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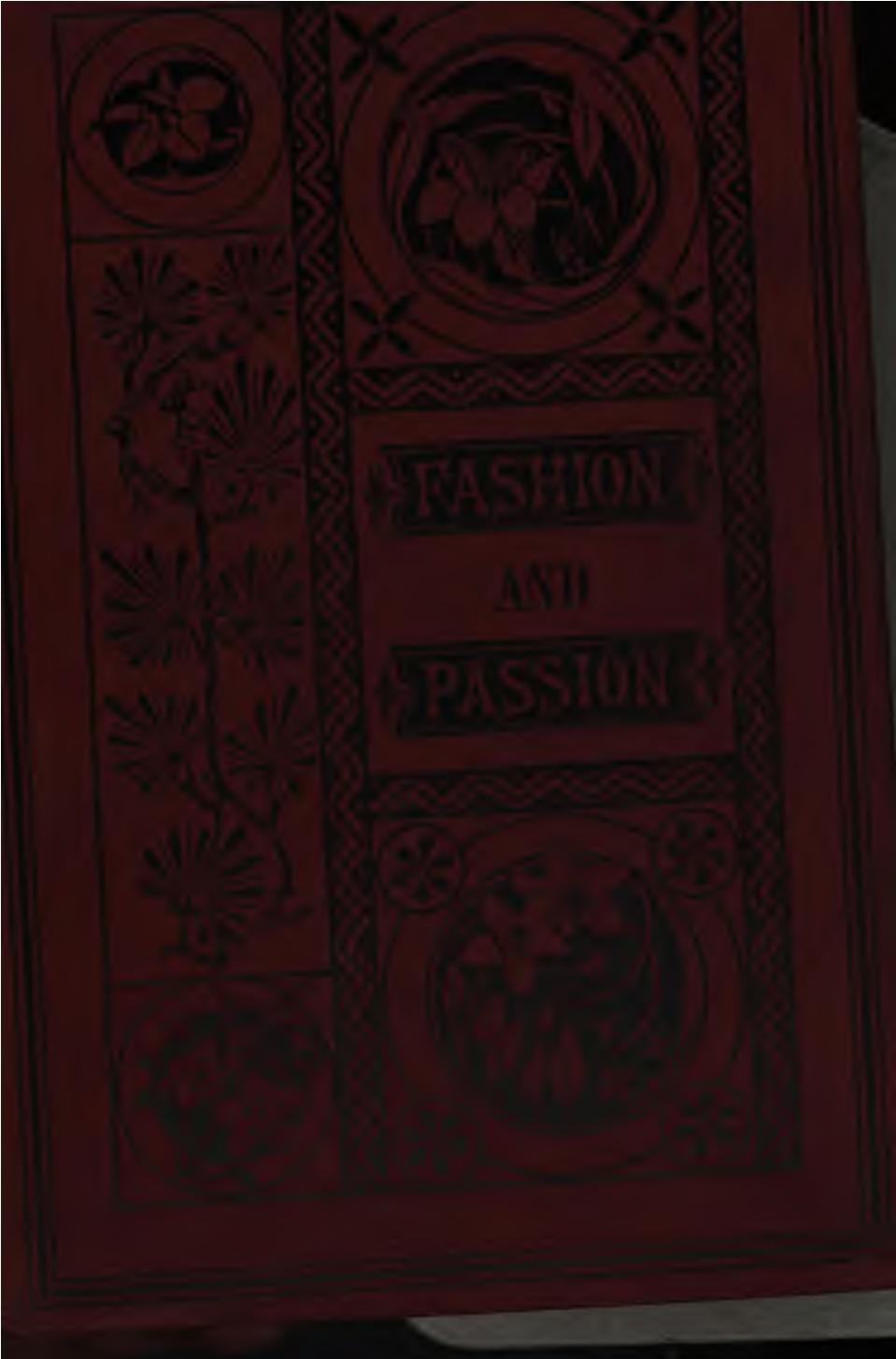
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FASHION

AND

PASSION





FASHION AND PASSION.



FASHION AND PASSION;

OR,

LIFE IN MAYFAIR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE HONEYMOON" AND "THROUGH THE AGES."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

1876.

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251. d. 483

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FIRST PART.

(*Continued.*)



FASHION AND PASSION;

OR,

LIFE IN MAYFAIR.

CHAPTER I.

A GOLDEN HEART.

(*Not by Tom Hood.*)

A FORTNIGHT had elapsed since the night of the supper at the villa on the banks of the Thames—a fortnight which had passed for the fairy-queen of that fairy domain like one long uninterrupted day of enjoyment.

I say enjoyment, and not happiness; for though Stella no doubt found new pleasures every day in that miserable worldly life she had chosen for herself, and enjoyed all the luxuries and festivities which it procured her, yet she could hardly be called happy, for she was not yet depraved enough to avoid feeling occasionally secret misgivings, and not to be troubled sorely at times by her awakening conscience; for the sense of good and evil is innate in our hearts, and even the most ignorant and the most wicked possess it.

Besides, she loved Juan. He was her god—the evil deity at whose altar she worshipped, and for

stone's existence; but her heart told her that the handsome Spaniard was not really in love with her, that he probably cared for her only as a means of getting money, and that he only prized her great beauty and her many charms—for she now knew that she was beautiful, and that her charms were irresistible—as so many tools that were to make gold for him.

She would have given anything not to love him—to have been able to forget him altogether; but she could not—her love was stronger than herself. Lord Belgrave she could not love. She could not understand his high sentiments; his noble nature was beyond her comprehension; besides, he took no pains to win her love, and in her eyes he always appeared like some being of another world, altogether different and superior to the general run of mortals she had known down in Soho.

It was Juan who had first awakened in her the feelings of womanhood, and she could not easily free herself from the invisible yet all-powerful chains that bound her, as it were, to him.

She had known him now for some time, yet she knew as little of him as she did that first day when, accompanied by his serious, sour-looking father and his lovely, sweet-looking sister, he had come to take up his quarters in her step-mother's first-floor-front in Bull Street.

Juan Fernandez was a man who never spoke of his own affairs. There are men of whom everybody knows all

about their belongings—where they live, whither they go, what are their means, and how they spend them. But there are others of whom nobody knows anything—one meets them everywhere, they seem to know everybody, and to go where everyone else goes, and yet we never know anything certain about them. Juan Fernandez was one of these men.

Neither his father nor his sister knew what he did with himself all day long—it had ever been his custom, even in Madrid, to keep them in the dark as to his movements. If they had not seen him for a month—an event which was by no means uncommon—and they asked him on his return where he had been, he either answered the question falsely, or left it unanswered. They knew this, and consequently never asked him now how he spent his time, or how he managed to live. That was his peculiarity, and even Stella remained for whole weeks ignorant of his whereabouts.

She, however, found this uncertainty was hard to bear, for she loved him with all her heart, and, as I have said before, was very jealous of him. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that one day, exasperated by the cool indifference with which he answered her questions, and mistrusting what he said, she should have followed him, disguised in an old shawl and a thick veil, through which no one would ever have recognized her, and, tracking his steps from one street to another, tried her best to discover where he went when he left her pretty little villa by the river-side.

To her surprise, and I must add to her great relief, she discovered that the house to which he directed his steps was the one in Soho in which she had first made his acquaintance. She had held that house in horror, for

even the voice of her Irish step-mother, who never opened her mouth but to scold and nag. But now she almost loved the old place; she could almost forgive the cruel old woman, and forget the misery she had undergone in that house—for she knew that Juan's sister lived there, and that he came to see her, and not a rival, as she had feared—and the sight of that wretched hovel now made her heart glad.

She would have trusted him now, convinced as she was of his fidelity to her, and would have returned home, for she knew Lord Belgrave was coming for her to take her in his drag to Richmond, where they proposed dining that day, had not an almost irresistible curiosity seized her of revisiting her old home—though she had so hated it—and of seeing once more the scenes of her former life, which was so very different to her present one, that at times she even doubted that such things could have really been.

It was Sunday morning, and noisy children were playing in the wretched street, while half-a-dozen half-starved hens were picking the dust heaps which no one thought of removing. Stella passed by these and approached Mrs. Potts' shop, which was open, although it was Sunday, the inhabitants of Bull Street not being over-religious. There stood the eternal bottles with the brandy balls and jumbles, in their accustomed places; and there, beside the door, was the last number of the *Police News*.

Stella cast one passing glance at it, and crossing the shop, which was empty, she ascended the dark staircase with a light step. How often had she mounted those slippery stairs exhausted with fatigue—panting for breath! How often had she washed them and scrubbed them until she had grown to know every knot in them, every grease stain which no amount of water seemed to take out! She!—the lovely Stella, who now drove in a four-in-hand by the side of a Marquis, dressed in velvet and lace, and could command as many servants as she chose!

She stopped on the first landing, at the door of what in a more conventional state of society would have been called the drawing-room, but which in Mrs. Potts' house went by the name of the first-floor-front. The sound of voices inside attracted her attention. The door was old and, like everything in that house, sadly out of repair; in fact, everything seemed fast going to ruin, and no carpenter or mason was ever called in to repair the ravages made by time; the door was so rotten indeed, that through the cracks Stella was able to discern the lovely form of Consuelo standing near the window opposite, near her brother, who held one of her hands in his, and seemed in the act of making a request that needed some extra display of affection.

She put her ear to the keyhole and listened.

Consuelo was speaking, and her soft gentle accents fell like the notes of a sweet melody upon her ear—a melody to which she was unaccustomed—a melody the merits of which she could not comprehend, but whose sentiment she felt to be soul-stirring. Consuelo was speaking in English, and she was therefore able to understand what she said.

~~Now~~: Oh, speak, speak; if there is anything in the world I can do for you I will do it—you know that!"

"Yes; that is why I have come to you. Consuelo, if I have not a hundred pounds before to-night, I shall have to run away—to hide myself for ever—or"

"Juan!—brother!"

"It is a debt of honour, Consuelo—I must pay."

"One hundred pounds! . . . ten thousand reals! Oh, Juan, Juan, it is quite a fortune! And we are so poor, so very poor!"

"I have come to you as my last resource. I know we are poor, and that a hundred pounds is a great sum, but, Consuelo, I only ask you to lend it to me. You have the care of all our money—father trusts everything to you—you can lend me the money to-day easily enough, and I promise to bring you back double one of these days."

"Juan, how often have I entreated of you not to gamble! Juan, Juan, for *my* sake—for God's sake—promise me never to touch a card again!"

"Consuelo!"

"Think of the misery, the shame that it brings, not only upon us, but upon so many others. Oh, it is too horrible! and you—you, the brother I so love—our father's hope!—my darling!—*you* turn out a gambler! Oh, I had no idea we had fallen so low! Until now I had entertained great hopes—hopes that made me almost happy

again; but now—oh, Juan, Juan!” and she burst into tears.

Juan remained silent for some time. At last he whispered something in her ear which seemed to pacify her a little; she raised her head and looked at him in silence.

“Consuelo,” he then added aloud, “believe me; I promise.”

She answered something which Stella, though she listened attentively, could not understand—it was said in Spanish.

They talked on for a long time in their own language. Consuelo still seemed to entreat, and her words were often broken by sobs and half-suppressed tears. After this she walked towards a table which stood at the other end of the room, and taking something out of the drawer, of which she had the key, she returned to the window, where Juan had remained standing, with a roll of bank notes in her hand, which she seemed to clasp convulsively.

“Juan,” she then said, once more in English, “here is almost the whole of what we have left. A few pounds alone remain to us in the whole world; but father need not know what I have done—I will work. I am young, strong—I can make money for him. You have promised me never to play again; it is under this understanding alone that I give you these bank-notes. Take them, Juan, and may they bring you back to the path of virtue and honour !”

Juan took the money, and said something in Spanish. He then embraced his sister and prepared to go.

Stella, who had been near the door at this time, was so moved by this scene that she had not the presence of

Belgrave would be waiting for her at her villa; but as she began to descend the staircase, she heard the noise of approaching footsteps on the flight below, and, being afraid to encounter her step-mother, she ran up to the second landing instead, and hid herself behind a door.

It was, as she had thought, Mrs. Potts herself who was coming up the stairs. She had lived for so many years in such mortal terror of that woman that her ear had got sharpened to the dreaded sound of her footsteps.

The gaunt, shrivelled hag stopped at the first landing, and threw open the door without any ceremony. Her high-pitched tone of voice caused her words to be distinctly heard on the upper landing, where her step-daughter had hidden herself—in fact, they resounded all over the house, like a clap of thunder.

“On yer knees!—well, gal, I’ve no patience with such muck as you!—where’s my rent?”

Consuelo, who had evidently been surprised on her knees (praying for her wretched brother, most likely) by the cruel virago, muttered something which Stella could not catch.

“Fine, very fine!” shouted the old woman, at the top of her voice. “Patience, indeed! Give me what you owe me, or I’ll send for the police this minute—by the powers I will! A nice lot you are, a-comin’ into a honest lone woman’s house without a shilling to bless yerselfs with—a-takin’ bed and board, like thieves, a-knowin’ ye can’t

pay! I should never have trusted furrin folks, as won't work, to be sure——”

“Oh, Mrs. Potts, how can you speak like that!—you know that we have paid you every farthing till this week. I intend getting some work—do you know of any lady who requires a woman to sew for her? I can do *that*, if I cannot do anything else. It is not that I *won't* work;—I am ready to work, Mrs. Potts—indeed I am; and you will wait a couple of days—won't you?—and I promise to pay you all.”

