

A SOUTHERN LADY OF SHALOTT.

"G RETA, how silent you are!" said Mrs. Ivison. "I fear that I am but a dull companion for you. Isn't it blindman's holiday? Pray put up your work."

Miss Ivison immediately laid aside the embroidery upon which she was engaged, and stepping out of the open window upon the porch, drew a low seat close to her grandmother's chair.

Leaning forward and looking up in her face, with playful reproach, "For shame, dearest!" she exclaimed. Then, as the sweet old face relaxed into a smile, "As if you did not know the nursery song, to the chime of one of whose couplets all my labors are set to music—

"I lived with my grandmother; 'twas down in yonder green;
She's the finest old lady that ever was seen!"

The clear caroling of these words awakened the echoes from across the river on whose shore the little house stood, and induced the rower of a small boat, just then gliding down its red sunset path, to rest for a moment upon his oars. "Where have I heard that voice before? Who are the tenants of this cottage?" muttered he, resuming his stroke.

"Tell me why you were so quiet," persisted grandmamma, laying the soft old hand, from which Greta had withdrawn the ivory knitting-needles, upon the now recumbent head.

"The lights and voices of other days were in my eyes and ears, I suppose," was replied, a little reluctantly, then heaving a heavy sigh. "But, presto, change! I see only the lovely glow of this western sky, hear only the rushing of the river on its way to the Mexican Gulf, and the whispering of these mimosa-trees near us. Grandmamma"—with a livelier tone—"confess that our lines are cast in pleasant places."

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Ivison, slowly. "I hope we may have done well to come here. It is a healthy location, convenient of access, yet secluded enough to enable you to do as you wish; that is, to pursue your drawing and embroidery-work uninterrupted. I wish you did not have to do the latter."

"Why not, since that is the kind of art to command the readier sale?" with a light touch of sarcasm. "The rent of this cottage, small as it is, makes it needful to eke out our income in some way, you know. And think, you ungrateful grandmamma, of the luxury of a roof to ourselves, however humble, and of a place in which to put the few treasures saved from our shipwreck—dear grandpapa's books and all!"

"It is too lonely for you; that is my greatest fear, Greta. You are young yet, and—"

"*Encore jeune!*" laughed Miss Ivison,

mockingly. "No, no; I am *disillusionnée*, as the French say, and older than your fancy paints me, grandmamma. Perhaps I may grow young again in this new life out of the world with you, though"—for the old lady had again sighed.

"Truly I don't like to hear you talk in that way. It is unnatural at your age."

"Is it? I will not, then, for I hate affection. Tell me, grandmamma, to change the subject, have you yet heard the name of the owner of the turreted house down the river yonder?"

"The house concerning which you have been so curious?" asked Mrs. Ivison, while her glance followed Greta's to the distant towers of a handsome residence that an intervening wood partly screened from their view.

"Yes. Seen from here, I could easily imagine it some castle on the Rhine. And the situation is so pretty on that height, which, I fancy, must descend from the back of the house in terraces to the water. Some day I shall negotiate with one of the river fishermen for the use of a small boat, and row myself past it—I have not forgotten my old accomplishment; don't look alarmed, grandmamma—if only to see that my idea is correct. Then, to quote Doré, the picture retained by 'the collodion in my brain' shall be transferred to paper on my return."

"You have forgotten your question," said Mrs. Ivison, after a pause, during which she rather thoughtfully stroked Greta's cheeks. "And chance has enabled me to answer it."

"Indeed!"

"You know that our landlord called today to receive the first quarterly payment of the rent. He was disposed to talk, from his satisfaction, perhaps, in obtaining tenants who made prompt payment, as I hear his former ones proved troublesome. In the course of a few words he dropped the remark that the neighborhood might be livelier soon, as it was rumored that the Kents, who had recently bought your picturesque castle, were expected from New Orleans."

"Not Clara's father and mother?"

"I asked if they were of the Carondelet Street firm of Kents, and he replied in the affirmative. But, after all, it may be a mistake; there are probably many of the name in New Orleans."

For Miss Ivison's brow had grown dark, her lip compressed.

The old lady looked at her somewhat anxiously. In prosperous days Greta had visited these Kents in their city home—Clara, their daughter and her school friend, having vehemently petitioned for her society at least for one winter's season up to its gay carnival close. And Greta's remembrance of the visit was as of some dream of enchantment. Thrown into constant