entered the garden, and approached. The house door was open, he heard a woman's shrill scream, his wife's voice he knew, and hurried nearer, and stood looking in.

He saw a very striking picture.

Duke Mason and his sister stood apart—Paulina was in the middle of the floor, and standing near her was Robert Lisle, and the woman who had been his wife in the eyes of the world for so many years, lying still and senseless in his arms.

CHAPTER V.

"PAULINA TO ALICE."

The bold, evil spirit within the man rose with the sense of his utter defeat. He set his teeth, and strode resolutely into their midst.

Paulina looked up and recognized him—growing very pale. Duke Mason took a step forward with a startled exclamation. And Robert Lisle lifted his face, white from excess of feeling, and looked at him.

The two husbands of the one wife after a quarter of a century were once more face to face!

The baronet took the initiative.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded. "Who are you, sir, who hold my wife? Paulina Lisle, how dare you remove Lady Charteris from the asylum where I placed her?"

Before Paulina could reply, her father interfered—quite gently.

"Mason, will you carry my wife upstairs? Paulina, you will accompany Miss Mason, and endeavor to restore her. For this man, I will answer his questions."

Paulina clasped her hands anxiously about his arm.

"You v
it. Ther

He sm
"I pro
blusterin
stronger
law."

He pl
watched
made a :

"Lady
peril you

Duke
powerful
hesitated
moment

"Now
his arms
baronet,
moment
to ask t

"You
ago inve
sconded
fled to
know y

"I th
a marr
Vane C
never, f
on the
answer

I was
how wi
charge

to let t
rey Ly
accusa
dark—
law sh

second
respect
never
unless
you ev
land

“You will not quarrel with him, father. He is not worth it. There will be no altercation—promise me that.”

He smiled gravely.

“I promise, my dear; I have not the slightest intention of blustering or quarreling with Sir Vane Charteris. A stronger power than mine shall deal with him—the English law.”

He placed Olivia’s fainting form in Duke’s arms, and watched him and the two women quit the room. Sir Vane made a second noisy attempt to interfere.

“Lady Charteris shall not quit this room! Mason, on your peril you touch my wife!”

Duke paid no heed. The baronet surveyed the six-foot, powerful-looking, soldierly figure before him, and wisely hesitated before trying to enforce his words by deeds. In a moment they were alone.

“Now then, Sir Vane Charteris,” said Robert Lisle, folding his arms, and looking down at the small, porsy figure of the baronet. “I will hear what you have to say. You asked me a moment ago who I was—I don’t really think you ever needed to ask that question.”

“You are Robert Lisle, the yeoman’s son, who twenty years ago inveigled a simple girl into a sham marriage, you absconded with her uncle’s money and jewels, and afterward fled to America to escape transportation. You perceive I know you well.”

“I thought so. For the sham marriage, as you call it, it is a marriage that our English law holds binding. You, Sir Vane Charteris, are a bigamist with intent. Olivia Lisle never, for one instant, was your wife. You saw me in church on the morning of that mockery of marriage. How will you answer to a British jury for that? When Olivia discovered I was alive, you shut her up in a madhouse for six years—how will you answer a jury for that? As to the other absurd charge you speak of, I was a fool—the greatest of fools, ever to let that bugbear alarm me. Neither you now, nor Geoffrey Lyndith, if he were alive, could support that trumped-up accusation. For the rest, I have worked as you did, in the dark—I have found my wife, and I mean to keep her. The law shall judge between us of the legality of the first and second marriages. You are free to act as you please, in all respects, save intruding here—yonder is the door—go—and never dare to degrade this house by your presence again, unless you wish me to take the law in my own hands. Did you ever hear of Judge Lynch, Sir Vane? I come from a land where he is well known. If you ever cross yonder

threshold again, I'll strangle you as I would a snake that crawled across my path. Now go!"

"Will you wait one moment?" said a voice in the doorway.

Both men turned round. All this time the house door had stood open, and a third person, quite unlooked for, had witnessed the interview.

Lord Montalien had spent the past two years traveling for his health. He was passing the London season in the country now, for the same reason—a chronic affection of the heart. Strolling by, taking his usual afternoon exercise, he had espied the two flies from the railway at Duke Mason's gate. He saw the house door open—it might be Paulina; curiosity prompted him to approach. He saw Sir Vane Charteris, guessed in an instant who his companion must be, and heard every word of Robert Lisle's speech. At last the hour of his revenge had come, at last he could pay off that debt now six years old.

"Excuse me," his lordship said, blandly, coming slowly in, "if I have inadvertently heard every word—Sir Vane Charteris, I am exceedingly happy to see you on the present occasion; you, sir," turning with a bow to the other, "are, I presume, Mr. Robert Lisle."

"I am, sir," was the stern response; "who are you?"

"Lord Montalien, very much at your service, and disposed, like my father before me, to do you a good turn. I owe Sir Vane here a little grudge, and am inclined to wipe it off. Have you any recollection in your past life of a man named James Porter?"

The American officer looked bewildered, and Sir Vane stood with bent, black brows, and sullen ferocity, waiting for the end!

"He was valet, five-and-twenty years ago, to Geoffrey Lyndith—perhaps that will aid your memory."

"I recollect," Lisle said, brusquely; "what of him?"

"Only that he is dead; and upon his deathbed made a deposition which I took down, and have in my possession at present, duly witnessed. In that confession he gives the whole nefarious plot by which you were driven out of England. It clears you in every respect. If you will do me the honor to call at the Priory this evening, I shall be happy to place the document in your hands."

He looked with a diabolical smile at the baronet. Sir Vane, livid with fear and fury, moved toward the door.

"Robert Lisle shall answer for his abduction and retention of my wife," he said, trying bravado to the last; "for you and your miserable documents, Lord Montalien, I care nothing. The law shall judge between us."

"The ship for been ele simplifi

Lord

"Perh

your da some yo for it.

me whe my bro

"He

"He

"He

"A s

liabiliti

Lisle

"Tha

any lon

ery of

ness in

He l

low, w

malign

"All

"Guy

famous

liked

Why d

him?

off, an

His

had go

to ma

invari

he wa

nervou

face o

his pil

more

home

Rob

then a

swoon

they

four-

to be

"The law shall," Lisle said, gravely. "I thank your lordship for this unexpected favor. My good name should have been cleared by my own efforts; but the confession of Porter simplifies all that. I will call this evening at the Priory."

Lord Montalien bowed, and turned to go.

"Perhaps you will be good enough to mention this fact to your daughter," he said. "I wished to make her my wife some years ago, and I am afraid she has never forgiven me for it. She may be induced to think somewhat less hardly of me when she learns this. May I also ask one question—did my brother return with you?"

"He did."

"He is at present in London?"

"He is."

"A successful author—quite able to meet all his little liabilities?"

Lisle nodded—somewhat impatiently.

"Thanks," Lord Montalien said; "I shall not detain you any longer. Permit me to congratulate you upon the recovery of your wife and daughter, and to wish you every happiness in the future."

He left the house. The smile faded from his lips, his sal- low, worn face darkened and grew, bitter, with hate and malignity.

"All my plotting has been in vain, then," he thought. "Guy has returned—the past wiped out and forgotten—rich, famous, handsomer than ever, no doubt. And she always liked him—always—I know it, and will marry him now. Why did she break off with Heatherland if not for love of him? And one day this accursed heart disease will carry me off, and he will reign in my stead at Montalien."

His face was black with impotent hatred and rage. All had gone against him. The only woman he had ever wanted to marry had refused him—he had speculated largely and invariably lost. Ill health had overtaken him—at thirty-three he was an old, disappointed, soured man. He had grown nervous with illness, and in the dark dead night, the white face of Alice Warren rose to haunt him and drive sleep from his pillow. She lay unburied and unavenged, but retribution more dire than any an earthly tribunal could inflict had come home to her murderer.

Robert Lisle watched his retreating form from view, and then ascended the stairs. His wife had recovered from her swoon, and lay helpless and trembling on the couch where they had placed her. Robert alive! Robert back! After four-and-twenty years of endless, infinite misery, Robert was to be hers again. The others rose as he entered. Paulina

stooped and kissed the wan, startled face, and the long-severed husband and wife were together once more.

Proceedings were immediately instituted to prove the validity of the first, the invalidity of the second marriage. There was little difficulty in doing so. Robert Lisle's Scotch marriage was as binding as though the Archbishop of Canterbury had pronounced the benediction. The second marriage was a farce. The suit and its results produced the profoundest sensation. Every day new and interesting revelations came out about Miss Lisle. Now the mystery of her birth was cleared up. She was not an orphan, as half London had supposed, and on the mother's side, at least, her descent was irreproachable. And Sir Vane Charteris was a villain, who had fled to the Continent to bury himself and his disgrace out of sight.

Mrs. Gilbraith and Maud had become socially extinct down at Essex. And Miss Lisle and her romantic father and mother held themselves sedulously aloof from wondering metropolitan society down in some cottage in Lincolnshire, where she had been brought up. What a romance it was—equal to any of Mr. Earls court's charming plots!

Immediately the suit was ended, Mr. Lisle and his wife (he had discarded the name of Hawksley) were going abroad. Mrs. Lisle's nervous system had been utterly shattered—years must pass of peace, of change, of happiness before she became fully herself again. She grew pale and terrified when Robert left her side—she flew to him trembling and panting when he returned. She lived in constant dread of something tearing her from him again—she shrank from strangers as only nervous people can shrink. The sooner she was taken abroad, away from the scene of her troubles, the better. It was evident, too, Paulina needed change. In those three weeks of waiting she had grown thin and pale as a shadow. All her old joyousness had left her, she wandered silent and spiritless about the old familiar haunts. Lord Montalien never troubled her solitary rambles now. The friends who loved her so well looked at her in wonder—it was so unlike Paulina—this pale, silent, noiseless shadow—whose smile was as cold and fleeting as moonlight on snow. Her friend, Mrs. Acherly, ran down once in a while to see her old favorite, and retail for her benefit the town gossip. Among her budget, Mr. Earls court had a new work in press, and was engaged to be married, so everybody said, to the Lady Edith Clive.