“No; I ain't to be done no more by the likes of you. Out ye shall pack, you and your sour-looking pa, as looks like a bottle of sour wine—out ye shall pack, both of you, if ye can't give me my money now, this very minnit!”

Consuelo remained silent. “Hark ye, girl; don't stand staring at me like a stuck pig that's a-going to the fair, or by the powers I'll . . . Why don't ye make money like my gal Polly does? . . . Shure, ye are pretty enough!”

“I will not be insulted, Mrs. Potts,” answered the Spanish girl, with a dignity of tone strange in one so young and friendless. “Take your money—here it is; I won't deprive you of what is yours, if I and my poor father have to starve!—there, let me alone now.”

Mrs. Potts said something in a gentler tone of voice, and left the room, banging the door behind her; but instead of going again downstairs to her shop, she proceeded up to the second floor, and there, to her great surprise, met her step-daughter, who, being unprepared for this meeting, looked as confused and bewildered as she might have done in the days gone by.

“Polly! to be sure, by holy St. Patrick!—why, girl,

THE HOUSE FOR GOOD, AND SINCE SHE WAS OWEING NO LESS THAN
money every month.

"Mighty grand, by the powers!" she added, seeing that Stella stared at her in silence, and did not seem inclined to speak.

"Mother," she said at last, "mother, you are hard upon that poor girl as has no money, and can't pay your rent."

"Hard, indeed! I think it a deal harder for me—a poor lone woman like me! The idea o' comin' and using of honest victuals, and honest folks' beds and cheers and tables, and then refusing to pay! I'll send for the police, that I will, next time."

"Poor girl!"

"Poor girl! why does she not work, and get money, like ye do?"

Stella started. "Like me!" she exclaimed. "Work like me!" and the colour rose to her cheeks and tears started to her eyes.

She looked at the old woman before her, then cast one glance around her, and shuddered as her eyes met those well-known unpapered walls, and that steep, hated staircase, and she thought of her pretty villa by the river, and her flowers, and her dresses.

She had not the courage to say one single word, but taking her purse from her pocket, and throwing it at Mrs. Potts' feet, she hurried past her, and disappeared down the staircase.

Mrs. Potts stooped to pick it up, and by the time she got downstairs and into the shop, her step-daughter had gone, nor could she see any trace of her down the street, when she looked out. She banged the door to, with a Satanic laugh, and retired to the back shop, to put in order her parcels of tobacco, and her bottles of sweets, muttering to herself—

“I always said no good would come of them furriners. I must stick up for my rights, that I must! The idea of Polly interfering!”

Poor Consuelo! What was going to become of her? She had given away her last sovereign, and there seemed no chance, however remote, of her getting any more!

CHAPTER II.

BIRDS OF PREY.

(*Not by Miss Braddon.*)

IT was a fine Sunday afternoon, strange to say—for in England fine days are scarce, and Sundays are generally about the worst in the week—so much so, that it would almost seem as if Heaven disapproved of the manner in which that day is kept in this country, and would show its displeasure in tears ; but this particular Sunday had been a truly glorious day ; the trees were at their greenest, the flowers at their brightest, the water of the rivers and lakes at their purest, the sky at its bluest. The birds sang merrily in the bushes, and the entire earth seemed to rejoice. On such a day what heart could be heavy, what mind oppressed ? Everything in nature preached of happiness and joy, and the hearts of men responded to the call, and took part in the general rejoicing.

Along the well-kept drives of Richmond Park a noble drag, drawn by four spirited horses, was making its way from Robin Hood Gate down towards the river.

On the box-seat sat the owner, Lord Belgrave, who with a well-trained hand managed the reins, and beside him sat Stella, radiant in all the wondrous charms of youth and beauty. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes

half closed, and the fresh breeze of the approaching evening played amongst her golden curls, which hung loose behind, under a white straw hat, covered with pink and white roses, and tied with black velvet—a toilette, simple, and yet perfect in its simplicity, and which suited her style of beauty to perfection.

She wore a pink satin dress, and over it a second skirt of white lace, looped up behind with broad black velvet bows. The body was cut square and disclosed her alabaster throat, round which she had tied a black velvet covered with diamonds, from which hung a single large diamond star. Her pretty little plump hands were gloved in soft *gants de Suède*, which reached almost to her elbows, and over them, round her wrists, she had black velvet bracelets, also covered with diamonds.

In this dress she looked wondrously pretty ; the pink satin hung round her in rich folds, which here and there were softened by the delicate lace that fell over them, and looked almost a part of herself.

Who would ever have thought that this same woman had, only a couple of months before, scrubbed the floors of a miserable lodging-house in Soho, in a dirty, torn print gown, without stockings, and with coarse leather shoes, and thought herself supremely happy at being able to run down on a Sunday afternoon to the neighbouring park, and escape for a few minutes the continual nagging and scolding of a cruel mistress !

Yet Polly Potts was not happy at that moment. She was naturally languishing and lazy, and the motion of the carriage was highly agreeable to her. She also cast side glances at her costly dress and sparkling jewels, and felt a secret pleasure in the certainty that no one could be better dressed than she was, or look fresher or prettier ;

yet her soul was troubled. The scene she had witnessed that morning was still before her mind's eye; in vain she tried to forget it—to think of something else; but she could not. Perhaps it was because Juan, the man she loved, had been the hero of it; perhaps because it reminded her of the days when she had lived in that wretched house in Bull Street, and toiled and starved like the poor Consuelo would have now to toil and starve in her turn—she, the beautiful young lady, whose gentle words had been like balm of Gilead for her suffering spirit in the days of her trials—she, the noble-minded girl who had first pitied, and consoled her in her misery, and at whose side she had always experienced a sense of safety and happiness, even when old Mrs. Potts had been scolding and finding fault with her more than usual.

Stella was a good girl at heart, though she was ignorant, and hardly knew good from evil; and the sorrows of Consuelo weighed heavily on her mind, so heavily indeed that not even the amusing stories of Lord Twickenham—who sat behind her on the drag, together with Lord Edwin and Alfredo—or the witty sayings of Lord Belgrave, who also seemed influenced by the weather, and had for a wonder forgotten his usual cold cynicism, could drive these sad thoughts from her mind.

Lord Belgrave noticed her pre-occupation, and wondered at it; but it did not trouble him much, for she was never violently lively, and the soft caressing air of that warm day was not calculated to make any one boisterous or gay, but rather to soften all feelings, and subdue all sensations.

Presently they dashed past the iron gates of the park, and drew up before the Star and Garter.

Their arrival would seem to have been expected for some time, for two waiters rushed immediately to the door, and conducted the noble Marquis and his guests, when once they had descended from the drag, into a pretty sitting-room overlooking the Thames, where a large party of ladies and gentlemen were already assembled, who greeted them with a cordial and noisy reception.

Most conspicuous of all, attired in the very latest of Parisian toilettes, stood the celebrated Mlle. Sclavage, the woman who is said to have invented breakdowns, and who prides herself rather more on her *chic* than her elegance—the woman who boasts of being able to ruin a man in a week, and who possesses the sweetest of smiles and yet can say the bitterest things.

In another part of the room, leaning on the back of an arm-chair, equally conspicuous, and also wondrously attired, stood Eglantine Rosefield, the English Sclavage, who, although she imitates the famous Frenchwoman in everything, hates her with all the hatred of which stage rivalry is capable.

Amy Dansherry, another queen of burlesque, sat near her, and Cornélie de Colté, the stately amazon of the Christmas pantomimes, resplendent in diamonds and rubies, was talking to her. It was these ladies—or rather, their friends Lord Carisbrooke, Capt. Haliburton, and Mr. Deanshome, together with Lord Belgrave—who were giving the dinner; the rest of the party—composed almost entirely of the intimate friends of these gentlemen, and of a few actresses more celebrated for their charms than for their good acting—having been invited by them.

Shortly after our friends' arrival, dinner was announced,

Belgrave at the other end.

I think, before going any further, that I ought to say a word or two about Lord Carisbrooke—or rather “Charlie,” as he is generally known amongst the class of friends in whose society we first meet him—for fear that I may not have another opportunity; and this book would hardly be the perfect *tableau* of life in Mayfair I should like it to be, if I did not describe at least the principal characteristics of a man so well known and so much run after as “Charlie.” Besides, he is a very good sample of a class which, though perhaps not large, is yet very conspicuous in Mayfair, and may therefore be taken as a good specimen of it, without going any further in search of one, which, if I do not take this opportunity, I shall certainly have to do sooner or later.

Lord Carisbrooke is essentially what is called “a jolly good fellow.” He is very good-looking, very good-tempered and very *debonnaire*, in addition to which priceless qualities he is an unrivalled horseman, a famous shot, a superb billiard player, and a capital driver—he is, in fact, one of those fortunate mortals who do everything so “devilish well,” and therefore ruin all hearts; and no one wonders that they should become such general favourites. He made his *début* in London society as a gay cornet in the Blues, in which character he is said to have broken many hearts; but “Charlie” was none the less popular for *this*, and

when his father died and he came into his title and his property, his society was courted by all, even by Royalty, some of whose members are very partial to him; and though once he went a little too far in a certain affair of honour which it would perhaps have been more honourable for him not to have meddled with, yet he is still as much in fashion as ever, and if scandal-mongers say that he plays a trifle too high, or leads a rather faster life than is good for him, why, all I can say is, that it is very malicious of them, and that I should like to know the proud Duchess who would not take her daughter to his balls if she happened to receive an invitation.

He was very brilliant that day at the Star and Garter, and he and Mlle. Sclavage talked and laughed enough for half-a-dozen—so much so, that no one noticed the silence and pre-occupation of “the Star of the East,” as Stella had been christened by Eglantine Rosefield, who, though herself speaking a horrible Yorkshire brogue, laughed at her Cockney accent.

“*Allons, Charlie, becquetons—tu me fais rire trop,*” Sclavage said, as she drained her champagne glass. She then turned to Alfredo, who sat next to her on the other side, and began speaking to him.

Alfredo was unaccustomed to this sort of society, and he always found himself completely out of his element when in it; yet he could not help admiring the jewels which this woman wore, if he admired nothing else about her, so to say something complimentary he began to talk about them.

“I do not think I have ever seen such beautiful stones,” he said; “they put one in mind of those jewels one reads of in the ‘Arabian Nights.’”

Mlle. Sclavage turned round suddenly. “*Sapristi!*”

woman—a lot which any other man would have thought a great privilege, but one which the thought of Consuelo, always paramount in his mind, prevented him from enjoying.

Strange to say, on the other side of the brilliant Lord Carisbrooke, Stella was also thinking of Consuelo. It was indeed curious that the image of that pure, chaste girl should have been so very distinct in those two minds, so different in every respect, in the midst of a party so boisterous and so brilliant as the one assembled in that room.

Lord Belgrave, at the other end of the table, was also serious and thoughtful now. The fresh air and the excitement of the drive had made him gay and even light-hearted for a moment; but now, in this hot room, surrounded by people whose society he could hardly care for, and whose words sounded in his ears like the discordant notes of a beautiful instrument out of tune, he had once more regained the cold air of indifference and *hauteur* which so characterised him amongst the rest, and which made him distant and reserved even to his greatest friends.

Besides, such a dinner as this could have no attraction for him. He had been at similar entertainments hundreds of times, intensely bored with the whole thing, yet coming to them again and again, perhaps more from habit than from anything else. He knew precisely

when Amy Danshery would burst out with her peacock-like laugh, when Eglantine Rosefield would smile, and when Slavage would come in with her oft-repeated *bon-mots*. He knew by heart every story that would be told, every joke that would be made, every look that he would receive. He knew how false every story, and every smile, and every look would be, and yet he sat there, as he had sat a hundred times before, talking nonsense with women who had never possessed a second idea—with women he could not but despise and condemn—he, the talented, noble-minded man, who might have become a pillar of the State, or a shining light in the path of science, had society not condemned him to be a Lord, and nothing more!

As the champagne and hock passed round, the party became more and more gay and riotous, the laughter and the noise increased, the gentlemen becoming excited and the actresses more familiar. Indeed, they all talked and joked together as if they had been the oldest and most intimate of friends—when the greater part of them had only met that evening for the first time—and as if they did not know very well that if perchance they crossed each other in the park the next day they would not even bow or make any sign of recognition!

Yet here they sat, these haughty aristocrats, who laugh at the pretty young ladies in society, laughing with the daughters of their own washerwomen and stablemen, as if they were their equals in every way!

And yet people say that Englishmen are proud and exclusive, and very difficult and refined in their tastes!

After dinner the whole party went out on the terraces. The sun had now set for some time, and the stars had begun to pierce the azure vault of heaven; the river

on this terrace, only one of two looked upon it with a little more than mere curiosity, and felt at all influenced by its sylvan charms.

For Slavage and her set, nature possessed no beauties; and no landscape, however lovely, would have made them think of anything beyond the fulfilment of their own mercenary ends.

They told silly stories and well-known anecdotes, laughing at the faintest provocation and at the smallest imaginable jokes—inexhaustible nothings, vapid utterances, which only filled the soul of Lord Belgrave with greater melancholy. And yet these common, ignorant women—who a few months before would have been content to eat black bread and turnips in some poor cottage, and to joke and idle away their time with labourers—now ruled supreme over these men, the representatives of long and illustrious lines of knights and nobles, and set the fashions for their wives and daughters.

But then—whose fault is it? Surely not theirs? It is not their fault that men should prefer them to the women of their own class; it is not their fault that these proud dames, who a month before would have thrown a penny to them from their carriages, should now try to imitate their style, and should follow their lead in everything—as indeed they must do, if they do not wish to be altogether out of the fashion.

Perhaps, after all, it is the fault of the ladies; if they

will bore men with their exclusiveness, and be so difficult to please, who can wonder that the men should leave them and go off to amuse themselves with Sclavage and her set ? If mothers will pester men, and force their daughters upon them, or if young ladies will run after young men, and try so hard to induce them to make a proposal which they will repent all the rest of their lives—who can blame them for preferring the society of Sclavage and her set, where everything at least is straightforward, and amusement the only aim, and from which the demon of matrimony has been exorcised long ago ?

As long as society is what it is at present, Sclavage and her set will rule the world. There seems no help for it. It is a horrible thing, I agree with you ; but if you want the final sum to alter, you will have to change the figures that compose it, otherwise the end will always be the same, twist the figures as much as ever you like.

But I am neglecting our friends at Richmond. I cannot alter the ways of the world, however much I may condemn them ; therefore, gentle reader, if you would have it otherwise, please to shut the book which treats of this wicked state of society before the consequences grow too awful, for I intend to describe the life in Mayfair as it really is, not as I should like it to be.

So let us once more return to the Star and Garter.

As the party there assembled were standing on the upper terrace, talking and laughing and smoking cigarettes, Lord Carisbrooke approached Lord Belgrave, and, addressing himself half to him and half to Stella, who stood beside him, said—

“ I hear, Belgrave, that you have a lovely villa on the

"indeed!"

Lord Carisbrooke looked at Stella, who coloured deeply, and lowered her eyes. Lord Belgrave continued—

"Yes; but I am sure that she will be charmed to receive my friends there, and that I may invite you to it in her name. When will you come and dine at Stella's villa?"

Sclavage, who was near, talking with Mr. Deanshome—that rich little banker, who is said only to frequent this sort of society that fashionable young men may go to his house, where the haughty Mrs. Deanshome does the honours in a queenly style—heard these last words, and immediately joined in the conversation.

"I shall be charmed to dine with you, Belgrave," she said, "provided you fix on a day when I do not act."

"Very well," answered Lord Belgrave, turning his head. "I shall be charmed to see you all—all, you understand. Will you come next Sunday, that is, to-day week?"

Sclavage was enchanted with the idea, and so were all the rest, when they heard of the invitation, which they eagerly accepted; for they were all very curious to see what sort of a home the rich Marquis had provided for "the Star of the East," as they called her, and of whom—if the truth must be told—they were not a little jealous.

After this the party separated, and they walked down the gardens in couples.

Lord Belgrave gave his arm to Stella, and took her to a little arbour at the extreme end of the terrace, whence a beautiful view of the fair valley below could be obtained, with the river running through it, and the meadows beyond, now illumined by the silver rays of the rising moon.

"You are serious, Stella," he said, "and seem sad. Has anything happened to displease you? Perhaps you are sorry that I asked these people to dine with us at your villa? If you like, I can put them off yet."

Stella regarded him with a look of mingled gratitude and fear. "You are always good, Bel," she said, leaning on his arm, and with her blue eyes still fixed on his. "You are a great deal too good for me. What have I done—I—a poor hignorant girl like me, to deserve such a fate?"

Belgrave looked at her in mute astonishment. These were the very last words he would have expected to hear in such a place, and from a girl of that sort. He was too surprised to answer, and after a short silence it was again Stella who spoke.

"It seems hard-like, don't it," she said, as if talking to herself, "that while I feast here in splendour, and wear fine clothes, and ride in grand carriages, other girls should toil and work and starve."

"What are you thinking about, Stella?" he said, taking her hand affectionately in his; "what is weighing on your mind? Tell me all about it—perhaps I can help you to banish these sad thoughts."

Stella, encouraged and reassured by these words, told him of her visit to her old home that morning, and what

she had heard there. She told the sad tale without any eloquence save that of nature; but human nature is always eloquent when it feels, and Stella, although she spoke in broken accents, and in her untaught English, by reason of her ardent and honest sympathy with the subject, managed to render her story most interesting, and at the same time most pathetic. Lord Belgrave listened to her attentively, and although his habitual cold smile still remained on his lips, he felt in his heart a secret pleasure in listening to her words; for they revealed to him that even in a girl like Stella there could be some sparks of true sentiment. When she had told him about the brother (whom, by-the-bye, she took very good care not to say was Juan), she finished by saying—

“ It seems hard, yet I suppose it is nothing so very uncommon after all. There may be thousands of girls in the same position in London; yet it seems hard-like for her, for she’s a lady, if ever I see one, and she’s so proud and so lovely, and so delicate-like. Mother said as she should do what I do, but she is too good, too pure. Bel, she’d just go mad with the—the shamefulness, as one may say. Poor girl, I can think of nothing but her to-day!—funny, ain’t it? ”

Lord Belgrave shuddered as she said this, for it showed him that Stella was not quite so indifferent to the shame of her mode of life as he had hoped, and the thought that he had contributed to her ruin made him turn cold; yet he was a man who could feel deeply without showing it, and when she had finished speaking he said, with his usual half-incredulous smile—

“ You are a good girl, Stella, and I like you for thinking in this way of another, while others would only

think of themselves; but how do you know that this girl you talk about—the Spanish girl who lives at your step-mother's—how do you know that she is so good and so much to be pitied?"

"Oh, Bel, if you could see her you wouldn't ask that. If ever you see a face as was all innocence and loveliness, and pride and virtue-like, you see it in hers. I knew her before I went to the Terpsichore, you know. I knew her before I knew you; and while mother and the lodgers, and the neighbours and all the rest of them, were scolding me and finding fault with everything I did, she always was sweet and kind to me. And now—now there's that about her as do seem to make me feel so common, and so coarse, and so ignorant beside her. She's a lady, I am sure; and the poor thing, I suppose, will end by starving—perhaps by dying!—who knows?"

Lord Belgrave remained silent for some time; at last he said—

"Do you think I could do anything for her, Stella?"

"You! Ah yes, Bel, if you liked you could, indeed. You might know some rich lady as might give her some honest work to do; she is ready enough to work—indeed she is—and she is not a good-for-naught sort of girl, as I always was, as never could do anything for myself—no; she would work gladly enough, and like it."

"I like to hear you, Stella; it is good and generous of you to speak like this. Give me the address. I will go and see the girl myself, and see what I can do for her."

"Oh, thank you, Bel; thank you! I shall sleep better to-night; but remember as she is a lady born, and honest though poor."

Lord Belgrave bit his lips, and the blood rose to his face; but he managed to hide the blush, which would have

with Consuelo Fernandez, the girl whom his friend Alfredo loved and had decided never to introduce to him, so sure was he that the Marquis would fall in love with her, and so afraid was he of the consequences, though at the same time he was sure of her love for him, and would have trusted everything to his friend.

Alfredo, in the meantime, unconscious of what was going on in the arbour at the end of the terrace, was walking by the side of Lord Edwin, listening to the florid description the latter was giving him of a dress Sibyl had worn at a party the night before, and laughing with him at Lord Twickenham's distress, who, more taken than ever with Stella's charms, had been telling them what he would do for her if she consented to love him and to abandon the Marquis.

A couple of hours later Lord Belgrave was driving his friends back to town in his drag, and Stella, once more light-hearted and merry, was laughing at Lord Twickenham's jokes as she leaned back on the front seat and cast occasional side-glances at him.

CHAPTER III.

QUITTS.

(Not by the Baroness Tautphæus.)

WHEN Lord Belgrave, in the solitude of his own room, began to think of what Stella had told him that night, he wondered greatly, that if this Spanish girl who lived in her step-mother's lodging-house—this Consuelo—were indeed as beautiful as Stella said, why the latter should have been so anxious that he should see her. "I wonder Stella is not afraid that I should fall in love with her," he said to himself. "If she really is as lovely as she seems to think, it is strange she should have asked me to go and see her."

Perhaps if he had known all Stella's thoughts, he would not have wondered at her conduct. But then—how could he have known that she was thinking of leaving him altogether, and that the idea of his falling in love with Consuelo would have given her the greatest satisfaction?

A great change had been taking place lately in Stella's feelings. She had never loved Lord Belgrave, and, indeed, his high-bred, weary-looking, contemptuous air had always frightened more than pleased her; she knew the great difference between them, and could never

Twickenham, and had neglected no opportunity of advising her to leave Lord Belgrave—who always knew what Juan was about rather better than he would have wished—and go off with the young Earl, whom he was sure it would be easy enough to manage between them.

The handsome Spaniard still retained all the influence over her which he had exercised from the beginning; and although she had already begun to doubt the sincerity of his love for her, yet she could hardly free herself from his power and fascinations.

She had therefore almost made up her mind to run away from Lord Belgrave; yet the thought of proving herself so ungrateful to him, after all he had done for her, made her hesitate, for she still possessed a few good sentiments, though Juan had tried so hard to stifle them all. She was ready to leave the Marquis, but she would have liked to do so without causing him any very great pain. It was this sentiment of compunction, joined to that pity she felt for Consuelo's sad fate, that had caused her to tell Lord Belgrave about her, and to induce him to go and see her.

Another man would perhaps have forgotten the whole affair before the next morning, but Lord Belgrave was a man of his word. He had promised Stella that he would go and see this *protégée* of hers, and he did go, though the next day proved horribly wet, and Bull Street, Soho, was decidedly very much out of his way.

He went, and he saw Consuelo.

Being such a bad day, both she and her father were at home, and he was able to stay and talk with her for nearly an hour—to which, most likely, she would never have consented had Mr. Fernandez been out.

Lord Belgrave had come in a hansom, and had decided before entering the house not to reveal his name. When Mr. Fernandez had asked him at the beginning of their interview who he was, he had said that his name was Lucas, and that he was partly Spanish, making this the excuse for his visit.

I have already said that he spoke that language fluently, so that neither Consuelo nor her father doubted for a moment his sincerity. Besides, poor people cannot be very particular on occasions of this kind, and, as old Fernandez said to himself, quoting one of his favourite proverbs, "*He who has nothing to lose need not fear the robbers.*"

Yet before the visit was half over, Lord Belgrave was sorry he had not told them who he really was; for he saw at once how greatly they were in need of assistance, and at the same time how impossible it would be for him—particularly under an assumed name—to help them in their difficulties; for he was but too well acquainted with the false pride that is called "honour" in Spain, and which he justly feared would greatly stand in the way of their accepting his assistance.

The wondrous beauty and grace of the poor Spanish girl had quite taken him by surprise. Though he had been prepared, by Stella's description of her, to see a very pretty woman, yet he never could have imagined so much grace and elegance amidst so much poverty and misery; and he was obliged to confess to himself, as he

had never seen such a handsome face, such a perfect figure, such a noble brow. And yet, when he remembered who he was, and who she was, and the awkwardness of the situation in which he found her, he was able to conquer his feelings, and to look upon her almost with the eyes of a cold and indifferent philanthropist—and that proud, all-powerful, contemptuous, sensual man of fashion possessed such a wonderful power of self-control that at that moment even the jealous Alfredo need not have been afraid of him.

Would it always be the same ? Ah, who could tell ? Alfredo knew nothing of Lord Belgrave's visit to Bull Street, and the latter could have no possible idea that this lovely girl was the plighted wife of his dearest friend.

The Marquis knew the Spanish character too well to offer the Fernandezes money, which he knew they would be sure to refuse; besides, he feared to offend them, and this he would not have done for any possible consideration ; so all he could do was to promise Miss Fernandez to speak to a few ladies of his acquaintance, who he thought would be able to give her some work, as she seemed so very anxious to do something to obtain a living for herself and her father, who was too old and delicate to work—a praiseworthy determination, which he could not but admire, though the mere thought of one so lovely working for her bread made him shudder. Yet he could hardly help admiring her courage ; and the few

earnest words she said concerning herself raised her at once highly in his estimation. No ; he was sure he had never seen such a beautiful, such a virtuous girl before. After seeing her, how could he ever again admire Stella, or, indeed, any one ? Yet Consuelo seemed so pure, so angelic, so superior altogether to the general run of women, that he could hardly bring himself to think of her as a woman at all !

It was thus that Consuelo and Lord Belgrave met, as it was destined they should meet, in spite of Alfredo, who had determined that they should never know one another ; and that night the noble Marquis dreamt of the poor Spanish girl, and from that day her image remained engraved on his heart as the personification of everything that was true and good and lovely in womanhood.

CHAPTER IV.