Paulina turned her pale face far away as she listened. Mrs. Acherly rattled on:

"The Lady Edith makes no secret of her preference, and he

is
Pat
of
the
tim
am
He
exc
rare
be
A
wh
her
imp
Eng
A f
dry
for
fail
at t
star
wea
T
per
don
sati
dire
A
occ
dow
"
P
bles
clin
blea
hea
the
son
of
war
as
hag
aga
gav
get
H

is certainly at Damar House perpetually. But, do you know, Paulina, I don't believe Guy's a bit in love with her, in spite of her beauty. If he marries her it will be because she is the richest heiress of the day and an earl's daughter. I sometimes fancy he has left his heart behind him in America, among those lovely American women he talks of so much. He says American ladies are all pretty—absolutely without exception—that a plain girl in the streets of New York is as rare as a black swan. The world says he and Lady Edith will be married for certain next spring."

And then Mrs. Atcherly departed; and I greatly doubt whether Miss Lisle's health or spirits were at all improved by her lively conversation. She longed with feverish, hidden impatience for the day of their departure to come. When England was left far behind she would be better, she thought. A fever flush came into her cheeks sometimes, her lips looked dry and parched—her glorious dower of perfect health, that for four-and-twenty years had never failed her, was rapidly failing her now. They spoke of physicians, and she laughed at them—she would be quite well again, she said, when they started on their travels—it was England and the hot June weather that disagreed with her.

The last day came. Everything was settled—Mr. Lisle's perpetual flying up and down by express trains between London and Lincolnshire was at an end. His legal business was satisfactorily over. On to-morrow morning they would start direct for Paris, making no delay in London.

A gentleman accompanied Mr. Lisle from town on this last occasion—a gentleman, who, at his especial request, had run down to see his wife.

"Where is Paulina!" her father asked.

Paulina was out, as usual, on one of her daily aimless rambles. It was a murky sort of day, with a light, damp fog clinging to everything—a dark, gray sky, lying low over a bleak, wet earth. It was no weather for any one in delicate health to be abroad—but Paulina neither felt nor cared for the damp. It suited her, this gloomy evening—it seemed somehow like her cold, gray life. The last, lingering shadows of the dark day were departing as she came slowly homeward. In body and mind, heart and brain, she was tired out as she drew near—her face paler than usual, her large eyes haggard and sunken. A man's tall figure leaned lightly against one of the gate posts as she drew near. Her heart gave a great bound, and then seemed to cease its beating altogether. No need to look twice to recognize Guy Earls court.

He saw her and opened the gate. Without lifting her eyes

to his face, without speaking, she bowed, and would have passed on, but he stopped her.

"Not one word, Paulina?" he said, in a low voice of reproach; "and it is the last time we may ever meet. For the sake of eight years ago, when we were friends, when little 'Polly' did not hate me, say good-by!"

He held out his hand. Her heart smote her—she stopped confusedly—glauced up once into the dark, reproachful eyes, half turned away.

Hate him! In that moment she knew, as she had never known before, that she loved him, with a passionate, deathless love, that would remain with her to her life's end.

She gave him her cold fingers. His hand closed over them—warm, strong and firm; his eyes were reading her pale, averted face.

"You—you came to say farewell to my mother," she faltered.

"And to you, Paulina—I may call you so, may I not? It is for the last time. I, too, leave England in a few days, and forever."

"Forever!" she echoed. A cold hand seemed to clutch her heart—was Mrs. Atcherly right, after all, in her surmise? She drew her hand suddenly and forcibly from his grasp.

"I shall return to America," he said, quietly, "and there pass my life." As soon as my new book appears, I leave. You will be abroad then, and I could not go without saying good-by, and asking you to forgive me."

"Forgive you! For what?"

"For letting you sacrifice your life," he said, firmly, "six years ago. I see clearly now that I should have saved you, but not in that way. You were mad that night—driven wild by their persecution, the fear of imprisonment, and a marriage with Francis. The play had excited you—you scarcely knew what you were doing, but I was sane enough, and I have never forgiven myself, in all these years, for taking advantage of your helplessness and terrors and making you my wife. You loved the Marquis of Heatherland, and he deserved it as few men do, and it holds you apart. You hate me, you have not tried to conceal it, and, I dare say, I deserve it. But I shall not banish you from England—my presence here shall be no barrier to your return. Farewell, once more, and try to forgive me if you can when I am gone."

He lifted his hat, she heard the gate open and shut, heard the light, firm fall of his footstep on the road growing fainter and fainter. The soft summer rain was falling and wetting

her through—lights twinkled in the cottage windows, and Guy was gone—forever!

"Paulina!" her father's voice called from the doorway, "come in! Do you not know it is raining?"

She was standing where Guy had left her, motionless. She started up now, staggered dizzily, and grasped something for support. The next moment her father's strong arm encircled her.

"You will get your death," he said; "you look like death now. Did you see Earls court?"

"Yes." The word dropped heavily and slowly from her lips. "He has gone."

He looked at her keenly. But even in that hour, when a pain bitterer than death was piercing her heart, her pride upheld her. The cold, set look that had grown habitual of late and warded off all questioning, came over her pale, proud face. Her step grew firm; she entered the house, and none present saw anything more than usual in her look.

Tea was ready—Rosanna's best cream cakes, and fruit pies, and whitest rolls, in honor of the occasion. As they gathered round the bright little lamplit table, a loud knock came to the door.

"Who is this?" said Duke. "I thought Mr. Guy was our last visitor."

He opened the door, and saw a middle-aged, sailor-like man, a total stranger, standing there in the rain.

"Does Miss Paulina Lisle live here?" asked this nautical visitor.

Duke nodded.

"And what may you want of Miss Lisle, my seafaring friend?" he asked.

Paulina heard and approached the door, looking at the seaman in profound surprise.

"You want me?" she inquired.

The sailor pulled off his hat and scraped a nautical bow.

"I do, miss, if so be you are the Miss Paulina Lisle what advertised in the *Times*, six years ago, about a Miss Alice Warren, missing. You offered a reward, you reck-lect, for news of her, dead or alive."

She gave a low cry, reached out, and drew the speaker in.

"Come this way!" she cried. "I am the Paulina Lisle who advertised, and I am still ready to give the reward. At last I shall hear of Alice."

She drew him into the kitchen—deserted now—placed a chair for him, and stood herself, breathless, expectant.

"What do you know of her?" she exclaimed. "She was

my dearest friend, and I have never heard a word of her since that time. Is she alive or dead?"

"Dead, miss!" the sailor said, solemnly. "Murdered!"

She clasped her hands and staggered back.

"Murdered!" She whispered the word with ashen lips.

"Look here, miss," the man said; and after fumbling a moment, produced from an inner pocket a little parcel rolled in many papers. He undid those slowly, one by one, and something golden glittered in the light. He handed it to her. It was a locket and chain. She gave a second low cry; she recognized it at once. It had been her parting gift to Alice ere her departure for the French school. She touched the spring—it flew open—there was her own picture, and a ringlet of her golden hair, and on the reverse side this inscription: "Paulina to Alice—1860."

"You know that ere locket, miss?" the sailor said. "Yes, I see you do. Well, I have had that these seven years come Christmas Eve. On Christmas Eve, 1862, the young woman what wore that locket was foully murdered, and her body lies a-bleaching, for what I know, in the same spot still."

She mastered her emotion by a powerful effort. For a moment she had grown sick and faint, and had been obliged to sit down. It passed away, and the white lips spoke:

"Will you tell me all? If this locket and these dreadful facts have been in your possession for six years, how is it you only reveal them now?"

"Well, miss; I did wrong, I suppose—I ought to have made a clean breast of it there and then, but, you see, I went to sea, and once before, out in Bermuda, I got into a scrape by finding a body that way, and nearly got lagged for a murder I didn't do. I don't know that I'd have told now, but it kind of haunted me like, and gave me no rest; so for the past two months I've been a-trying to find you out. A precious deal of trouble it's been, I can tell you. This here's the way I came by that locket."

And then the sailor told his story, Paulina listening, white and still.

"My name's Bill Saunders, miss, which I was christened William James, and I follows the sea for a livin', as you may see for yourself. I'd been away on a year's voyage, and when I got home I started from Liverpool to see my old mother, livin' at that time at Battersea-way. I stayed with the old woman nigh upon seven weeks, coming up to London off and on, and signing articles Christmas week to sail for China in the *Golden Pagoda*, on a three years' cruise. The *Golden Pagoda* was to sail down the Thames about noon, Christmas Eve, and, bright and early in the morning, I slung

my bundle over my shoulder, bid the old mother good-by, and started afoot for London.

“It was a tarnaal stormy morning, miss, axin’ your pardon for swearing, a-snowin’ and a-blowin’ like as if it was Canada instead of old England. I was used to snowstorms, though, and trudged along, never mindin’, though along the waste fields, and marshes, and old brickyards it blew fit to take your head off. It wasn’t the sort of mornin’ nor the time of day you would look to see any one out a-drivin’, and so when I see a horse and wagon a-comin’ furious in the other direction I stood still behind a pile of rubbish, and made a telescope of my fist, and looked hard to see what the parties was like.

“They was a man and a woman—I could just make out that, and no more; both was so muffled up and so white with snow. While I looked, the wagon stopped sudden like, the man jumped out and helped the woman after. This was another move I did not expect in such a place and in such a storm.

“‘Something wrong with the turnout,’ I says to myself, and keeps well out o’ sight and waits to see. The man looked all about, and then takes the woman round an old pile o’ broken bricks that hid them from sight. A minute after—it could not have been more—I hears the report of a pistol; and then I knew for sartin what I had suspected when the man first got out, that foul play was going on, and that I’d better keep still if I didn’t want a second pistol ball through my own skull.

“I waited about two minutes. Mind well. I pulled out my watch, and looked to see the time, afeared I might be late for the sailin’ of the *Golden Pagoda*. It wanted just twenty minutes o’ nine. I can swear to the very minute, for she’s a good one to keep time, she is. As I put the watch back, I sees my cove a-comin’ round the heap o’ bricks, and taking a second look in every direction. If I kept out o’ sight afore, you may be sartin I was inwisable now. He looked at his watch, then jumped into his trap, and drove away as if old Nick (savin’ your presence, miss) was scuddin’ after him.