SHE AND I.

(Not by T. C. Hucheson.)

THE following morning Alfredo called at Bull Street to say "Farewell" to his Consuelo : he was going to leave England for America the next day.

Let it not be supposed that this was a resolution he had suddenly come to ; he had been thinking of it for a long time past, and he had judiciously weighed in his mind all the advantages and disadvantages attached to this important step, that would inevitably influence all his future life.

He had come to England fully impressed with the idea of soon making his fortune ; he had quitted his country and his friends for this praiseworthy object ; he would no longer be a cause of anxiety to his family ; he would live no more upon his poor father, who was now old and infirm, or upon his brothers, who had already families of their own to provide for : no ; he would go to England—to England, the land of commerce and business—and make his fortune.

He had now been nearly four months in London, and what money had he made—what chances had he had of making any ? On the contrary, although he had been

Lord Belgrave's guest all this time, and had seldom been allowed to pay for anything, yet he had managed to spend in little nothings sums that to him were of vital importance.

He had dropped, so to speak, into the midst of a set where the art of making money seemed to be altogether unknown, and where the art of spending it was practised with a prodigality altogether alarming to one possessed of his small means.

He knew that there was a place—somewhere beyond Temple Bar—where men did a great deal of business, and made large fortunes; but neither Lord Belgrave, nor any of the men he met at his house, could tell him much about it, and seemed greatly surprised when he began to ask them questions as to the best way of making money.

Lord Belgrave, though he loved him truly, and entertained a sincere friendship for him, and would have gladly done anything in his power to serve him, was not the man best calculated to give him advice on this subject. He would have wished Alfredo to have remained always near him. "You never need want for anything, you know, whilst you have me," he had often said. But all this was highly unsatisfactory. Alfredo, though he really liked the Marquis very much, and felt very grateful to him, could deceive himself with no vain illusions; he knew the immense gulf that divided all their aims and interests in life, though their feelings and sentiments were so very akin, and their tastes so similar.

As long as he remained in England he would have to be Lord Belgrave's guest—he could hardly leave his house when he prayed him to remain; and he knew very well that instead of increasing the little capital he had brought with him from Spain—all he possessed in the

~~THE HIGH OFFICIALS WOULD NOT TRY THE AMERICANS, AS~~
he had before left Spain, to try if he would have more success in America.

Lord Belgrave rather approved of this move, though he was very sorry to lose his friend; yet, as he knew that it would be for his good, and that he could hardly oppose it, he gave him a few letters of introduction to men he knew in the States—men of business, who would be able to help him, and who he knew would be glad to do so to please him; for the worthy citizens of the great Republic are not quite as indifferent to the members of the aristocracy of the old country as one might suppose.

It had been therefore decided between them that he should go to New York for four years, and enter some business house in that city. Alfredo was pleased with the idea, and the only thing that caused him uneasiness or regret was the thought of having to leave his Consuelo. But then, as he knew very well, even if he remained in England he could not marry her. The very love he bore her only made him the more anxious to become a rich man. He had therefore determined to go; and when, on the day following Lord Belgrave's visit to Bull Street, he made his appearance there, it was to say "Good-bye" to Consuelo for the last time before leaving England.

Our lovely heroine had known his plans from the first, and though it was a great trial to part from him, yet she hardly dared to persuade him to stop; for she

knew only too well what his present position was, and how impossible it would be for him to marry her under such circumstances. She had dwelt so much on this sad subject that she had overshadowed her whole existence with a dark cloud of doubts, which even the sunshine of love was unable to drive from her heaven.

She never doubted his love for a moment—she loved him herself too much for that—but it seemed hard that they should be obliged to part, though it would be only for four years; and the more she thought of this, the more dreadful it seemed to her.

She was not therefore taken by surprise when he came to say “Good-bye” that Tuesday morning, for she knew that the vessel that was to bear him across the Atlantic was to leave Liverpool on the following day; but he found her in a state bordering on despair, and their interview, therefore, was a great trial to both of them, though they had been preparing themselves for it for some time past.

“The fatal hour has come at last, my Consuelo,” he said; “I must bid you Good-bye.”

After a preliminary interchange of everyday questions and answers, they had seated themselves by the window that looked out upon the poor cheerless street outside. Neither of them had dared to approach the dreaded subject until now;—one waited to speak, the other waited to hear. There had been a long oppressive silence between them—a silence during which the noises of the street below, the cries of the women, the laughter of the children, the chuckling of the poultry that were running about its uneven pavement, the tramp of a heavy-footed cart-horse, and the noise of a few distant carriages, even the humming of the flies on the

A young good-bye! She murmured, her eyes, still full watching, weary with grief, yet still soft and beautiful as only Spanish eyes can be, bent sorrowfully upon her lover's troubled countenance.

He turned his head away—he could not bear to meet those entreating eyes; he pushed his black locks from his temples, and, struggling with the sickness of heart he felt, he murmured—

"I must go."

Then the thoughts that had rent her bosom for the last few days, and which had deprived her of sleep and rest, burst forth in a wild, incoherent speech.

"Alfredo, Alfredo!" she cried, forgetting all the promises she had made to herself to keep up her courage to the last; "if you knew how I love you, you would not leave me thus! Oh, I shall die if you leave me! Alfredo, don't go—stay with me—let us be happy together! Oh, Alfredo, I do not mind being poor; I can work. I am strong—indeed I am; but stay, stay! Oh, if you only knew how much I love you!"

It was not that she doubted him—oh, no!—but she believed him to be as much the master of his love as he was the master of all other feelings, and that their separation would not cause him half so much grief as it would cause her. In that she utterly misunderstood his character. He felt their separation quite as keenly as she felt it; but it was the fear of increasing *her* grief that kept him from showing his.

"If you knew how much it costs me to leave you—if you knew what I have suffered before I could take this resolution—oh, if you only knew the long days and sleepless nights I have passed, thinking of you and of our future—oh, Consuelo, dearest, you would encourage my departure; nay, you would yourself bid me go."

"I bid you go! Oh, never! I am a poor unhappy woman, though I once prided myself on my strength of character. . . . I cannot bid you go; no, darling, stay! —if you love me at all—stay with me!"

Alfredo took her hands in his, and pressed them convulsively against his beating heart.

"Do not talk so; for pity's sake do not speak so despondingly. If you go on like this I shall be obliged to stay, and that will be the ruin of us both. If you love me as you say you do, let me go. It is for your good that I leave you for a few years. I may make money enough to marry you in America; I shall never make it here. If I stay in London we shall remain for ever in the same position we are now. Your father will never consent to our marriage."

Consuelo shuddered. She had not told her lover to what a state of misery they were reduced. Her pride—her natural Spanish pride—had caused her to hide from him the sad truth, and when he recalled to her memory her father's words—the words he had uttered on board the ship, when the hope of receiving assistance from his rich sister seemed almost a certainty—she could not help shuddering to think how greatly their position had altered since then, and how her father would certainly be the last to oppose her marriage, though it should be with a man as poor as Alfredo.

~~With all your money, but you will come back with~~
money, and then he has promised me that you shall be mine."

Consuelo had not told her father of the one hundred pounds she had given to Juan, partly because she dared not brave his anger, partly because she wished to hide from him as long as possible the faults of his beloved son. She was sure that had he known how little money they had left, he would not have been so hard on Alfredo, but would have gladly consented to her marriage with him; yet she dared not tell her lover all this, so she buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly.

"Ah, Consuelo, do not cry, do not despair thus—you, who should be the one to offer me consolation! After all, what are four years? They will soon be over, and then we shall be for ever happy."

"It will be too late! No, Alfredo; let us be married now at once. I have a dreadful presentiment that if I do not marry you now I shall never be your wife! Let me be yours before you go; let me call you husband, and then go—I shall die, but I shall die happy!"

"Oh, my love!"

"You will marry me now?"

"No; it would be too bad to leave you, once we are married. Four years, Consuelo, might make a great change in your mind: your love for me might cool; you might forget me, or meet somebody you like better. No;

it is better we should part as we are—lovers, but nothing more. You have nothing to fear. I leave you in safe hands: your father loves you; he will take care of you. Remember that I hold myself engaged to you, though at the same time I leave *you* free to marry another if you find that you could be happier with him than with me."

"Oh, Alfredo! Do you think I could ever be happy with another?"

"My darling! Ah, Consuelo, you are too lovely! I think that if I stay a moment longer I shall lose all my good resolutions and remain. No, I *must* go! I have not only to work for my own fortune, but for yours. In America I shall soon make a little money that will enable us to live happy. Our tastes are simple, you know, and in Spain a little money can be made to go a long way. Lord Belgrave has given me letters that almost assure me success; all I need is perseverance, and *that* I shall have, now that I have such a priceless treasure to toil for!"

"Lord Belgrave!" murmured Consuelo, half aloud. "Why don't you introduce us to him before you go? He might be useful to us. You know he is rich, he is powerful. . . ."

"Useful to you! Ah, no; you do not know the world! He belongs to another class altogether. He is rich and powerful, it is true; but you, too, have rich friends. There is Mr. Jobkin, your cousin—he, too, is rich and powerful, and you see how much he cares for you, though you are his relatives!"

"But Lord Belgrave is kind and good, and has a noble heart, you say."

"Ah, yes!" Alfredo replied; "he has indeed a noble heart and he is the best of men, the kindest of friends,

I shall expect you to answer all my letters. It will be such a great source of happiness to receive letters from you."

"But if I were your wife I might go with you," she said; the thought that was paramount in her mind again finding expression in words.

"Oh, my Consuelo! you—so delicate, so frail, so tender—you would perish! Remember that the life I shall have to lead will not be one of pleasure. I might have to go to California, or one of those uncivilized regions, and how could I leave you alone in a strange city? No; you must remain here with your father. Do not look at me. . . . Take this ring, and never part with it. If anything happens to you, look at it—it will remind you of me, who will always be thinking of you. As its circlet is without end, so without end will be my love for you."

As he said this he placed a little gold ring on her finger.

"It will never, never leave me—only with my last breath will it be taken off my finger!" she said, casting a long loving look at him through her tears; then, taking a little gold locket which hung round her neck with the smallest of gold chains—the only ornament she had left, for she had sold all the rest before this—she placed it inside his waistcoat, throwing the chain over his head.

"If you must go—if you must leave me—take this locket. It contains a lock of my own hair—my mother cut it off when I was a child, and wore it round her

neck until her death. It is the only *souvenir* I have left of her; take it; let it never leave you; let it hear every pulsation of your noble heart, every longing of your nature, that when you come back it may tell me all that you have suffered for me! Let it rest there where my hand has placed it. . . . It will give you hope and it will remind you of me of your Consuelo, who loves you!"

He was so moved that he could not answer her. He bent his noble head over her, and pressed his lips to hers. Neither of them could utter a word, but they remained for a long time with hands clasped, until it was time to go.

And thus Consuelo and Alfredo parted—perhaps never to meet again.

LES MYSTÈRES MONDAINS.

(*Not by Adolphe Belot.*)

THAT night there was a great assembly at the Foreign Office, at which all the beauty and fashion of London were congregated; and the proud matrons of Mayfair wore their best jewels, and their clever husbands all their Orders, and the young ladies appeared in their prettiest dresses, and flirted with the young men, and talked delightful meaningless nonsense on the stately staircase, listening to the inspiring melodies of the band below; eating ices, and laughing and joking as if this world were a place where sorrow was unknown, and joy and pleasure the sole business of life.

There you might have seen the proud Duchess of London, with her great diamond coronet, and the lovely Duchess of Northland, with her large diamond cross, and a dazzling shower of brilliants in her hair.

There you might also have seen Mary, Marchioness of Bury, with her curls and her jewels, more tightly laced than ever, talking "City" with that modern Croesus, Lord Birmingham, while his pretty wife looked at her Ladyship's bright jewels, and sighed as she thought of hers, "the wonder of the world," which were shut up in a glass case in some distant exhibition.

And Miss Stefano, the great American belle, looking out for young Peers, and Giroflé-Girofla, the Transatlantic sisters, dressed exactly alike, and also on the look-out for elder sons, while those gentlemen glanced at them through their eye-glasses from over the banisters above, and wondered, with a "how?" and an "eh?" whether their ten thousand a year could be depended upon.

There, also, you might have seen Lady Tottenham, with her daughter—the poor Failure looking almost as supercilious and forbidding as her worthy mother, though I dare say she would have become as soft and amiable as you could have wished if any young man of fortune had condescended to speak to her. And Lady Windermere and her friend Lady Pencarlin (that lady who once is said to have sung comic songs in some third-rate provincial theatre, and now gets Royal Dukes and Royal Duchesses to dine with her), both of them ready to stand up for their friends' characters. They are so very careful of their reputation that they always discuss it in a superfine Mrs. Candour style that might have done honour to Sheridan himself.

Not to mention the lovely Mrs. Muleta, who, of course, is "not to be mentioned," nor the almost as lovely Mrs. Deanshome, whose worthy husband we met the other day at the Star and Garter, and who is said to be herself so highly respectable.

By-the-bye, all sorts of strange stories are told of the desperate efforts formerly made by this lady to gain the place she now occupies in the Mayfairian world—frantic struggles, desperate charges, wicked feuds, constant assaults, intrigues, cabals, and machinations, that would have done honour to the greatest General that ever lived had he been storming the most impregnable of fortresses

~~A THREE-DIMINENSIONAL WITH ILLUMINATION.~~

Only the other day Lady Tottenham was talking to me about her, and her Ladyship said—of course in the strictest confidence (that's why I venture to give the story to the public)—

"When that odious Jewish woman, Mrs. Deanshome, was struggling to get into society—she had only mixed with tradespeople before, I believe—she was most anxious to be patronized by me, and asked Frank Howard—before my very face, at one of the Boston Gilbert parties, to which that lady told me she had been invited by a mistake—to introduce her to me, which he did, the silly fool! without so much as asking my permission. I was cold and distant, as I know how to be, though you would scarcely believe it, but I hate *parvenus*—when she had the impudence to ask me point-blank whether it was true that I received every Monday.

"'Yes, madam,' I said; 'I am at home on that day to my friends.'

"I thought my answer would have told her that I did not want her; but imagine my indignation when on the following Monday I saw her coming into my drawing-room in a horrible red dress, that put my pretty pink satin—(one of Madame Tournure's last—I patronize no other dressmaker, I assure you) quite into the shade. I never even bowed to her, and kept all the time at the other end of the room, without deigning even to glance at

her, as if I were quite unconscious of her presence; but—would you believe it?—if she did not go and push up against Lady Verysopht, and make the poor silly old woman upset her tea over her flaming red dress! Lady Verysopht was obliged to beg her pardon and make excuses to her, and the odious Jewish woman graciously forgave her, after which they sat down together on the same sofa, and talked as if they had been the best of friends, when they had never even been introduced!

“The next evening I met her at Lady Verysopht’s house! She had got an invitation from her, *bon gré, mal gré*, and she bowed to me with an air of triumph.

“This was three years ago—and now,” said the poor lady, looking at me through her gold-rimmed eye-glass, and almost screaming with indignation—“and now—what do you think that wicked, impudent, vulgar, odious upstart of a pawnbroker’s daughter has done, after getting introduced into society *entirely* through me? She cut me two days ago at Chiswick, and never sent me a card for her ball last night, though the Prince of Wales was to be there, and she knows how fond my dear girl is of him!”

Yes; such is the strange truth. In the race of fashion, the resolute and enterprizing Jewess has passed poor Totty! She, the daughter of a Marquis and the wife of a Peer, can only get second-class Royalty, as it were, to attend her parties, whilst the pretty wife of the little banker actually gets the Heir-Apparent to dance at her balls!

Her successes in the Mayfairian world may be traced by the sets of friends whom she has courted, beset, made, patronized, cut, and left behind her there. She has struggled so gallantly to get to the top of the ladder, that

leased a theatre, and sent her—after a scene with the little man—about her business to Paris. She would gladly, I dare say, send Mr. Deanshome thither likewise, for she has grown so refined and sensitive that the poor man must appear almost vulgar and common in her eyes—though it is not so long ago that she was only too glad to marry him to escape going upon the stage herself—but that he is a peg on which she still hopes to hang a few more honours, and is, after all, her banker. He is meek and content enough, so long as she lets him amuse himself with the young ladies of the ballet, and buy strange little pictures and old china, which he hangs over tapestry until he makes his house look like an old curiosity shop.

He is very rich, and his fall will be great, when he *does* fall, which I suppose he will one of these days; for I hear people are already taking their precautions to cut them before they do collapse, with their tapestry, and pictures, and old china, and all the rest of it; but at present she goes to all the parties and balls, exhibiting her family jewels (her father was a jeweller, I believe), and looking like a stately, proud, beautiful, dethroned queen.

Her daughters are quite grown up—at least, so the world says; but she is wise, and keeps them in the nursery upstairs, where all the old pictures and broken china go when they disappear from her drawing-rooms. I

wonder where she herself will go when Mr. Deanshome does break down !

But, to return to the party at the Foreign Office, I must not forget to mention Elizabeth, Countess of Twickenham, who, this being a Ministerial assembly, appeared there in all her glory, her damask rose cheeks becoming almost dazzling in the gas-light.

Sibyl and Geraldine were with her, the former looking as handsome as ever in a golden tulle dress, with corn-flowers amongst her raven tresses—the younger sister rather pensive, and evidently thinking of her handsome Don Juan, who was not there, though she had bothered her father until he had written for an invitation for him to Lord Villegrande, who, strange to say, had never received the letter—though Lady Villegrande could have told a very different story did we take the trouble to ask *her*.

Lord Edwin, of course, was there, and devoted to Miss Fetherstone, from whose side he could not now tear himself away; and Lord Clare—the young Irish Peer we met at Lady Twickenham's “Small and Early”—was almost as devoted to the younger Miss Fetherstone, in whom he had lately discovered an ardent, poetical, romantic nature, almost as sublime as his own. He has written a volume of spooney poems, with ink contained in an inkstand cut out of stone from Juliet's tomb at Verona, and with a pen, the holder of which is said to have been made of wood grown at Mount Ida, from the precise tree, he believes, under which the three goddesses appeared to Paris ! He is as soft and sweet as any young nobleman can be who is yet able to bow to the fastest turf company in the park, and can drive a good bargain in horse-flesh down at Tattersall's. Yet Geraldine seems hardly

emerged on to the great staircase, whereupon the Duke was playing tantalizing waltzes, when just at that moment Lady Twickenham's searching eyes caught a passing glimpse of her beloved son, and her heart was gladdened, for she noticed that he was talking to Lady Isobel Clanfyne, and that the proud young lady seemed to listen to his words with a little more interest than she generally displayed when talking to strangers—especially since her brother married into the Royal Family.

Lady Isobel, the eldest unmarried daughter of the Duke of the Isles—that ambitious nobleman who writes theological treatises, and would fain be a Duke amongst the philosophers, as he certainly is *the* philosopher amongst the Dukes—is a striking, statuesque, antique-looking young lady, with a mouth always suggestive of prunes and prisms, and a profile fit for an ancient Venus that has not been too much repaired. She is amiable enough and lively enough when she is amongst her equals—but then—who are her equals? The nobility whom she cuts—or the Royalty who cut *her*? This is the question the poor girl is always asking herself; no wonder that at times she should be as solemn and silent as the precious antique statue she so resembles.

Her younger sister is certainly prettier and more amusing, and the question, whom she should consider her equals, does not seem to trouble her so much; yet one cannot help thinking that if she could be induced to forget whose daughter she is, and whose sister-in-law she

has become, and would dance round dances like other girls, and not look over people's heads who happen to be taller than she is, she would be one of the nicest young ladies in London.

But our business—or, rather, our hero's—is with the elder sister, and it was with a weary heart and a careless tone that he talked to her that evening. He thought of the pretty Stella, who knew nothing about rank and precedence, and who had never in her life spoken to a Royal personage, with whom he could chaff and crack jokes as he would with a school chum, and say and do anything that came into his head without fearing to incur her displeasure. Lady Isobel was grandly condescending to him, and certainly was statuesque, and refined, and highly bred, and all that, and yet he could not help thinking her a confounded bore all the same, and wishing himself in Stella's villa by the river, instead of in Downing Street amongst Dukes and Princes and their proud daughters.

But his mother had begged of him to pay his court to Lady Isobel, so he was doing his best to please her—though, at the same time, he had made up his mind not to marry her.

Lady Brightly, who was coming up the staircase as he and that young lady were going down, remarked to Lord Malise, on whose arm she was leaning—

“Look at Charlie Twickenham trying to make people believe that he is making love to Lady Isobel Clanfyne. I wonder what her father, the pew-opener, will say to that.”

“The pew-opener!”

“Yes; don't you know? Isn't he the Lord of the Isles; and, on the other hand, doesn't he write treatises

Lady Twickenham and her step-daughters were also coming down the staircase at that moment. The Countess was leaning on Lord Belgrave's arm, who was talking to her about Consuelo, and trying to interest her in the poor girl.

"She is very pretty, you say?"

"Yes, very."

"Ah!" and her ladyship looked at him with a malicious smile playing in her expressive Jewish eyes.

Lord Belgrave coloured. "Yes, she is pretty, certainly; but I believe her to be a good, honest girl, ready to work for her bread."

"She is Spanish, you say?"

"Yes. I wish you would do something for her. You see, I can hardly give her my coats and trowsers to make, and it would insult her to offer her money as a charity."

The Countess again looked at him maliciously, but seeing how seriously in earnest he seemed, she replied—

"Very well; send her to me to-morrow, any time after lunch. I'll try to be at home. Of course, you know, I have all my dresses from Paris; but yet, as you say she is Spanish, she might make a mantilla for me, or something of that sort, you know. I'll give her something to do, at all events, to please you, Lord Belgrave." Then, looking at him once more and smiling, she exclaimed, "Oh, you wicked men!" and then changed the subject.

Their carriage was called at the park door, and a few minutes afterward the three ladies were taking their places in it, encouraged and complimented by a familiar linkman, to whom the Marquis gave a shilling as he told the coachman to drive on to Preston House.

The two young men—Lord Clare and Edwin—followed them in their respective broughams.

CHAPTER VI.

FASHION AND PASSION.

(Not by the Duke Oh yes; this time it is by him.)

IT was a great ball at Preston House. The entire set of state apartments had been opened for the occasion, and everybody was there—at least, everybody that was anybody.

The immense ball-room was full of people when Lady Twickenham entered it with the Misses Fetherstone, and the crowd was so great that they soon got divided, and Sibyl, who had taken Lord Edwin's arm, found herself alone with him in a distant corner, from which it was difficult to see precisely where Lady Twickenham and her sister were.

Sibyl was as much in love with Edwin as ever she had been. He had never seemed fairer or gentler in her eyes; during the last fortnight he had been her devoted slave—he had dedicated himself entirely to her—but, somehow or other, his love, which she had once thought the most precious thing the world could offer, had lost much of its value in her eyes.

He had been her constant attendant. Not once had he spoken to Lady Juliet Standish during that fortnight, and yet she was not quite pleased with him. She had

never spoken of their adventure in the Argyle Rooms, where she had first declared her love for him ; and he, with natural delicacy of feeling, had of course shrunk from approaching the subject, though it was always in his mind, and he could hardly think of aught else.

She, too, often thought of that night ; but to her it was always an unpleasant thought, one that she would have given anything to forget. She accused herself of having gone too far ; she accused herself of having shown her own weakness to a man whose great merit in her eyes lay precisely in his weakness.

Her vanity, which at first had been aroused, and the desire she had then felt of cutting out her friend and rival, had now been completely satisfied—all London knew that she had only to say one word to become Lady Edwin Beauville, and make the man she loved her slave for life.

But would the honour of being his wife be indeed so great ? she asked herself. And, after all, did she really love him as she thought herself capable of loving ?

These were two questions difficult indeed to answer.

Since her childhood she had felt (and this feeling had been encouraged by all her relations) an unexpressed but all-consuming ambition, that made her restless without giving her any real food for her mind.

She was the beauty of the family, and she knew that great things were expected of her. Now, could a marriage with Lord Edwin, a second son, with only a few hundreds a year, and no career or expectations of any kind, be considered a good marriage ? No ; there could not be two words about it. It was not the match which her family, or indeed she herself, would have wished, and yet she tried hard to think that it would be grand and

means a strong-minded woman—that is to say, that she did not think, like so many American young ladies, that women should be doctors and surgeons and lawyers, nor did she even wish to have the privilege of voting at general elections; but she was a woman who, had she been born in the days of old, would have plotted and conspired with all-consuming zeal—a woman who would have led a party, and intrigued, and even fought, if necessary, to obtain her object. Had she been born in the days of Nimrod, she would have been a second Semiramis. Had she been born in Imperial Rome, Emperors would have trembled on their thrones at her gaze. She might have conspired with the Ghibelines, and done honour to the cause; or she would have joined the Fronde, and intrigued at Versailles or the Escorial, in the days of the great monarchs who ruled supreme in those glorious palaces. Prince Charlie or Don Carlos would have found in her a devoted partisan, one ready to die for them.

She was a woman who would have made any “cause”—provided she could fully sympathise with it—her own, and lived for it, died for it, and at her death left a glorious name behind her. Her true lover should have been a hero. Could she have found such a man she would have devoted herself to him body and soul: she would have kept up for him his seditious correspondence while he lay in the Bastille; she would have carried on his conspiracy, had he been shut up in the Chatelet itself; she

would have accompanied him to the Tower, and deemed herself happy to have mounted a scaffold by his side! She would have liked to have gathered around her ardent spirits, men who could have sympathised with her, and who would have talked of "the cause," and have kept alive in her the flame of the political fire that had become her life.

As it was, she had no "cause;" in steady-going, prosperous, matter-of-fact, cautious, commercial England, she could have none. Her father was a Minister, yet his political views were very mild; she herself scarcely knew what they were. All she knew was that they had no interest for her, and whether the Liberal-Conservatives or the Conservative-Liberals were in power, seemed to her altogether of the smallest possible importance. Edwin had, so to speak, no politics; he had sat as Member for the Beauville boroughs when almost a lad, and had been defeated at the first election after his father's death by a rising brewer, who bought over all the publicans, and declared himself an out-and-out Liberal, while *he* was only a Moderate-Liberal. He knew no more, and cared less; he had thought the House a great bore, and was not sorry, if the truth must be told, to get out of it.