“I waited there until he was clear out of sight, then I made for the spot. Ahind the pile o’ rubbish was a sort of hole, like a little cave, made, maybe, to hold tools, and that, when the brick fields was in use, and into this the body had been dragged. He had piled up in a hurry agin the entrance a heap o’ loose brick, and stones, and wood. You might pass the spot scores o’ times and never take notice. There was some blood upon the snow, but not much, and the mark of where he had dragged her in; and away inside I

could see, when I took down the piled up rubbish, a woman's figure lying on its face.

"Well, miss," the sailor went on, shifting away uneasily from the gaze of the large, horror-struck eyes, "maybe I did wrong, but I piled up the stuff agin as I found it, and made up my mind to say nothin' of what I'd heard and seen. Out in Bermuda, as I said afore, I nearly got lagged for life, getting accused of a murder I didn't do. A burned child, they say, dreads the fire—it was no business o' mine; I would just go off in the *Golden Pagoda*, I thought, and let the young woman's friends and the London police find her at their leisure.

"I was turning to go away—it was nine now, and I had no time to spare—when somethin' a-shinin' in the snow caught my eye. I stooped and picked it up. It was that there locket, miss, bent a little, as you see, where it had been tramped on, and the little chain broke off short, as if it had been dragged from her neck. I put it in my pocket and tramped away to London. That afternoon the *Golden Pagoda* sailed, and me in her, and I've never set foot in England since, until three weeks ago.

"But I couldn't forget what I saw that Christmas Eve morning—I couldn't forget it, miss. In my watch on deck o' nights that there young woman used to come afore me, and I could see her again lyin' dead on her face in that dismal spot, where nobody might ever find her. I couldn't forget it, and at last when I sailed from Canton for England, I made up my mind, come what would, I'd make a clean breast of it and tell the whole story.

"I was sitting in a coffeehouse in Liverpool the night I landed, thinking how I had better begin the business, when I came across an old London paper, six years old, and there, as if Providence had put it in my way, the very first thing my two eyes lit on was the advertisement offering a reward for any news of one Alice Warren, missing or dead. Now, on the locket I'd seen them words printed, 'Paulina to Alice—1860,' and this here missing woman was an Alice, too. That was all I had to go by. Any news was to be brought to a law firm in London. I started for London next morning, and found out, after a sight of trouble, the law firm. I showed 'em that advertisement. I axed 'em who put it in. They couldn't give me a plain answer—they badgered and bothered, and said I was to tell them anything I knew. I said I'd be blowed if I did! That brought them to their bearings, and they said it was a client of theirs, a young lady, Miss Paulina Lisle. When I heard that name, 'Paulina,' I knew I was on the right track. I axed 'em if they'd

ever found this nere Alice Warren, and they said no; nothin' had ever been heard or seen of her from that day to this. Then I told them I wanted to see Miss Paulina Lisle; that I'd something to say to her about this here business she might like to know; and at last, after a deal o' fussin', they gave me the directions here. Here I came; and there, miss, is the whole story. Alice Warren was murdered on Christmas Eve, 1862, and her bones lies a-molderin' to this day, for what I know, in that hole on Battersea Common."

The sailor had finished his story. Paulina sat perfectly rigid, with dilated eyes, listening to every word. She spoke now:

"And the man who murdered her—tell me what he was like."

"I didn't see his face, miss; he was that muffled up with a great scarf, twisted round the lower part of his face, and a fur cap, with a peak pulled over his nose. He was tall and slim like; he wore a rough-looking greatcoat, and I took him to be a gentleman. But I shouldn't know him again if I saw him."

"Tall and slim, and like a gentleman." Paulina's thoughts were of Lord Montalien. He was tall and slim and gentlemanly. But deeply, strongly as she felt on this subject, she was too just to make any rash accusations in so supreme an hour.

She rose up with an effort that was almost painful. She knew the truth at last. Alice had been murdered!—gentle, loving Alice!—and for six long years had lain unburied and unavenged. She felt giddy and sick, as she stood up, and it was a moment before she could speak.

"I will call my father," she said. "Do you wait here. You must repeat your story to him. Something must be done, and at once!"

She opened the sitting-room door, and summoned both her father and Duke.

The two men looked at her in alarm—at her awfully corpse-like face.

"Paulina, my dearest, what is the matter?" exclaimed Robert Lisle. "What has this man been telling you? Your friend is—"

"Murdered, father—fouly murdered, six years ago—lying unburied and unavenged! Think of that! This man will repeat to you what he has said to me—the horrible story of a horrible murder."

"Too horrible for your ears, my poor, overwrought child. You look fit to die this moment. For pity's sake, go and lie down! Remember, you start upon a journey to-morrow, and

just now you appear more fitted for a sick-bed than a lengthy journey. Go to your mother, Paulina."

He kissed the deathlike face tenderly and led her from the room. She obeyed with weary patience. Was she ill? A dull, heavy pain throbbled in both temples; her forehead seemed encircled with an iron band; a hot mist dimmed her eyes. She had never been ill in her life; was she going to be ill now?

He left her in charge of her mother and Rosaana, and returned to the kitchen.

Mr. Bill Saunders, very much more at his ease, now that the beautiful lady with the marble-pale face was gone, repeated his story, almost word for word as he had told it to Paulina.

Duke listened, turning cold with pity and horror. Poor, little, pretty Alice! So sweet! so gentle!—beloved by all!—and this had been her fate!

"I shall lay this matter before the police at once," Mr. Lisle said. "You will accompany me to town to-morrow, my man, and repeat your story before the proper authorities. A most foul murder has been done, and must be brought to light."

Mr. Saunders expressed his readiness, and took his departure. He was stopping over night at one of the inns in the town, and would wait upon Mr. Lisle the first thing in the morning.

"This is a most shocking thing, Mason," he said; "and in Paulina's present state of health there is no telling what effect the news may have upon her. She seems to have been very strongly attached to this unfortunate Alice Warren."

"Very strongly," Duke answered, moved himself more than he cared to show. "It is her nature to love with her whole heart those whom she does love—and they were like sisters. Poor little Alice!"

"Who was the man with whom she eloped? Was it never known?"

"Never for certain."

"It was suspected?"

"It was."

"Who was the man?"

Duke hesitated. It had always been a story he had shrunk from—now more than ever.

"Who was the man with whom she fled?" Lisle repeated.

"The man to whom she fled I don't know. The man with whom she left Speekhaven was—Guy Earls court."

"Mason!"

"I can't help it," Duke said, doggedly. "Every one here

knows it. She left Speckhaven, and traveled up to London with Mr. Guy; and most people believe him guilty. I don't—I never did—no more does Marlow Warren or Paulina."

"Will you tell me all about it, Mason?" Lisle said, gravely. He was beginning to foresee the trouble in store for the young man he liked so strongly.

They sat together for over an hour. Duke, confining himself to simple facts, told all he knew—the letter Paulina had received, the flight in company with Guy the succeeding evening—of the revelation of Guy to Paulina at Brighton, which she had repeated to Duke. Lisle listened, growing more and more grave.

"Earls court is not the man," he said, decidedly. "Guy is simply incapable of luring any girl deliberately to her ruin, however many and great his faults of the past. For the charge of murder, in connection with him, it is of course utterly monstrous. But his leaving the place, and accompanying the girl to London may place him in a very disagreeable position until the criminal is found. Were none of the other men stopping at the Priory suspected at the time?"

"None. That is"—Duke hesitated—"Paulina suspected Lord Montalien; but Paulina's suspicions were scarcely unprejudiced. She always disliked his lordship. No one else ever suspected him, and there never was the slightest proof against him. He may have admired Alice, as they all did; but Guy was the only one among them with whom people connected her flight. It is a most mysterious and shocking affair altogether. I almost wish this sailor, having kept his confession so long, had kept it forever."

The kitchen door opened, and Olivia Lisle looked in. Her face had that anxious look it always wore when her husband was out of her sight.

"Are you here, Robert? Ah!" brightening as she saw him. "I thought perhaps you had gone out. Has that strange man left? What has he been saying to distress Paulina so?"

"Where is Paulina?" Robert Lisle asked, following her back to the parlor.

"Gone to her room—she would let neither Rosanna nor myself accompany her. She is altogether unfit to be left alone. She insists upon it, though. What is the matter?"

Lisle told the story the sailor had repeated—his wife and Rosanna listening, greatly shocked.

"And Paulina loved this girl as a sister," her mother said, rising. "Robert, I must go to her."

But Paulina's door was locked. There was no response to her mother's knock.

"Paulina, love, it is I—will you not let me in?" Mrs. Lisle said, in a frightened voice.

Still no reply. Terrified now beyond measure, Olivia's calls brought the other three to her side. In five minutes Robert Lisle's strong hands had forced the door. They entered, the lamp burne' upon the table, and Paulina was lying as she had evidently fallen, half across the bed. She never stirred at their entrance.

"The child has fainted!" Rosanna cried, shrilly.

Her father lifted her up. No, she had not fainted—she was lying in a sort of stupor, that rendered her deaf and blind. The last shock had finished the work Guy Earls court's sudden apparition weeks before had begun—body and brain had given way. Before morning broke Paulina Lisle lay tossing in the wild delirium of brain fever.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR A WOMAN'S SAKE.

For the first time in her four-and-twenty years of life Paulina lay ill—ill unto death. The airy upper chamber in which little Polly Mason had slept her brief, bright life away was silent and darkened now. A great London physician had been telegraphed for, and came, and Rosanna, grim and gray in the green dusk, took her place by the bedside of her nursling.

The great London doctor looked portentous, and shook his head. Flushed, and delirious, and restless, Paulina lay, talking incoherently—or tossing in hot, unrefreshing sleep—very, very ill. Of course all further thought of departure was at an end—who was to tell that Paulina Lisle's first journey might not be to the tomb?

And the grief of the faithful hearts, who loved her so devotedly—who shall paint that? They had to banish her mother by force from the sick-room—her self-command had all gone in those long, miserable years of asylum life, and her uncontrollable sobbing filled the place—she was utterly helpless and useless. It needed but one word from the husband to make her yield.

"You distress Rosanna—you may disturb Paulina—you will injure yourself—come, Olivia."

He was haggard and pale himself—his very life seemed bound up now in his new-found wife and child—that death or danger should approach either he had not dreamed. And death and danger were here. But his life's training never failed—his grave face told little of the bitter pain—the miserable dread within.

"You and I will go up to town, Mason," he said, "by the noonday train. Duty before all other things. If Paulina," he paused for a second—"were with us, she would listen to no delay. The information you can give may be needed. You will accompany me and this man Saunders."

"I will do whatever you think for the best, Mr. Lisle," answered Duke, but his reluctance was visible; "but I don't like—I don't like repeating this story. It places Mr. Guy in a false position, makes him appear guilty, and he is as innocent of any wrong against poor Alice as I am. It's a story I hate to tell any one—much less an official of the detective police."

Lisle laid his hand heavily on the scene painter's arm.

"Mason," he said, impressively, "Guy Earls court is as near to me as a son—more, it has been one of the dearest desires of my heart, since I have known him, that he should become my son. That hope I have not yet resigned, and in order that his character may be entirely freed from the slightest imputation of guilt, I wish this matter to be thoroughly investigated, and his part in it made clear to the world. He has suffered already too much in his reputation on this unhappy girl's account. The story of the flight, and the rest of it, is no secret; every man and woman in Speckhaven seems familiar with it. Better that the London police should hear it from your lips than listen to their garbled version. When the real criminal is found, Guy will be free from blame; never before."

The three men went up to London by the noon train. Alice's letter to Paulina, written the night before her flight, was searched for, and discovered among her papers. It told little to them, but there was no knowing what it might not reveal to the practiced eyes of a detective officer. They drove to Fleet street, and were set down before the office of Inspector Burnham, the detective, who had already discovered the hiding place of Olivia.

Mr. Burnham was at home—a wiry little man, in black clothes, with a sallow face, compressed lips, and light, restless eyes. Lisle introduced his two companions and began with the matter in hand at once.

Did Burnham remember the case of the missing girl, Alice Warren, for the discovery of whom a large reward had been offered about six years ago?

Mr. Burnham shook his head. There were so many missing people, and so many rewards offered, that it was impossible for any one human mind to recall them. Had they a copy of the advertisement? He would probably recollect if he saw it.

The sailor had. The paper that had attracted his attention in Liverpool he still carried about with him. He handed it now to the detective. Mr. Burnham recognized it at one glance.

"I remember," he said, "I remember. Case attracted considerable attention at the time. I was not concerned in it. Party missing never was found, or heard of, was she?"

"Never—up to the present. We think the clew is found now. We think the girl was murdered."

"Murdered!" Mr. Burnham pricked up his official ears at the agreeable sound of that word. "Ah!" with professional relish, "murdered, was she? And how long ago, and how was it, and how has it come to light?"

"Tell your story, Saunders," Mr. Lisle said. And Mr. Saunders, who was chewing tobacco, and spitting politely in a corner, removed his quid and repeated his story of Christmas Eve 1862.

Inspector Burnham listened keenly, never for one second taking his light, sharp eyes off the sailor's stolid, sunburned face.

"On Christmas Eve, 1862, precisely at half-past eight a. m." Mr. Burnham produced a dirty pocketbook and a stumpy pencil, which required to be sucked audibly before it would make its mark. "You're certain of the time, my man?" pausing with the stumpy pencil poised and transfixing Bill Saunders. "Precisely half-past eight when the shot was fired? You can swear to this, if necessary?"

"Before the Lord Chief Justice, sir," responded Saunders, sturdily: "My watch is a watch wot never goes wrong. It was twenty minutes to nine when that ere chap fired that ere shot, and it was just a quarter o' nine when he jumped in his trap and drove away. At nine, sharp, I left the place myself; it wasn't the sort o' pleasant spot to make a man linger."

"Let me see the locket," the detective said.

Robert Lisle handed it to him.

"You recognized this locket at once?" he inquired, examining closely the inscription and picture.

"My daughter recognized it; Mr. Mason, here, recognized it at first sight."

"I could swear to the locket," said Duke; "I was with Miss Lisle when she purchased it, and ordered the inscription to be engraved. That is also her picture, and a tress of her hair. It is impossible to be mistaken."

"Mr. Mason," said the detective, "will you be kind enough to tell me all you know of this girl's story. I recollect, quite distinctly now, the rumor that she ran away from home with

some one—a gentleman much above her in station. I am right, am I not?"

"About the rumor? Well, yes," Duke admitted, reluctantly, "she did run away."

"With——"

"She traveled up to London with Mr. Guy Earls court—Lieutenant Earls court he was then—second son of Lord Montalien. But mind you, she didn't run away with him."

"No?" Mr. Burnham was taking notes again, sucking the stumpy pencil, as if it had been a stick of candy, in the intervals. "She went up to London with him, but she didn't run away with him. Now, how was that?"

"They met; by chance, at the station," answered Duke, very much discomposed; "by the merest chance. She told him she was going up to London—it was late in the evening, and she was afraid to travel alone; and she asked him to take care of her."

"Just so; very natural. She asked him to take care of her. She had known Mr. Earls court a very long time, I suppose?"

"For two years, off and on."

"She was a very pretty girl—this Alice Warren?"

"Very pretty, indeed."

"Did any one present on the occasion hear this conversation passing between Miss Warren and Mr. Earls court at the station?"

"No one, that I am aware of."

"Mr. Earls court saw her to her destination, then. What was her destination?"

"Some lodging-house, Tottenham Court road way. I forget the exact address. He took her there, and left her in charge of the landlady."

"Ah!" Burnham said. "We must find that landlady. Do you know, Mr. Mason, if he ever saw her again?"

"Yes, once. He told her friend, Miss Lisle, that, several weeks after, he visited her at her lodgings, and that he found her much changed—looking ill and unhappy. He went again, next day, but in the meantime she had been removed. She has never been heard of since, until now."

"Humph!" Mr. Burnham said, with a thoughtful grunt. "Did Miss Warren leave no word, no message, no farewell, to anybody before quitting home?"

Lisle produced her note, and handed it to him.

"She wrote this to my daughter on the night preceding her departure. You will see she speaks of her marriage there for certain."

Mr. Burnham read the note attentively two or three times, then placed it with the locket in his desk.

"Miss Warren being a pretty girl, as you say, Mr. Mason, she had doubtless numbers of admirers both in her own station and above her. The month was September. Were there many gentlemen staying at Montalien Priory in September, 1862?"

"There were six," Duke answered, after a second's pause. "Lord Montalien himself, his brother Guy, Mr. Allan Fane, the artist, Sir Harry Gordon, Captain Cecil Villiers, and a Mr. Augustus Stedman. I remember all their names because there was so much talk at the time."

"Yes; and were any of those gentlemen admirers of Miss Warren? Did they visit at her father's house?"

"They all visited there—except, perhaps, Mr. Allan Fane, who was a married man, and out of the question."

"The others all visited at the bailiff's house, then. Did suspicion fall upon none of these?—did Miss Warren evince no partiality? It must have been pretty clear which she liked best, and she was evidently very much in love with the man she ran away to marry?"

Duke hesitated. He knew Paulina's suspicions of Lord Montalien, but they were only Paulina's suspicions—no one shared them. He had no right to repeat them.

"No," he answered, after that pause. "I never heard she evinced any particular partiality. They all went, and she was pleasant to all. I know no more."

"And I'm very much obliged to you for telling what you do know, I'm sure," Inspector Burnham said, politely. "Now, if I only had the addresses of those gentlemen—you couldn't furnish me with them, I suppose?"

No, Mr. Mason could not. Sir Harry Gordon and Captain Villiers were in the Guards, Mr. Allan Fane and Mr. Guy Earlescourt were in London, and easily to be found when wanted. And Lord Montalien was down in Lincolnshire, at the Priory, in very bad health.

Mr. Burnham shut up his pocketbook, locked his desk, looked at his watch, and got up.

"Half-past four. I don't see anything to hinder our taking a drive out to Battersea way, and having a look at this spot Mr. Saunders tells us of. We'll dismiss the cabs some distance off, and go on foot to the place."

He rang a bell, whispered a few words to a subordinate, and prepared for the drive.

"It's not likely the remains have ever been discovered, or we'd have heard of it. Curious how those things turn up."

"You didn't see the man's face, you say?" to Saunders. "You couldn't identify him again if you met, I suppose?"

"In course not," answered Saunders; "I never see his face. He had a muffler, or a comforter, twisted up to his nose, and it was snowin' like all creation. He was a tall, slim chap—I see that—with the look of a gentleman, but I couldn't tell him again not if I ran slap agin him this minute."

"Cabs waiting, sir," a voice called, and the men went out to the street. Two cabs were before the door, and in the foremost, which Inspector Burnham entered, a man sat who had an official air, like the inspector himself. A large box was placed on his knees.

"I'll go in this, with my friend Timmins," Burnham said. "You three gentlemen will take the four-wheeler."

He gave the word, and the cab started. In the second carriage the three men sat in profound silence. It was not a pleasant errand they were going upon—to look at the spot where poor Alice Warren had been so foully murdered, and find all that remained of her after six years.

The drive was not a very long one. As the bleak extent of waste ground came in view, bleak even this golden summer day, Inspector Burnham stopped the cab, and with his companion got out. That companion carried under his arm the box before spoken of, and in his left hand a light spade. The occupants of the second carriage looked with some curiosity at these things, but no one asked any questions.

"You are sure you will recognize the exact spot, Mr. Saunders?" the policeman asked.

"Sartin, sir," the seaman responded. "I've seen it, sleeping and waking, every day and night since I was unlucky enough to lay eyes on it first."

He went on ahead, the two detectives following, and Lish and Duke bringing up the rear. The July afternoon was at its mellowest as they crossed the common—yellow sunshine everywhere, and a bright, blue heaven over all. Ten minutes' walking, and the sailor stopped short.

"This here's the place, sir," he said to the detectives. "Things hasn't changed a mite since I was here six years ago. There's the old kiln, behind which I watched the man, and this here's the spot where I picked up the locket. Dig among this rubbish at the entrance, and you'll find all that's left of that there misfortunate young 'ooman."

The place to which he pointed was a sort of excavation, hollowed out of the high, clayey embankment, the entrance choked up with rubbish of every sort.