In what enthusiasm could she indulge with such a man? "I dare say he will make a devoted husband, and never cross or contradict me in anything, but what on earth are we to do with ourselves once we *are* married?" She had put that question to herself that very morning; perhaps she thought too much of these things, and, I dare say, was over prudent in calculating the chances of happiness she would enjoy as Edwin's wife, for she knew she would be poor, and that if she married him she

thinking of these things in spirit or words. You only one told her that she was afraid of having to quit these saloons, in which, since her coming out, she had been one of the reigning belles, she would have declared that she despised them too much to care for them. Had it been whispered to her that she loved fine dresses and precious jewels, she would have scorned the whisper. Had any one suggested to her that the flattery and the compliments of men, and the continual excitement and noise of society, were necessary to her happiness, she would have said that that person knew very little of her character. And yet, at that moment her eyes were fixed upon the lovely Lady Birmingham, and she almost envied her her position, and her laces, and her jewels, although she had so often laughed at her husband, and had accused her over and over again of having sold herself, to obtain those paltry things, to a man whom no woman could possibly look up to or respect.

The band at that moment struck up the Manolo waltz, and a cold shiver ran both through her and her companion as those entrancing strains reached their ears. Lord Edwin was so impressed that he said, almost involuntarily—

“ Doesn’t that air bring sweet reflections to your mind, Sibyl ? ”

It was the first allusion he had dared to make to their adventure at the Argyle Rooms. Sibyl flushed scarlet as he said this, and turned her head another way not to encounter his gaze.

"Forgive me if I have offended you. I never intended to remind you of that night ; but, you know, as I date my present happiness from it, I can hardly forget it."

"Even if *I* were to ask you to forget it ?"

"Ah, Sibyl, you could not be so cruel. You know how happy you *then* made me—do not make me miserable now."

"Oh, that horrible waltz !"

"You used to love it, once !"

"Yes—once !"

"Come, you love *me* still—you know you do—you confessed it yourself ; and I always loved you—always shall love you. When will you let me call you mine ?"

"Don't speak so loud—remember we are not alone," and her voice faltered.

"But if we love each other, why should you wish to hide it from the world. Everybody must know it one of these days, when we are married."

"Married !"

"Oh, Sibyl, does that idea make you shudder ?"

"No ; but don't let us speak of it now. See, there is my aunt, Mrs. Lovel, I must go to her ; we are not dancing, and people will wonder that I should go about without a chaperon."

She left him to join her aunt, and soon afterwards he saw her dancing with a man he did not know ; he was, in a general way, gentle and peace-loving, but at that moment he could have killed the man.

When that dance was over he again approached her, and asked her for the next, but she had already engaged herself for it, and Lady Twickenham had told her that she would leave immediately afterwards. Edwin turned round on hearing this, and went away in a huff.

"Do you know, Sibyl," she said, "that I am beginning to hate society?"

"Nonsense!"

"Yes; it seems strange, my first season too; but you must agree with me that all these parties and assemblies and balls are most unsatisfactory."

"I suppose they are; yet I rather enjoy a good ball."

"Ah, yes, when Edwin is there!"

"Edwin! Why, I never once danced with him the whole night!"

"And you pretend to love him, Sibyl!"

Sibyl remained silent, and unfastened the heavy coils of her jet black hair, which fell over her beautiful shoulders in wild disorder.

"I cannot bring myself to believe," continued Geraldine, as if pursuing her own thoughts aloud, "that the highest aim in life is to shine in ball-rooms, and attract the attention of men whom we have never even seen before, and whom we do not care in the least about."

"Indeed! that thought never struck me before!"

"Papa thinks that the least I am made for is to become a peeress!"

"And pray what *was* Geraldine Fetherstone made for?"

Geraldine remained silent for a second. "I cannot answer the question," she faltered, rising, and walking towards her sister. "I fear—only for discontent and

old-maidism—and yet, I could make such a devoted wife, such a good mother!"

Sibyl rose now in her turn, and taking her sister's hands in hers, she sighed; then, looking straight into her eyes, she said, in a hurried voice—

"Geraldine, I think you are wrong in dwelling so much on these subjects. I wish I could forget them. Love—love—what is love? A deity that requires continual sacrifices, and can give us nothing in return! I am sure we should be much happier without it. I cannot help thinking that we have, both of us, given too much thought to the subject. As girls even, we dreamt of love; our books, our conversations, our plays, were full of it. We considered it the aim of our existence; we grew up to dream of nothing sweeter or dearer, and yet the moment we come to the actual experience of this much-longed-for passion, what do we find? That if we wish to obtain, if we desire to enjoy, its pleasures, we must sacrifice every thing else to it, every thing that we had been taught to look up to as the blessings of life. We find ourselves between the two great attractions, Fashion and Passion, and nine times out of ten we end by being wretched and miserable for life. Ah, believe me, Geraldine, this is not the world in which we should preach up too highly the felicity or the philosophy of love!"

Geraldine had been listening intently to her sister's words, gazing earnestly upon her changing countenance as she spoke. When the last sentence had left her lips, she smiled scornfully, and answered, with an ill-disguised tone of contempt—

"That is because you have never really loved. You have no idea what love is, and therefore cannot give an opinion. You judge of the whole world by the narrow

“ I suppose it is that precious Juan who has put those ideas into your head.”

“ No—the ideas were always there ; but it is he who has taught me to give them expression.”

“ And you love him ?”

“ As you will never love, Sibyl—nay, as you will never be loved, though you are so beautiful, and so accomplished, and so fascinating !”

“ Geraldine, Geraldine ! mind what you are about. You know nothing of that man, he may be an adventurer, an impostor”

“ An impostor ! *he*—my Juan ?”

“ Love has blinded you. I shall say no more ; I know it will be of no use, and that were I to prove to you that he is a base impostor, a mere fortune-hunter, you would not believe me ; but I shall take very good care not to become blind myself in the same way. I have only one hand to give ; I shall think twice before I give it to any man, however much I may love him. Passion is all very well, but as we live in society we cannot afford to break through all the rules of Fashion. Good-night, Geraldine ; I hope you may not wake to find how mistaken you have been in your choice, though Fashion is a slave and Passion a god. You have chosen to sacrifice yourself to the god, give *me* the slave I can command.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISOWNED.

(Not by Lord Lytton.)

JUAN was not in love with Geraldine. It was perhaps that very fact that gave him such wonderful power over her. He did not love her; he was not a man capable of ever feeling such a noble, tender, unselfish passion; but she loved him with heart and soul, and she was the daughter of a Minister, and at his death would inherit the half of his property, and he was only, as Sibyl had rightly guessed, a penniless adventurer, a fortune-hunter, who had nothing to lose and everything to gain.

But he was handsome, wondrously handsome, and he possessed that kind of dark manly beauty which most women admire: not the soft, gentle, sweet fascination of a Lord Edwin, but the stalwart, muscular frame of a strong, powerful man—the clearly cut, perfect features, the dark, deep-set, keen eyes, and the dare-devil expression of a man at whose will everything and everybody must give way, though that will would most likely be expressed in a soft tone and with an irresistible smile.

Never had Geraldine seen such a handsome man; and when he devoted himself to her, and spoke in those rich

at present.

Geraldine was not a beauty ; she had nothing to attract the attention of most men, and few even took the trouble to render themselves pleasant to her ; so Juan had no rivals. Her family, too, seemed to take little care of her, and hardly seemed to notice the decided marks of preference she showed for him on every occasion ; so he had everything in his favour, and was left undisturbed to the easy task of gaining her love.

Geraldine, I must add, though she was by no means a great prize in the London matrimonial market, where alone heiresses and beauties can hope to obtain great matches, was always the daughter of one of her gracious Majesty's Ministers, and at his death would come into a very nice little fortune, so that for Juan she was a great catch, and one for which he might well toil and exert himself during a whole London season.

The morning after the ball at Preston House, of which I spoke in the last chapter, Juan met Geraldine riding in the park. He was living now almost altogether with her step-brother, Lord Twickenham, to whom he had contrived of late to render himself indispensable, and it was one of his horses he was riding. He rode well, and looked exceedingly graceful and handsome on horseback ; besides, on this occasion his natural colour had been increased by the exercise, and his eyes seemed to have acquired a deeper and more brilliant expression.

Geraldine was riding with her sister, and, on seeing him, checked her horse, when Juan, observing her desire to speak to him, left the men to whom he had been talking—friends of Lord Twickenham, who wanted to know all about Stella, of whom they had heard him speak so much—and, joining Geraldine and her sister, rode the rest of the morning with them.

About one they returned home, and Juan accompanied the young ladies to Carlton House Terrace. Having gone so far with them, it would have been rude not to have invited him in, and it was Sibyl who asked him to come in and rest, an invitation which he was not likely to refuse. He accordingly left his horse with their groom, and went into the house with them.

Sibyl went immediately upstairs to take off her habit; but Geraldine said she would lunch as she was, and, opening the door of the library, led the way into that room, where Juan followed her.

There was a piano there, and without any ceremony he sat down and commenced the celebrated duet from *Faust*. He played with a great deal of taste, if not brilliancy, and could throw much expression into what he played. Geraldine was fond of music, and loved to hear him, so she drew a chair close to the piano and listened to the music almost enraptured.

“How lovely that is!” she murmured to herself. “How sweet, how melodious, how full of expression and sentiment. I can hardly wonder at Marguerite’s love for *Faust* when he sang such lovely things.”

“You like it?”

“Do I like it? Could anything be more lovely?”

“Then I’ll sing it for you.”

Knowing well that the Italian words would be lost

At the end of the first verse Juan stopped singing, but went on playing, and while he played he said, in a voice whose soft cadence adapted itself to the music so that his words seemed almost part of it—

“Love is like a beautiful melody, which delights our hearts while it lasts, but when it is ended leaves us sad and melancholy.”

“And why should it ever end?”

“Ah—why? Real love should be immortal; but it requires a great soul to love thus. Do you think you could love—love for ever?”

Geraldine flushed as she bent over the piano, and said, in a low but laughing voice—

“Why do you ask me?”

“Because I think I should die if I thought you would one day forget me. My first, my last, my only love!” he added, turning from the piano and encircling her gently with his arms. “Geraldine, I love you! I love you! What more can I say? All the poetry of Goethe or Byron could not say more.”

Geraldine remained silent, but allowed him to press his lips to her forehead.

“Geraldine, my angel—my all in all—do you think you could love me as I love you? They say the cold daughters of your country cannot love. Do you think you could prove the contrary?”

Geraldine replied an inaudible something, as she hung half fainting with confusion on his breast.

"And you will be mine—mine for ever?"

"Oh yes, for ever!" she whispered; and he pressed her passionately and repeatedly to his heart—to that heart that was able to remain cold and unmoved, even at the sight of so much innocence and maidenly devotion!

A slight noise was heard in the next room, which was Lady Twickenham's morning-room. Juan started, and, fearing to be surprised by the Countess in such a position, hurriedly led Geraldine to a seat, and seating himself once more at the piano commenced another song. But he had scarcely played the first chords when a cry was heard from the next room, a stifled exclamation, which seemed to come from one in distress, and caused them both to stare and turn cold.

Juan rose, and, walking straight to the curtains, which alone divided the two rooms, with a firm hand quietly drew them aside and disclosed—to his intense horror and amazement—his sister Consuelo, who, deeply affected by what she had overheard, and trembling with excitement, flung herself into his arms.

Geraldine started back in her chair, and in a trembling voice exclaimed—

"Juan—Juan! Great God! what does this mean?"

Consuelo was the first to recover her self-possession.

"Young lady," she said, advancing towards her, "this is my brother."

"Your brother!" faltered the bewildered girl, casting an anxious look of inquiry upon her lover.

Juan could neither see nor hear at that moment. All his nervous energy seemed to have given way in one minute, and he stood there pale and mute as a statue.

"This cannot be—it must be a mistake! How came you here?"

~~I WICKEDNAM WAS TO GIVE ME SOME NEEDWORK TO DO.~~

"A sempstress! and you call yourself—presumptuous girl!—you call yourself my Juan's sister!"

"Your Juan?"

"Yes, *mine!* I care not who knows it—I love him!" she exclaimed, rushing to him and taking hold of his arm. At that moment she would have done anything, if it had been only to prove to her sister how she could love. "Juan, Juan," she then added, "speak to me; say you do not know her; say you have never seen her."

Consuelo, on her side, also very much excited, took hold of his other arm, and, shaking him convulsively, she cried in an agonized tone of voice—

"Juan!—brother!—do you not recognise me?"

The Spaniard looked at one and then at the other; his heart was sorely tried. At last he gathered courage, and muttered, half to himself, half to his unfortunate sister—

"Who the devil are you? Let me go; what do you want with me?"

Geraldine cast a look of triumph upon Consuelo.

"You see, girl," she cried, "he does not know you!"