"Dig, Timmins," Inspector Burnham said, sententiously, and laying down his box.

Timmins set to work. The dry rubbish came away easily enough. Five minutes' work, and the entrance was cleared.

Mr. Burnham stooped and looked in. The hollow place was quite dark and quite dry—an earthy odor alone was perceptible. It was tolerably large, not high enough for a man to stand upright in. It had evidently been made and used long ago for the purpose of holding tools.

"Fetch along the lantern, Timmins," the detective said. "I thought it might be dark," to Mr. Lisle, "and came provided. If you please, I'll trouble you to follow me in."

Timmins produced a small lantern from the box, lighted the candle, and handed it to his superior officer. Inspector Burnham went in at once, holding the light before him.

Lisle followed. The place was perfectly dry and of considerable extent.

Three steps from the entrance, and what they sought was found.

A human skull lay at the detective's feet, human bones lay scattered and dry and fleshless, a mass of long, brown hair, and torn fragments of a woman's dress.

"Look!" said Inspector Burnham.

He picked up the skull with perfect coolness, and passed it to his companion.

But Robert Lisle declined taking it by a motion. Death, in its most horrible forms, had been familiar to him in his checkered career; soldiers he had seen mown down like corn before the sickle; but this was different.

A helpless woman, murdered in cold blood, is, perhaps, of all terrible and unnatural things, the most terrible and unnatural. And this woman had been his beloved daughter's dearest friend.

"Timmins," Mr. Burnham said, setting down his light, and getting on his knees, "fetch us the box."

Timmins groped his way in—the box was evidently brought for the purpose of removing the remains. Lisle watched the detective and the sergeant, wondering at their professional coolness. They gathered together everything—hair—bones—every shred of dress.

"Have we all?" asked the inspector, peering with his lantern over the ground.

"I think so. No—not all; what's this?"

It was a tiny silken bag, with a string, as if it had been worn about the neck. Something like paper crackled within. Inspector Burnham opened the little bag, and drew out a slip of paper. Was it a marriage certificate? No, it was an address—the address of Lieutenant Guy Earls court, Piccadilly—the address Guy had turned back to give Alice on the night

of her arrival at Gilbert's Gardens, when he had told her, if ever in trouble or need, to send to him, and he would come to her.

She had kept it always in grateful remembrance—poor Alice—of his kind words and looks. And now it had come to bear silent witness against him.

Nothing remained—the box and its ghastly contents were taken out by Timmins. The three men once more stood in the bright sunlight, and the secret of that dark excavation was its secret no longer.

Timmins shouldered the box and started back for his cab—the others following—silent, gloomy. All save Inspector Burnham—his silence was the silence of deep thought, not gloom. Here was a splendid case cropping up—a case that would create an excitement throughout the length and breadth of England.

The Honorable Guy Earls court, the brother of Lord Montalien, the popular author, hunted down for murder, and by him, Inspector Burnham. Why, if he could track the deed clearly home to him, his reputation for life was made.

He linked his arm in Duke's, who would much rather not, and drew him a little behind.

"I have another question to ask you, Mr. Mason. Are you aware by what name this Miss Warren went in her lodgings? An assumed name, I'll wager."

"It was an assumed name," answered Duke. "She was known as Mrs. Brown."

"And how do you happen to be aware of it? Oh," carelessly, "Mr. Earls court, no doubt, informed Miss Lisle?"

"He did."

"Mrs. Brown." The notebook and pencil came out again. "Tottenham Court road, I think? You don't remember, or, perhaps, you never heard, the name of the landlady? It's essential to find that woman, Mr. Mason."

"I have heard the name, but I forget. It began with an H—Holmes, or Hayes, something of that kind."

"But Miss Lisle will remember, no doubt?"

"Miss Lisle is ill of brain fever—she will remember nothing." Duke said, and relapsed into silence and gloom.

Mr. Burnham left Duke and approached Saunders.

"And where shall we find you, my man, when we want you? You are the most important personage in the matter just now, and must give bonds by and by for your appearance when called upon. Do you return to Lincolnshire or remain in London?"

"I stays here," Saunders answered; "I ain't got no business in Lincolnshire, and I mean to stay ashore until I see

the end of this here matter. When you wants me I'm on hand and willin'."

He gave an address. Mr. Burnham took it down. Then they re-entered their respective cabs, and drove back to London.

It was very late when Mr. Lisle and Duke reached home. Olivia flew to her husband as she always did, whether his absence was long or short, forgetting, in the rapture of his return, everything else for the moment.

Paulina was much the same—no better—no worse—knowing no one—restless—parched with thirst—delirious always, calling—sleeping and waking—for "Alice, Alice!"

Inspector Burnham, of the Metropolitan Police, went to work at once, and with a will, working up this extraordinary case; extraordinary only in that so distinguished a man as Guy Earls-court was the suspected criminal. He notified the coroner of the district, and placed the box and its dreadful contents under his charge. And then he set to work to hunt up the lodging-house in Tottenham Court road, to which Mr. Earls-court had brought Alice Warren.

The task was not difficult to a man of Mr. Burnham's skill and experience. Mrs. Howe still resided at the same place, and in the same house, and remembered, very readily, when Mr. Burnham asked the question about the "Mrs. Brown" who six years before had been her lodger.

"Which a nicer young persing, or one as gave less trouble, never set foot in this 'ouse since or before," said Mrs. Howe; "and from the day she left to this minute, I've never heard tale or tidings. And I do 'ope, sir, as 'ow the poor lady is well and 'appy, which she certainly was neither when she left here."

"Neither well nor happy? I'm sorry to hear that. Mr. Brown, perhaps, treated her unkindly?"

"Brown!" cried Mrs. Howe, in shrill scorn; "no more Brown than I'm a Dutchman! He was a millingtary swell, as I always said it from the first, and always shall, and whether she was his wife or not, he knows best. She thought she was, poor dear, for a more innocent crecter never came up from the country to go to her ruining and misery in London. He was a millingtary gent, and the very 'andsomest I ever see, though his haactions were the reverse of 'andsome. Not but that he paid up the bill without a word—hasking for a receipt in that 'aughty way of his—but he treated her shameful, poor soul, and left her to worrit herself to a shadder, as she was when took away."

"A millingtary gent," repeated Mr. Burnham. "What was he like, Mrs. Howe?"

"Tall and 'andsome, carrying his 'ead like that,"—Mrs. Howe flung up her own—"dark-complected, dark-heyed, black 'air, very glossy, curly, and black mustache. I never 'ad a good look at his face, but once—the night he first brought her here—he halways came muffled up hafterwards, but I see him as plain now as I did that minute."

"Is this anything like him?" inquired Mr. Burnham, quietly. He produced a photograph, and Mrs. Howe uttered a cry of recognition.

"That's him! that's him—Mrs. Brown's 'usband! That's the very gent I mean—I could tell that picture anywhere!"

Mr. Burnham replaced the photograph of Guy Earls court in his pocket.

"Now, Mrs. Howe," he said, "I'll tell you who I am. I'm Inspector Burnham, of the detective force."

Mrs. Howe gave a gasp. "Don't be afraid; I'll not do you any harm. This young woman, you knew as Mrs. Brown, is missing—has been for some years back—and we want to find her, that's all. What you've got to do is to tell me every-thing you knew from the hour Mrs. Brown entered your house until she left it."

He produced the notebook, and gave the stumpy pencil a preparatory lick.

Mrs. Howe, in mortal terror of a detective, began at the beginning—the visit of Augustus Stedman to engage the rooms for a "party from the country, a runaway match, going to be married the day after her arrival." "Which," said Mrs. Howe, "them were his own expressions."

"You don't know this young man's name?"

No; Mrs. Howe had never heard it, and never set eyes on him again, though he did call on the young lady next morning.

"Describe him."

This was not so easy as describing Guy. Mr. Earls court's was a face, once seen, very easily remembered. Mrs. Howe had a good memory for faces, however, and hit off Mr. Stedman pretty well.

"We'll find him when we want him, I dare say," said the detective, writing rapidly. "Go ahead, Mrs. Howe."

Mrs. Howe described the arrival of Guy and Alice about midnight, and the appearance of both.

Mr. Burnham produced a second portrait, this time of Alice, procured from Speckhaven.

"Is this anything like her?"

"As like as like—that's Mrs. Brown, as I saw her first; as sweet and pretty a face as ever I set my heyes on. Not that her good looks lasted long, poor thing."

"What was the gentleman's manner?—affectionate, now, as a lover's might be?"

"Well—yes," hesitating somewhat; "he seemed very careful of her and that, and called her 'Halice,' and when he said good-by, and left the room, he ran back to her again. Yes, he was affectionate, Mr. Burnham, sir."

"Did you hear her address him by his Christian name?"

The landlady shook her head.

"No, sir, she didn't in my hearing; I should have remembered it if she had. No, sir, she didn't. And then he went away, and she went up to bed. And the next afternoon, about six o'clock I think it was, a cab drove up, and a gentleman got out, and ran upstairs. I went to the front window to see them going hoff to be married, but I couldn't see his face. He had a wide, black hat, slouched down over his nose, and his coat collar, that turned up—there was no getting a look at him. And it was after dark before they came back. And when he came after that, it was halways in a sort of disguise. Most of the times I was busy in the kitchen, and didn't see him at all—when I did, I couldn't get another look at his face. He generally came about dusk, too, and the passage is dark. No, sir, except the first night, I never got a look at Mrs. Brown's 'usband's face."

Mrs. Howe had very little more real information to give Mr. Burnham. Would she try, and think—had not the tall, dark, military young gentleman called afterward, unuffled and undisguised?"

Mrs. Howe shook her head. Not that she had ever seen; but now Mr. Burnham spoke of it, she did remember Sarah Hann (the girl) telling her of a visitor Mrs. Brown had had in her absence, who called early, and on the first occasion brought a bouquet of roses. She had been very busy at the time, and paid but little attention. It was the very day before Mrs. Brown left. Later that same afternoon her husband had called. It might and it might not be him as had brought the roses. She herself had let him in. It was dark and rainy, she remembered, and he had a shawl wound about the lower part of his face. He and Mrs. Brown had quarreled—they had heard her crying, and his voice raised as if in anger. He had paid the bill himself in the passage, and informed her her lodger would leave next day. So she had—for the country somewhere, she had told Mrs. Howe on goin'; "and if ever any poor soul looked heartbroke," the landlady pathetically concluded, "it was Mrs. Brown as she got into the cab and drove away. From that day to this I've never set eyes or heard tell of her, but Sarah Hann, she told me next day, when I came home from market, how the tall, dark

gent
seem
clude
peopl
took
Mr
shool
dead
more
affyd
"A
tor
in w
disce
left
little

Tw
of th
of ou
whom
of la
room
tures
atelic
haire
Broth

Th
have
He s
great
weak
ago.
faire
his l
gray
geniv
hims
caus
enou
A
Paul
his
that
orco
press
wedo

gent had been back again, haskin' for Mrs. Brown, and seemed upset like when told she was gone. "Which," concluded the landlady, "was like his 'cartless tricks to deceive people, and made them think as 'ow he wasn't the party as took her away himself."

Mr. Burnham inquired for "Sarah Hann." Mrs. Howe shook her head in a melancholy way. "Sarah Hann had been dead and gone these two years of a decline. She had no more to tell. To what she had told she was ready to take her affidavit in any court in London."

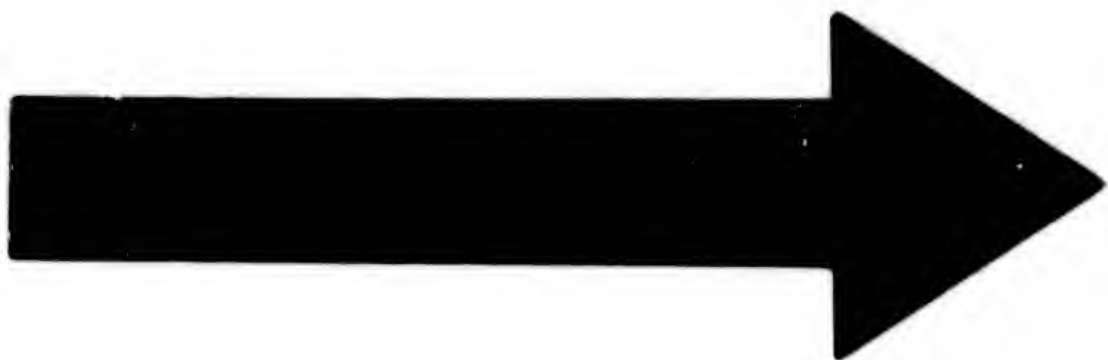
"And I'm very much obliged to you, Mrs. Howe," Inspector Burnham said, rising to depart, "for the pleasant manner in which you have given your information. If we can only discover now, whereabouts Mr. Brown took his wife when she left Gilbert's Gardens, I think we shall have a very pretty little case worked up. Good-day to you, ma'am."

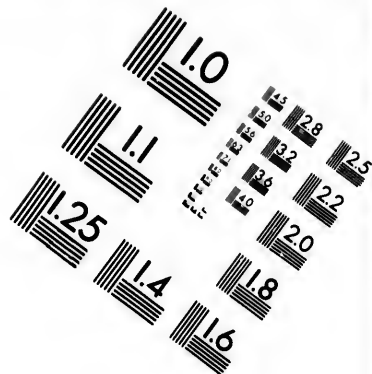
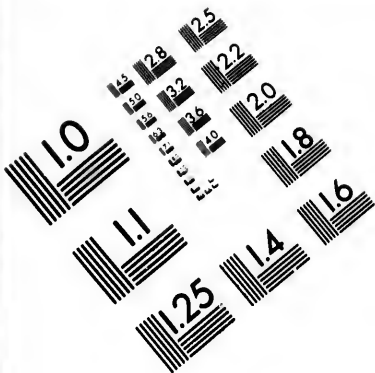
* * * * *

Two days later, and in his studio, with the slanting rays of the July sun streaming in upon the canvas, an old friend of ours stands, busily painting. It is Allan Fane, the artist, whom, in the press of others' affairs, we have quite lost sight of lately. The studio is a very small, very luxurious little room, sacred to the artist himself, his most cherished pictures, and most intimate friends. There is a larger, outer atelier, where gentlemen congregate to smoke and talk—long-haired gentlemen mostly, who didn't patronize barbers—the Brotherhood of the Brush.

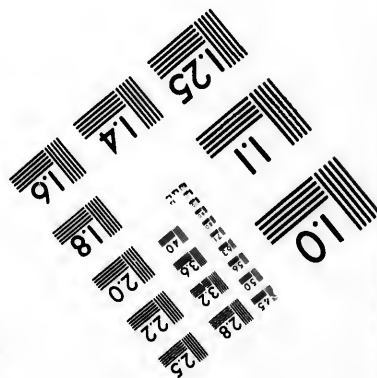
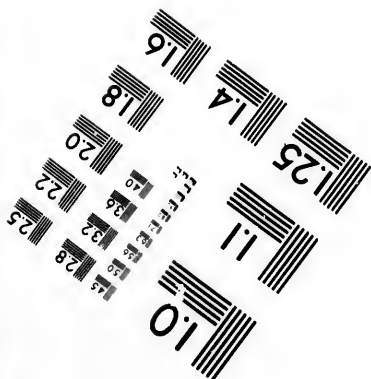
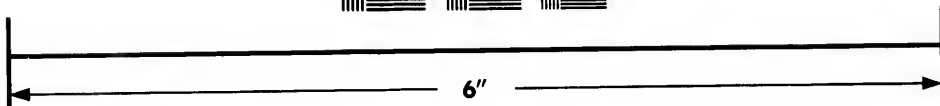
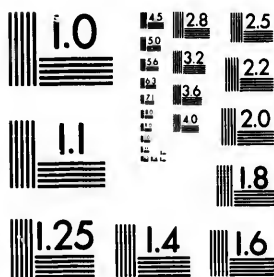
The years that have been so fraught with events for others, have not passed without change over the head of Allan Fane. He stands here to-day with the yellow sunshine on his face, greatly changed, greatly improved, from the effeminate, weakly, indolent, and selfish young man, who, eight years ago, fell in love with and deserted little Polly Mason. The fairer, somewhat womanish beauty of his face remains, but his long, golden beard, and the firmer curve of the lips, the graver light of the eyes, tell now of strength and power—ay, genius within. He is a celebrated man—he has won for himself fame and wealth; and the Bond street tailor has cause at last to be proud of his son—a son, who has sense enough to be ashamed of his humble origin no more.

A month after that October day on which he had met Paulina down in Speckhaven, after her return from France, his wife had died abroad. Her fortune had gone with her—that fortune for which he had so weakly sold himself, and once more he was free. He tried, manfully enough, to repress the feeling of relief and gladness that would arise—his wedded life had been unspeakably bitter, and eight months





**IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)**



**Photographic
Sciences
Corporation**

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

15
18
20
22
25
28
32
36
40
45
50
56
63
71
80
90
100

10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
50
56
63
71
80
90
100

after their union they had parted by mutual consent—and he was free—and Paulina Lisle.

He went back to his brush and easel, and worked as he had never worked in his life before. The picture was his long-dreamed-of, long-talked-of "Rosamond and Eleanor;" and he painted his Rosamond from memory. All that winter he spent at Montalien Priory over this one painting, and in the spring it went to the exhibition. On the chances of that picture his whole future hung—if it failed, his ruin was complete. The picture was a great, a wonderful success—crowds flocked daily to see it, the newspapers praised and abused it without bounds—all London talked of it, a royal duke bought it a fabulous price—orders rushed in upon him, and the artist's fortune was made. The world had not seen Paulina Lisle then, but a little later, and people began to talk of the marvelous resemblance between Sir Vane Charteris' ward and the fair Rosamond, and to discover that Miss Lisle must have sat for the original.

The picture was a striking one.

You saw a bleak stone hall; a red, rising moon through its one wide-open casement, rending its way up through piles of jagged black clouds. Queen Eleanor stood, a wrathful, murderous woman, robed in heavy purple draperies, with bent, black brows, and eyes of dusky fire, proffering the bowl and dagger. Rosamond stood with the red light of the rising moon upon her fair face and flowing golden hair—a form slender and girlish, drawn up to its fullest height—the face white as death, the blue eyes flashing as blue eyes only flash; the whole fearless face full of pride and defiant scorn.

So, surely, never looked the fair, frail mistress of the king, confronted by the jealous wife, but so Allan Fane had chosen to paint her. The face shone out so vividly, so startlingly lifelike, from the canvas, that you seemed to hear the scornful words of defiance with which she braved the infuriate queen. Had Paulina Lisle ever really looked like that, people wondered? No; but in the twilight of a summer day, Polly Mason had, as she flung his ring at Allan Fane's feet, and stood before him in her new-found womanhood, scorning him.

While life remained, Allan Fane would never forget how she looked, how she spoke then.

The picture was a success, and his fortune made.

He did not go into society that year; he heard in silence of her beauty and her triumphs; and the second season he met her. The old love, stronger than ever, filled his heart—he was famous now, and rapidly acquiring wealth, and he laid his laurel crown very humbly at her feet. He loved her

devotedly—with a love that knew no change—would she be his wife? Her answer had been a refusal, a refusal that crushed out every atom of hope.

"The time for all that is past, Mr. Fane," she said, quietly. "I could not care for you now if I tried. Will you let me be your friend? Your wife I never can be. It is too late."

Too late! The old, dreary refrain. Once her love had been within his grasp, and he had turned away from the gift, and now it was too late! He accepted his fate, with a brave patience that made her like him as nothing else could have done, and they had been "friends," as she wished it, since.

There are not many men who will remain the faithful friend of the woman who refuses them—Allan Fane was one.

Wisdom and generosity were coming to him with years and suffering:

He stands this July afternoon painting busily. He is not alone. On a Turkish divan, smoking a long, twisted pipe, stretched at full length, lies Guy Earls court. It is the last day of his stay in England—by the latest train he departs for Liverpool, to sail to-morrow for New York, and his last hour he is spending with his friend. A greyhound lies at his feet, and looks up in his face with darkly loving eyes, as Guy pulls his long ears through his fingers.