Consuelo was too much overcome to hear her; she took her brother's hand in hers, and cried—

"Oh, Juan!—dear Juan!—do you not know me? Are you indeed fallen so low that you can deny your own

sister?—the sister who loves you, the sister whom you once so dearly loved!"

Juan suffered greatly all this time, for though he had little heart, yet the little he had belonged to his sister. She had always been so good to him, and he had always looked up to her as to the one being superior to all the rest, whom he could almost have worshipped. Yet he dared not fall into her arms now, as he would so gladly have done, for he knew how he would sink in Miss Fetherstone's estimation if he acknowledged her as his sister.

There was a silence of a second or two; but it was a silence that seemed to last a whole century to the three, bewildered as they were by such contrary emotions.

"Tell me, Juan, tell me the truth—is this woman really your sister?"

The Spaniard looked first at his sister, who, poorly, nay, shabbily dressed, stood beside him, tremulous and anxious; and then at Geraldine, who was standing before him in her riding-habit, with her large grey eyes fixed inquiringly on his face, with a look which told him how much she loved him, how ready she would be to sacrifice everything for his love; and turning towards her he exclaimed—

"No, no; I do not know her!"

Geraldine uttered a cry of joy, and Consuelo one of despair. The poor Spanish girl covered her face with her hands and wept silently, while the now radiant English young lady, taking Juan's hand, said to her in a cold, pitiless voice—

"Go; leave the house this minute—go!"

Consuelo's pale, care-worn cheeks grew paler still; but she left off crying, and looked calmly at the disdainful

this young lady—I know it ; I can see it in your eyes. May God forgive you as I forgive you!"

"Go, I tell you, or I shall call the servants that they may turn you out!"

Consuelo grew ashen pale and her limbs shook ; but her eyes did not lose their resolute, frank clearness of expression, and she replied, with a dignity almost unexpected in one so young and sorely tried—

"I go. I have nothing to forgive *you*. You love him. May God have more pity for you than you have for me!"

Geraldine could contain herself no longer. She left Juan, at whose side she had remained all this time, and approaching the fireplace, rang the bell with such violence that a footman rushed into the apartment almost immediately, thinking that something dreadful had happened.

"Show this girl out, James," was all Geraldine said, and she turned her back upon them.

Consuelo walked straight to the door with a firm step, though the tears were once more gathering fast in her large liquid eyes, and almost prevented her seeing.

At that moment Lady Twickenham and Sibyl appeared at the door ; the furious ringing of the bell had alarmed them, and they came in anxious to know what was the matter.

Consuelo never even noticed them. She passed by them, and opening for herself the hall door, left the house without looking back.

"Who is that woman?" inquired the Countess of the younger Miss Fetherstone. "How came she here?"

"I don't know. It seems she came to see you. She is a sempstress, I believe."

"A workwoman! Why, that must be the poor Spanish girl whom Lord Belgrave wanted me to employ. James, run after her. I must see her."

Geraldine would have stopped the servant if she had dared, but Lady Twickenham's will was law in that house, and she dared not say a word in opposition to it.

The footman, however, came back saying that the girl was nowhere to be seen, and Geraldine once more breathed freely.

"Strange! strange!" muttered the Countess. "How very extraordinary to run away like that, without even saying a single word to me! Ah, Mr. Fernandez! Glad to see you! You will stop and lunch with us?"

Juan was so overcome with the scene he had gone through that he would not accept this invitation for fear of betraying himself; and so, making the best excuse he could, he left the room, and soon afterwards the house.

When he had gone, Lady Twickenham again remarked how strange it was that the Spanish girl Lord Belgrave had so recommended to her, and begged her to employ, should have gone away without even speaking to her.

Geraldine, who dared not tell what had happened, but who yet felt a great wish to know something about her, inquired of the Countess, in as careless a tone as

she could command, if she had any idea what her name was.

"Yes," she answered, "he told me that her name was Consuelo—Consuelo Fernandez. Strange! it is the same name as that of Don Juan. I had not thought of this before—but I believe it is a common name in Spain."

Geraldine turned deadly pale, but remained silent.

CHAPTER VIII.

DON JUAN.

(Not by Lord Byron.)

AND this was the brother for whom she had sacrificed so much !

Consuelo had now reached the climax of her misfortunes. She could indulge in no more hopes of ever reclaiming her brother, of ever bringing him back to the paths of honour and virtue. After the scene at Carlton House Terrace, she knew that he was lost to her for ever, and, what was still worse, lost to his better self.

Her grief for him was so great that the noble girl even forgot her own sorrows thinking of him, and the image of her Alfredo faded for the first time from her mind.

In her despair she actually accused herself of having contributed to his fall. "Perhaps I was too hard with him," she cried. "I ought to have been a mother to him, instead of a younger sister ; I should have guided him, instead of allowing myself always to be guided by him ;" and then she exclaimed, "I should never have given him those notes ; it was that that finished him. If we had never come to England ; if we had remained in Madrid, where we were so happy, he would still have been the noble-hearted man he was there, instead of . . ." She dared not say the word, even to herself.

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HIS SWANSON, AND HIS FRIENDS, HE HAD ENJOYED EVERY ONE OF THEM THOROUGHLY, AND HAD GOT RATHER TIRED OF THEM—BUT STELLA HAD BEEN THE FATAL FLAME ROUND WHICH HE HAD HOVERED SO CLOSELY THAT HE HAD FINISHED BY GETTING HIS WINGS SCORCHED, AND WAS NOW REALLY VERY MUCH IN LOVE.

THE VERY DAY OF JUAN'S UNFORTUNATE *rencontre* WITH HIS SISTER, LORD TWICKENHAM, DRIVING WITH HIM IN HIS TANDEM TO HURLINGHAM, BEGAN AS USUAL TO TALK TO HIM OF STELLA.

"WHAT A CURSED BORE IT IS," HE SAID, "THAT MY MOTHER WANTS ME TO MAKE LOVE TO THAT STATUE OF A WOMAN, LADY ISOBEL, WHO DOESN'T CARE A STRAW FOR ME, ANY MORE THAN I CARE FOR HER. IT SEEMS SUCH BOSH ALTOGETHER; AND YET I SUPPOSE I SHALL END BY MARRYING HER!"

"WHY NEED YOU, IF YOU DO NOT LOVE HER?"

"LOVE HER! HOW COULD I LOVE HER? NO; IT IS STELLA I LOVE—STELLA, AND NO ONE ELSE. I WISH I WERE RICH ENOUGH TO BE ALTOGETHER INDEPENDENT OF MY MOTHER!"

"AH, BY-THE-BYE, YOU WILL WANT THE FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS YOU LENT ME, ONE OF THESE DAYS," JUAN SAID, IN A CARELESS TONE.

"WHY, YES, WHENEVER IT IS CONVENIENT TO YOU."

"SAY NO MORE; I HAD NO IDEA YOU WERE HARD UP, OLD MAN. DO YOU KNOW THAT STELLA TOOK ME ASIDE THE OTHER DAY, AND ASKED ME TO TELL YOU THAT SHE HAD RECEIVED THE BROOCH YOU SENT HER, AND THAT SHE WILL WEAR IT ALWAYS, AS IT WILL REMIND HER OF YOU; BUT THAT SHE DARED NOT WRITE TO THANK YOU, FOR FEAR OF LORD BELGRAVE, YOU KNOW."

"Confound that fellow! How can she care for him!"

"But she doesn't; I am sure she does not care a pin about him."

"Then why does she look so cold and serious whenever I speak to her?"

They had entered the narrow winding lane that leads from the road to Hurlingham, and Lord Twickenham, who was not very much accustomed to drive tandem, was forced to go slowly, for fear of accidents. Juan leant over and whispered in his ear—

"Charlie, if you will help me in my love affairs I'll help you in yours; and, trust me, Stella shall listen to you, and with pleasure."

The young Earl's face brightened. It was one of those fair open faces that one smile could light up, and render almost beautiful.

"Charlie, I love Geraldine!"

"I know it; I guessed it from the first."

"If you speak to your step-father, he may consent to our marriage. You might influence him through your mother, you know; if not, I am afraid he will never consent, and both Geraldine and I will be miserable for ever."

"Nice girl, Geraldine, is she not?"

"Ah, yes, a charming girl. And you have her happiness in your hands, Twickenham—her happiness and mine," he added, pressing his hand.

"And you think Stella will love me?"

"Yes; I promise you that before the week is over she shall be yours."

"Why, there is Lord Carisbrooke and Sclavage, and Eglantine Rosefield, and a lot of others, going to dine with her next Sunday!"

The carriage drew up before the door of the club-house, and the two men entered it arm-in-arm.

"By-the-bye, old fellow," Lord Twickenham was saying, "don't distress yourself about that trifle, you know—a few months hence will suit me just as well. I say, hadn't we better look in at Stella's villa on our way home; we might find her alone, you know."

"No," answered the Spaniard, as they disappeared inside the house; "leave it all to me—I'll speak to her."

CHAPTER IX.

GOLDEN FETTERS.

(Not by Mark Lemon.)

IT is a long time since I have spoken of Mr. Jobkin, and, though not a highly interesting man in himself, the part he plays in this book is so important that I think I had better say something about him before my readers forget him altogether.

In spite of all Lord Twiston's endeavours to get his son elected Member for Brightborough—and in spite of that wonderful plan of Ferrers-Stoneleigh, which was to ruin Mr. Jobkin's prospects by weakening his party and splitting the votes of his constituents—the millionaire had managed to get elected for that fashionable watering-place, and was now what he had so longed to be—a Member of Parliament.

The *Gazette* had announced Mr. Jobkin's election, after a sharp but decisive contest. "The Ministerial journals" had rung with exulting paeans; the Opposition ones had called the electors of Brightborough "garrulous old fools," "meandering cockaboos," "unworthy citizens," and all the other hard names which they usually employ on such occasions, and had declared that Mr. Jobkin had bought over all the electors—which, after all, was not so very untrue—and that Mr. Twiston would

any society he liked—at least so he fondly imagined—yet his rank in the world was hardly defined. He knew this; he felt it at every party he went to. People invited him because he was rich, and gave balls and receptions to which it had become the fashion to go; but this did not prevent their snubbing him whenever they got the chance, and Jobkin was a proud man in his way, and felt their conduct, yet dared not complain.

“It is a pity,” he remarked one day to Mr. Thomson, the only one of his old friends he had not cut; “it is a pity that in this liberal and go-a-head country personal merit should be so much overlooked; it seems to me that a man who has risen from the ranks by his own talents, and enriched himself honourably and honestly, as I have done, and is ready to employ his wealth to the best advantage of his fellow-citizens, should be despised and over-looked, while a little insignificant boy, who never even pays his tailor’s bills, and who has only a few acres of moor somewhere in the north—and even those mortgaged—is looked up to and courted, simply because he ‘appens to be a Lord.’”

Thomson smiled; he knew his friend’s weakness, and pitied more than condemned him.

“Mrs. Boston Gilbert advises me to marry a woman of high rank. What do you think, Thomson—Lady Hethelbreda Gwendoline Berengaria Jobkin would not sound at all bad, eh ?”

"It certainly sounds well, but I wonder what it would feel like."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, that I do not think it can be very pleasant to be married to a woman one has to look up to, and who most likely scorns one, and laughs at one behind one's back."

"Do you think any woman would scorn *me*, or laugh at me if she were my wife?"

"Well, I suppose not; and since rank can be bought for money, I certainly don't see why you should not have a wife with a title as well as other people."

"There is that snob Schletter—see what airs he gives himself because he married an Earl's daughter—he is always put before me at all the dinner parties, and he is not half so rich as I am!"

"Well, Jobkin, you can always marry a peer's daughter, if you like. I dare say there are plenty who would be only too glad to have you."

"I should say so!" Mr. Jobkin replied, with all the supreme dignity and pomposity of a City magnate; and he opened the Peerage which lay on his drawing-room table, and began to look through it in search of a wife with a high-sounding name.

What a wonderful book that is! I really do believe England owes all her grandeur to it. To have their names inscribed in its pages seems to be the aim of its greatest men, if seldom their beginning; and the old English cry of "Death, or Westminister Abbey!" seems to have changed into the more general one of "Ruin, or a Peerage!" It is altogether a "noble book," and perhaps that is the reason why it sells almost as well as the Bible in this Lordolatrous country.

him that they were the oldest and most distinguished families—but Mr. Jobkin was not very anxious to be converted, and preferred seeking a wife amongst the Protestant nobility.

He had often met the Cowes's in society, and ever since that day when little Cyril Scholl introduced him to Lady Cowes at Prince's, Lady Juliet Standish had been first in his thoughts. She was a very elegant-looking girl, with the manners of the best world, and the daughter of an Earl, to use his own words. She had quite won his fancy—perhaps because, being essentially a good-natured girl, and unfortunate in her little love affair, she had not made as much fun of him as young ladies generally did; and he was conscious of this, though he would not have admitted it—no, not even to his friend Thomson.