There is silence in the little room—the artist works industriously, and Guy smokes and watches with dreamy eyes a picture hanging opposite. It is the fair head and graceful throat of a girl in her first youth—the lips wear a saucy smile, the sapphire eyes sparkle with laughing light, and follow you wherever you go: The picture is richly framed, and never leaves that spot—it is a portrait of "Polly Mason."

"What do you think of it, Guy?" the artist says, at length catching the glance. "It is like her, I think, as—as we knew her first."

It was almost the only time her name had passed his lips to Guy. He dreamed not of the young author's secret, of course, but he had seen them together, noted, with surprise, the marked restraint and avoidance between them, and felt there must be a secret behind.

"Very like," Guy answered; "so like that I can see that birthday *fete* and her, as she stood dancing in the sunshine. Allan; I should like a copy of that picture to take with me—"

"To your second exile? You shall have it. I have already promised a copy to another old friend of hers—Duke Mason. What a strangely checkered life hers has been—little Polly Mason—reject a duke! Guy, I wonder why she threw over Heatherland? It is not like Paulina."

Before Guy could speak, the door opened, and Paulina Lisle's father stood before them. Guy sprang erect.

"My dear colonel! You here! I thought you had left England a week ago. Nothing wrong, I hope?"

For Robert Lisle was very pale, very worn, and grave.

"Mrs. Lisle!—Paulina!" Guy exclaimed; "they are well, colonel?"

He still addressed him by the familiar title that had been his when they first met.

"Paulina is ill—very ill. I knew it was your last day in London, and I called to tell you. Your people said I would find you here."

Allan Fane dropped his brush, and turned very pale. Guy listened—what he felt, his dark face showing little.

"Very ill," he repeated slowly; "how long?"

"She was taken ill on the night you left us. It is brain fever. She had received a terrible shock—the revelation of the death of a dear friend, and this, coupled with exposure to damp and previous ill-health, brought about this result. She has been delirious ever since—she is so still. What the end will be Heaven only knows."

He walked away to the window. Dead silence fell. It was broken by a tap at the door, and the entrance of a servant with a card.

"Inspector Burnham, of the Metropolitan Police," read Mr. Fane, aloud. "Who the deuce is Inspector Burnham, and what does he want here?"

Robert Lisle wheeled round from the window with a startled expression.

"He says his business is with Mr. Earls court, sir," the man answered, "and is most pressing."

Fane looked doubtfully at his friend.

"I don't know what he wants," Guy said, answering that look; "but I'll see him all the same, with your permission, Fane."

Mr. Burnham appeared on the instant. He bowed respectfully to Lisle and addressed Guy.

"I believe," Inspector Burnham began, politely, "I am speaking to the Honorable Guy Earls court?"

Guy nodded.

"I have been informed, Mr. Earls court, that it is your intention to sail to-morrow for New York. Is it true?"

"It is quite true," answered Guy. "May I ask, in turn, how my departure can possibly concern you?"

"In this way, Mr. Earls court—that it must be postponed."

"Indeed! And why?"

Mr. Burnham glanced at Mr. Lisle, who had grown even

paler than upon his entrance, coughed apologetically, and drew a step nearer.

"My business here is of a very unpleasant nature, but it must be done." He laid his hand suddenly and heavily upon Guy's shoulder. "Mr. Earls-court, I arrest you on the charge of having caused, or been party to, the death of Alice Warren, on the morning of Christmas Eve, 1862. Mr. Guy Earls-court, sir, you must consider yourself my prisoner."

There was an exclamation from Allan Fane—a deepening of the gray pallor upon Robert Lisle's face. For Guy, he shook off the hand of the detective, and stood looking at him—only one expression in his eyes; an expression of utter amaze.

"The death of Alice Warren!" he exclaimed. "You mean to tell me that Alice Warren is dead!"

"Alice Warren has been murdered," repeated Inspector Burnham; "foully murdered, on the morning of Christmas Eve, 1862."

"Murdered!" he repeated the horrible word, staring at the officer mechanically. "Great Heaven!"

His thoughts flew to his brother, and at the awful possibility that suggested itself his dark face blanched to the hue of ashes. Alice Warren murdered. He remembered her as he had seen her last, wretched and alone in a wild winter storm—he remembered the look his brother's face had worn a few hours later when he had spoken of her. Who but Montalien had an interest in her death? Every trace of color slowly faded from his face, leaving him white to the very lips. Inspector Burnham saw the change—was it the consciousness of guilt, he wondered? Guy slowly recovered himself, and spoke:

"Will you tell me, Mr. Burnham," he said, "what proofs you have that Alice Warren is dead at all, and why you have cause to suspect me?"

Before the detective could speak, Robert Lisle came hastily forward.

"Allow me," he said. "I was about to tell you of this, Guy, when Burnham entered. My share in bringing about this *denouement* you must hear from my own lips."

And then he told the story of the sailor's arrival at the cottage, and the confession made to Paulina, which had ended in her dangerous illness of his and Duke's visit the next day to Inspector Burnham, and of their discovery at Battersea.

"Inspector Burnham knew from us, Guy, that you were the companion of Alice Warren from Lincolnshire to London; that you saw her afterward at her lodgings—facts we knew

you would have willingly, freely, told him yourself, had you been present. I never dreamed though that——”

Guy grasped his hand.

“Say no more! You did quite right. My share in this unhappy girl's story the whole world is free to hear. But murdered! Good Heaven! It seems too horrible! I cannot realize it! When did you say?”

“On the morning of Christmas Eve, 1862, between the hours of eight and nine. Of course, this preposterous charge against you will fall to the ground immediately. I only wonder at a man of Mr. Burnham's astuteness bringing it forward at all. You will prove an *alibi* at once. Carry your mind back to Christmas Eve, six years ago—the very time, was it not, when you left England? Try and recollect where and with whom you were on Christmas Eve, between the hours of eight and nine.”

Robert Lisle laid his hand affectionately on the young man's shoulder, and looked into his face; and the whole truth burst upon Guy.

On Christmas Eve, 1862, between the hours of eight and nine, his strange marriage had taken place!

What singular fatality was this! A dark-red flush rose up over his olive face, then faded slowly and entirely away. He was very pale, but perfectly calm, as he turned to the detective.

“Have you a cab, Mr. Burnham? I am quite at your service. An absurd mistake this, colonel!” turning, with a smile, to Lisle, and holding out his hand, “which will postpone my journey to New York. Farewell, for the present! Let us hope a few days will set this ridiculous error right!”

“But, good Heaven, Guy!” burst forth the artist, “you can surely disprove this monstrous charge at once! Make an effort—you certainly remember what you were doing, and with whom you were on Christmas Eve at that hour.”

“I remember very distinctly what I was doing, and with whom I was,” Guy said, coolly. “I do not see fit, however, just at present, to take Mr. Burnham into my confidence. I am quite ready to go with him at any moment.”

“And when the time comes—in a few hours, or days—you will prove an *alibi* and overthrow this preposterous charge?” Lisle demanded, in intense anxiety.

Guy looked at him with a smile—a smile that seemed to have some strange, hidden meaning in its depth.

“And if I cannot prove an *alibi*—if I cannot, or will not, reveal where and with whom I was on that day and at that hour, will you believe me guilty, colonel?”

“Never!” answered Robert Lisle, firmly. “But you do not mean this, Guy?”

“I mean it. This charge must, and will, doubtless, fall to the ground of itself; but, come what may, it is out of my power to prove an *alibi*. Good-by, for the present! The inquest, no doubt, will set this disagreeable business all right.”

He was gone before they could speak—Mr. Burnham’s prisoner. He sat back in the carriage, his hand pressed over his eyes.

“Come what may, I will keep my oath!”

He remembered the words well, and to whom they were spoken. Come what might, the secret of that Christmas Eve never could, never would be revealed

CHAPTER VII.

“SEMPER FIDELIS.”

After the arrest of Guy Earls court every effort was made to persuade him to tell where he was on the morning of Christmas Eve between the hours of eight and nine, but he persisted in refusing to give any information on the subject.

The trial and all the evidence occupied four days, and the verdict of the jury was “that the remains found were those of Alice Warren, and that she came to her death by a pistol shot fired by the hand of Guy Earls court, on the 24th of December, 1862.”

The coroner then made out his warrant committing Guy Earls court to prison for safe keeping until set free by due course of law.

Most faithful of all his friends had been Robert Lisle. He called on him every day. His own private troubles were lessening. His daughter had been pronounced out of danger and was now able to sit up. But he could not leave England while his young friend’s fate remained undecided. All his efforts and persuasions, however, to get Guy to state where he had been on that fateful morning were of no avail. He was with him the day before the trial, and as he was about to leave, Guy asked hesitatingly, “Miss Lisle continues to improve, I trust?”

“Not as she should,” answered her father gloomily. “The doctors speak of hidden trouble, something preying on her mind, and advise change of air and climate; the old stereotyped formula.”

“You should follow their advice,” said Guy, “take her abroad immediately. I hope she does not know of my

affair. For the sake of past times, when we were good friends, I should not like her to know I am even suspected of the murder of her friend. You have not told her?"

"Most certainly not. And, strange to say, she has made no inquiries whatever on the subject of her dead friend since her recovery. She is in a state of apathy that seems to blot out ail feeling and memory. She never reads, she sees no visitors, and we tell her nothing."

Guy drew a long breath of relief. "I am glad of that. Take her out of England in ignorance if you can, and let her never know of this if it is in your power to prevent it." And after a pause: "I may tell you now what I would not tell you out there in Virginia. I love Paulina with a love that is as devoted as it is hopeless. Alice Warren was to her as a sister, and I cannot endure that she should think I was suspected of her murder. Promise me, old friend, that you will do this, the greatest, the last favor, I shall ask of you. Promise."

"I promise," Lisle answered, wringing the young man's hand, "but sooner or later she must learn the truth in spite of me."

At ten o'clock the next morning the prisoner was taken to the court. Mr. Fane was the first witness and he had very little light to throw upon the case one way or another. Had seen prisoner in company with Miss Warren many times. Both the September of her flight and other years during his summer visits to Montalien Priory. Had never thought Mr. Earls court a lover of hers; had not known him to pay any more attention to her than other men did stopping at the Priory. Knew that he went up to London one evening late in September; could not remember the date. Heard next that Miss Warren was missing and had gone with him. Was surprised at the news. Did not credit it. Believed Mr. Earls court's own statement that he had met her by accident. Knew that the reputation of the prisoner had not been stainless in the past, but his guilt had been the common follies of youth, never crimes.

A profound sensation ran through the court at the name of the next witness. It was Francis Baron Montalien, the prisoner's brother. His face was deathly pale as he was sworn, and when he spoke his voice was almost inaudible from agitation, the natural agitation of an upright man seeing his only brother placed in so dreadful a position.

He had known Miss Warren for many years, and always had the highest respect for her personally and for the whole family. Had visited the cottage often in passing, and had met his brother there. Had frequently jested him

about
never
to I
hear
and
tried
had
Lo
down
path
thro
the
regi
hand
liber
in h
C
to S
He
else
love
mer
stay
from
the
ber
sm
bec
Gu
an
nig
se
is
br
co
w
a
g
t
c
v
r

about his attentions to the bailiff's pretty daughter, but had never considered them serious. Knew that his brother went to London on the evening of the 27th, but did not hear of the girl's flight until the next day. Was surprised and shocked when informed they had fled together. Had tried to speak with him on the subject several times, but had always been rebuffed.

Lord Montalien was cross-examined and allowed to stand down. His emotion had been very great. Profound sympathy for his delicate health and deep sorrow was felt through the court. His face was quite ghastly as he left the witness box, his hand was pressed convulsively in the region of his heart. Guy's dark eyes followed him, his handsome face set and stern. He had listened to his deliberate perjury, and if any doubt of his guilt had lingered in his mind it was dispelled in that hour.

Captain Cecil Villiers came next, and with every wish to save his friend, did more to hang him than all the rest. He had known Alice Warren, and admired her as every one else did. Was not aware that Guy Earls court had been her lover, and believed that the meeting at the railway had been mere chance, as he had been told. Mr. Earls court had stayed at his lodgings for two days previous to his departure from England. He had been absent on duty nearly all of the 23d of December. Found the prisoner in his chambers upon his return late at night. They had sat together smoking and talking for a couple of hours before going to bed. Awakening next morning about daylight, he had seen Guy in the room adjoining dressing himself by candlelight, and asked him what he was getting up in the middle of the night for. The prisoner had answered that it was half past seven, that he had a pressing engagement for eight. "There is a lady in the case, Villiers," he had said, "and ladies brook of no delay." He came back about half past nine covered with snow. He said he had been out riding, and was tremendously hungry. We breakfasted together. At a little before eleven he left, and two hours later I saw him go off on the noon train for Southampton.

While Captain Villiers was having all this reluctantly extorted from him, a messenger had made his way to the prisoner's counsel, Mr. Carson, and placed a note in his hand. It was of evident importance, for the face of the lawyer flushed up with surprise and delight as he read it.

When the case for the prosecution closed with everything pointing to the guilt of the prisoner, Mr. Carson rose, and after a few prefatory remarks on the evidence given he observed that, in regard to the silence of the prisoner as to

his doings on the morning of that memorable Christmas Eve, Mr. Earls court had admitted that there was a lady in the case, and this was the truth, but that lady was not the murdered girl, as he was prepared to show the court, for his client had been from eight till nine in the morning, the time when the murder was committed at Battersea, in company of this lady and her maid. Illness had prevented her hearing of Mr. Earls court's arrest until yesterday, when she was away in her home in the country. To-day she was—here!

The door of the witness box opened and a lady stood there, tall, elegant, veiled. She lifted one gloved hand and flung back her veil, and four hundred eager eyes fell and fixed on the proudly beautiful face of Paulina Lisle. She was white as marble as she faced the bench. Once and once only she looked at the prisoner. He dropped his head, and until he stood up free he did not raise it again.

Mr. Carson leaned forward and blandly spoke.

"Your name, madam, if you please?"

To the legal gentlemen present Miss Lisle was well known by reputation, the celebrated London beauty, who only a few weeks ago had refused to marry the Marquis of Heatherland. And the beautiful wealthy heiress and belle stood here in a London police court, to vindicate the innocence of a man suspected of murder! She came and stepped forward. For an instant the blood rose up bright in her pale face. Then, in that sweet vibrating voice, that had always been one of her chief charms, she spoke:

"I am called Paulina Lisle, but it is not my name. Wait; when you have heard what I am here to say you will understand."

There were scores present who knew her well, but with the exception of two none of them understood what this meant. Even her father stood confounded.

Simply and without hesitation she told the story of her marriage to Guy Earls court. It took her upwards of an hour. She grew faint and giddy before it was done. She reeled with the last words—she looked like death, and as permission was given her to stand down she had to grasp the rails to keep from falling. A second later she was in her father's arms—lifeless and cold. For the first time in her life Paulina had fainted entirely away.

Her maid, Jane Seaver, was called to the stand, and gave her evidence with a clearness and precision that carried conviction to every hearer. It vindicated Guy completely. She swore positively to the time, at the hour when the murder had been committed—Mr. Earls court had been every instant

with her and her mistress. No cross-examination could shake or alter her.

Guy was free!

At this moment a man rushed into the courtroom and called out: "I demand to be sworn. My name is Augustus Stedman."

At sight of the newcomer a grayish pallor had spread over the face of Lord Montalien. The game was up! He had thought Stedman safe in Australia for life, and yonder he stood, speaking the words that told his life away. There was a singing in his ears, a mist before his eyes, for a moment a sharp, sudden pain in his left side. He had reason to dread those swift keen pangs. His medical men looked grave when he spoke of them, and warned him to avoid agitation of all kinds. He made no attempt whatever to leave the court; a fascination he was powerless to control chained him to the spot where he stood. His life perhaps depended on his escape now, but he stood there listening as greedily as the most unconcerned spectator.

Clearly Augustus Stedman told the shameful story in all its details: the mock marriage, which turned out to be a real one, the heartless manner in which the poor girl had been neglected when her noble husband had tired of her, which he had done in a very short time, his ambition to marry the rich Miss Lisle, and his reasons for wishing to get rid of the wife who had become so distasteful to him.

At the close of this recital Guy Earls court was dismissed and the heavy hand of Inspector Burnham fell with grim satisfaction on the shoulder of Lord Montalien, who seemed dazed and looked straight before him with a sightless stare. They led him from the courtroom. He went peacefully. Once he looked back. He saw his brother surrounded by an eager throng shaking hands and congratulating him. Their glance met. He turned away. He had looked his last on the face of the brother he had hated all his life.

That night, alone in his cell, he thought of Guy free, and himself here. Guy was the husband of Paulina, and he was the murderer of Alice. Guy would inherit the title and estates; his children and Paulina's would grow up amid the green beauty of Montalien; and he—

A vision of a gray dawn rose before him—of a gaping, eager crowd—of a scaffold, ghastly in the chill light—of a condemned man, led forth to die. He fell down on the bed with a cry of anguish and despair, and lay still.

The next morning when the jailer brought in his breakfast, he was surprised to find his prisoner still asleep. He approached the bed, bent down, listened for his breathing,

"Semper Fidelis."

placed his hand upon the region of his heart, felt the pulse, and stood upright. Lord Montalien was dead! Friendless and alone in the dismal prison room the dark spirit of Alice Warren's murderer had gone forth to answer for its crimes.

Before the sun set that August day, the ceremony performed by the London registrar was repeated by the rector of Speckhaven in Duke Mason's little parlor. Ten minutes after the benediction had been pronounced there stood before them a legal-looking gentleman who took Guy aside and whispered in his ear the news of his brother's death. It gave him a pang, the thought of how he died; but there was not a creature on earth who really regretted the dead man. So in the hour of her marriage Paulina was Lady Montalien. They left England at once and went abroad for their honeymoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Lisle went to Lyndith Court, where the first happy months of their clandestine marriage had been spent. Sir Vane Charteris died soon after, and Maud made her home with them, and found the tenderest of fathers in Robert Lisle.

Winter, spring, summer passed, and when September lay bright on the green glades and waving trees of Montalien Priory, Lord and Lady Montalien came home. Not altogether as they went, for a Swiss nurse accompanies them, and there is a dark-eyed baby in long robes, whom they call "Robert," and who is the heir of Montalien.

And miles away, in Allan Fane's studio, there hangs a picture of a smiling girlish face. Allan is famous and wealthy now. He and Lady Montalien meet often in society and are very sincere friends. His best wishes are for her and Guy's happiness, but he never goes to Montalien. He has no thought of marrying again. No woman in this world will ever be to him again quite what "Polly" was in that lovely June of years ago.

THE END.

No. 215 of THE SELECT LIBRARY, entitled: "The Leighton Homestead," by Mary J. Holmes, is a story of love and intrigue, of plotting and scheming, delightfully and cleverly told, and most entertaining to read.

e pulse,
endless
of Alice
for its

ay per-
rector
minutes
ood be-
y aside
death.
t there
e dead
Lady
ad for

ne first
spent.
le her
i Rob-

er lay
ntalien
alto-
them,
ey call

ngs a
s and
n so-
re for
alien.
n this
as in

ghton
d in-
verly

N R

A REQUEST



Conditions due to the war have made it very difficult for us to keep in print all of the books listed in our catalogues. We still have about fifteen hundred different titles that we are in a position to supply. These represent the best books in our line. We could not afford, in the circumstances, to reprint any of the less popular works.

We aim to keep in stock the works of such authors as Bertha Clay, Charles Garvice, May Agnes Fleming, Nicholas Carter, Mary J. Holmes, Mrs. Harriet Lewis, Horatio Alger, and the other famous authors who are represented in our line by ten or more titles. Therefore, if your dealer cannot supply you with exactly the book you want, you are almost sure to find in his stock another title by the same author, which you have not read.

It short, we are asking you to take what your dealer can supply, rather than to insist upon just what you want. You won't lose anything by such substitution, because the books by the authors named are very uniform in quality.

In ordering Street & Smith novels by mail, it is advisable to make a choice of at least two titles for each book wanted, so as to give us an opportunity to substitute for titles that are now out of print.

STREET & SMITH CORPORATION,

79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