He took a long time to consider all the advantages he might gain by such a marriage, and to calculate its exact cost, for he was a very cautious man in all commercial transactions, and matrimony with him was quite a business matter. At last he came to the conclusion that he could not do better than marry Lady Juliet. One of his great ambitions was to have a yacht, and become a member of the Yacht Club at Cowes. Now Lord Cowes was all-powerful there, and would naturally help him on if he became his son-in-law; so this scheme seemed to him

a great point in the young lady's favour. Besides, though not so very rich as to despise his wealth, the family was free enough from debt, as he had taken very good care to ascertain, and he need not be afraid of having to pay off any mortgages for them. Altogether, he came to the conclusion that he could not do better than marry Lady Juliet Standish.

The thought that she might refuse him, never, of course, entered his head—but how should he manage to propose to her? That was the difficulty. He was not a very expansive man at the best of times, and he was too well aware of the great disadvantages of his speaking powers to trust himself entirely to them in such a serious and important matter as this. He might express himself so badly that the young lady would think herself compelled to refuse him, though she might be dying to marry him all the while. It must be difficult, under the most advantageous circumstances, to propose to a girl whom we scarcely know, and for whom we do not feel the least love; but Mr. Jobkin found it especially so, and after turning the subject over and over again in his mind, he decided to speak to Lady Cowes first, and ask her to tell her daughter.

Accordingly he called upon the Countess one afternoon, and made his proposal *en règle*.

Lady Cowes was rather taken by surprise, but was certainly more pleased than otherwise; she knew how rich Mr. Jobkin was, and how much he was thought of in the City, where she herself transacted some small business in a quiet way from time to time; and, after the usual questions and answers, she asked him in a business-like manner, which quite won his heart, what settlements he was prepared to make. "You know," she said, "that we

so you see that much as we should wish it, it will be utterly impossible for Lord Cowes to give his daughters any marriage portion."

"I do not ask it," Mr. Jobkin answered. "I am prepared to make the most liberal settlements, I assure you, Lady Cowes. If Lady Juliet Standish condescends to become my wife, she shall have my house in Grosvenor Square, and five thousand pounds a year settled on her, and I shall make a will on my marriage-day leaving her everything I possess—if I die without children. I have no family of my own, and am therefore quite at liberty to dispose of my fortune as I think best."

This was said in such a pompous manner that Lady Cowes could not help smiling; but the settlements seemed so splendid that she promised to tell her daughter of his generous offer, and to do all in her power to influence her to accept it.

What Lady Juliet's answer was, my readers will see in a subsequent chapter. I must now return to my other heroes.

CHAPTER X.

A RENT IN A CLOUD.

(Not by Charles Lever.)

THE Sunday on which the dinner at Stella's villa was to take place arrived in the course of time.

Lord Belgrave repaired to that fairy-like retreat with his brother early in the evening—for he wanted to be there before any of his guests arrived, as he knew that Stella was little used to receive much less to entertain company—when, to his great surprise, he found that she was not at home.

“She went out early in the afternoon in her brougham, carrying a few parcels with her, and she've a-bin out ever since, my Lord,” the servant informed him.

“Strange,” he muttered, “that she should stay out so late, and especially when she knows so many people are coming to dinner.”

He entered the dining-room to inspect the table and see that everything was in its proper place. The plates were all of the oldest Dresden china, and the centre-pieces were of cut glass, and so were the candelabra; altogether, it would have been difficult to see a prettier dinner table—though of course there were none of those monstrous silver dishes and that old family plate which

WILLOW INTO THE GARDEN, AND BEARING A STAFF, WALKED
DOWN THE TERRACES TOWARDS THE RIVER.

It was a fine summer evening, but the sky was clouded, and the heat was so oppressive that a storm seemed imminent. Since the setting of the sun a few streaks of lightning had rent the fast-closing darkness—they might be only caused by heat—but yet they looked threatening on such a close dark night. The river was perfectly smooth—not a ripple was to be seen anywhere upon its wide surface; and, for a wonder, there were hardly any boats upon it, though it was Sunday evening, and the heat of the long summer day must have drawn many persons from their houses in the City towards the green fields on the banks of the Thames.

Lord Belgrave and his brother walked silently along the terrace which overlooked the river. They, too, seemed oppressed, as if by the presentiment of an approaching storm, and felt little inclined for conversation. Yet this was the first time they had been alone since that night when they had dined together, several weeks ago; and since the letter which the elder brother had received on the following morning from the younger, asking him not to call upon Lord Cowes, as had been arranged between them the previous evening he should do, thanking him for his generosity in offering to provide for him, but at the same time declining it, which letter had not yet been mentioned by either of them. Lord Belgrave had guessed that something had happened to his brother,

and that it must have occurred that very night, too, which had caused him thus suddenly to change his mind; yet he hardly liked to ask him, and indeed he had only met him in company with other men, when it would have been impossible to have had any private conversation; and now the time seemed to have passed altogether for explanation, and he hardly liked to approach the subject at all. In all probability something of the same kind was passing through Lord Edwin's mind at that moment, and it was this, perhaps, that made them both so silent.

"What must he think of me?" Lord Edwin was saying to himself. "I dare say he considers me a confounded fool—and so I am, perhaps; and yet at this very moment I would refuse a thousand fortunes to have such an adventure as I had that night, and hear Sibyl confess her love for me."

Yes; he would gladly have given up even, as he thought at that moment, "a thousand fortunes" to hear Sibyl's passionate avowal again—for he was a disinterested man, though a poor one; and yet I hardly think he would have been so ready to give up Lady Juliet's hand now, should it have been proposed to him. No, perhaps not even for Sibyl's love; for he knew her better by this time, and was able to appreciate at its true value that love which he had once considered beyond all price.

"No; I shall never have the courage to tell him all," he said to himself; and yet he would have gladly opened his whole heart to his brother, and asked him again for his advice—the good advice which he had so soon forgotten that night.

Lord Belgrave was also thoughtful—he was troubled

friends, and received them in her house. This night he was going to entertain them in her villa for the first time. He was going, so to speak, to throw open its doors to the criticisms of the scandal-mongers of the whole world, and this idea made him thoughtful and almost sad. Yet he could not but confess to himself that his love for her had vanished. Indeed, had he cared for her as he had done at the beginning, he would never have dreamed of inviting his friends to sit at her table. It was precisely because his love had cooled that he cared less whom she saw, and had consequently consented to introduce her to that fast set which has constituted itself the centre (at least in its own opinion) of the fashionable world, to which he belonged perhaps more by his rank and fortune than by any natural inclination.

Circumstances had made him a man of pleasure, and as such he was almost forced to do as the others did; but in his heart he could feel no sympathy for such society, and consequently derived but little pleasure from it. In the great world where he lived—I say great world, because it is emphatically called so in our state of society, though in reality it forms but a very small portion indeed of the world—women are divided into two classes: those whom men must amuse, and those who must amuse men. He had been so besieged and disgusted ever since his first appearance in society by the former, that he had lately been compelled to turn,

when he wanted female society, to the ranks of the latter, almost against his wish, and certainly against his natural inclinations.

Stella he had admired at first for her innocence and natural grace. Her child-like beauty had attracted his attention, and her simple unaffected manners had won his admiration. But he was scarcely a man on whom such allurements could exercise more than a mere passing attraction ; he felt now that his heart had been always free. Stella had pleased his fancy, but certainly had not touched his heart. "I shall never love as men should love," he thought ; and, strange to say, whenever he said this, the chaste, pure, most supremely beautiful image of the poor Spanish girl he had seen in the squalid lodging-house at Bull Street, Soho, appeared before him. Could it be that he loved her ? No ; he would not even entertain such a thought. She was too pure, too innocent, too good to become his mistress ; too obscure and low-born to make his wife. He would think no more of her ; and yet, in spite of all his good resolutions, in spite of his usual strength of character, in spite of the great power over himself which he possessed to such an extent, and which he exercised so mercilessly, he could not banish that girl from his mind—perhaps from his heart.

As he walked slowly up and down the terrace with his brother that evening, his thoughts, strange to say, were oftener with Consuelo than with Stella, though everything around him must have reminded him of the latter, and his imagination must necessarily have been troubled with the thought of her absence, which was, indeed, most unaccountable.

Time passed and she came not. Eight o'clock had

grave said, speaking for the first time. She won't have any time to dress. What can make her so late?"

"I can't imagine," his brother answered suddenly and stopping his walk, for his thoughts had been with Sibyl and Juliet all this time—"provided she has not come to grief," he continued, thinking that his brother would expect him to say something under the circumstances.

"She would have sent some message if anything had happened; and yet perhaps not—she is so careless, and her horses are very spirited: I told her so only the other day; but she would have thoroughbreds!" he answered, his feelings, strange to say, hardly disturbed by the suggestion of an accident.

A bell rang at that moment, and through the trees Lord Belgrave saw that a carriage had drawn up to the front door. "There she is at last," he said to his brother, and he walked towards it.

It was not Stella, however, but Lord Carisbrooke and Eglantine Rosefield. Lord Belgrave was very much put out, but gave his arm to the actress and entered the house, for heavy drops of rain had begun to fall, and a storm was every moment more imminent.

The other guests now rapidly arrived one after the other, and the whole party had assembled, but no Stella!

Lord Belgrave explained how matters stood, and asked what he should do. They only looked at each other in astonishment and laughed.

Mlle. Sclavage, who had arrived the last, and wore a most wonderful dress, all yellow satin and gold, seemed very impatient.

"*Allons, becqueter,*" she said, in her usual argot; "*ou je me la brise moi.* I can't wait any more for my dinner, *détalons.* I dare say the 'Star of the East' won't come this half hour; and I am used up—*parbleu!*"

"I think it will be more polite to wait, though, for the lady of the house—it is early yet," Lord Carisbrooke suggested, with his usual politeness. But the ladies said they could wait no longer, and insisted on going into the dining-room at once. So in they went, and sat down at the table. Lord Belgrave ordered the dinner to be served without waiting any longer, and they were soon all talking and laughing as if the principal person had not been missing. In fact she was so little missed that Lord Belgrave had almost forgotten about her when one of the servants handed him a little note.

He took it hastily, for he knew what it must contain, opened it, and read it through. It must have been very short, for he was but half a minute reading it; yet, as he glanced at it, a great change came over his handsome face—his fair features seemed suddenly to darken terribly; his eyes, generally so cold and indifferent, shot fire; his lofty brow frowned, his cheeks flushed, and his lips became deadly pale under his light moustache; but he soon recovered his self-possession, though not before every one had noticed the change, even those who had not seen the servant hand him the letter.

Lord Belgrave crushed the note in his hand, and thrust it into his coat-pocket.

"Is it from her?" Sclavage said to him, breaking the oppressive silence which the arrival of the note had caused.

beg of you to excuse her presence, and to make yourselves as comfortable as if she had been here to entertain you."

He seemed easy in his mind, tranquil and self-possessed; yet so forbidding and serious in his manner that no one dared to ask him any questions; and to hide their own curiosity, each one began talking aloud to his neighbour, and the noise and laughter were soon more general than before.

"You look like a Raphael to-night," Mr. Deanshome said to Eglantine Rosefield, who was sitting next to him, and who was dressed in a picturesque costume, in which the dressmaker had evidently tried to imitate some old Italian picture.

"Raphael!—who's he?"

The little banker started in his chair.

"A painter—don't you know?"

"No. I dare say *he* knows me, but I don't *think* I know *him*."

"Why, he is one of the Old Masters, Eglantine, you little fool," shouted Lord Carisbrooke, from the other end of the table.

"Indeed; the Duke de Saisons promised to take me last winter to Rome, to be painted by one of them 'old masters,' as you call them, but he never kept his promise."

I should almost be induced to believe that Eglantine feigned an ignorance of which she was not really

guilty, in order to make people laugh, and perhaps with a view of restoring the gaiety of the party. However the case may be, her little *bêtise* proved highly successful, for it produced a general roar of laughter, and the incident of the letter was soon forgotten.

The party was a very merry one, and was kept up until a late hour. Slavage was as brilliant as ever, and every one tried to out-do the other in amusing the company. Lord Belgrave alone was rather silent, and at times seemed altogether unconscious of what was going on; but no one noticed this—at least, if they did, they pretended not to—and when, at a late hour in the morning, they said good-bye, they all assured him that Stella had not been missed at all, and that the dinner could not have been a more jolly one had she been present—a fact which seemed also to strike him forcibly and dissipate some of his gloom.

When Mr. Deanshome approached him to say good-bye, he remarked what a pretty house it was, and how much he liked the decoration of the rooms.

“Do you really like it?” Lord Belgrave said, with an inquiring look.

“Exceedingly; I have long been in search of a villa in this style, but I am afraid I shall not easily be so fortunate as you have been, Belgrave.”

“If you really admire this villa, and would like to have it for what I gave for it at the beginning of the season, you may have it to-morrow.”

“How?—what do you mean? You don’t mean to say you would sell it?”

“Yes, even at a loss—I am tired of it!”

“But Stella?”

“Stella is tired of it, and I am tired of her!”

shook hands, and went away with Amy Danshery, whom he had promised to drive home.

The weather had now cleared ; much rain had fallen during the night, and there had been a great storm ; but now the clouds were fast breaking, a cool fresh breeze had sprung up, and the sun's first rays were seen gilding the fast-dispersing clouds in the direction of the open fields beyond the waters of the Thames.

When all his guests had departed, Lord Belgrave opened the French window of the pretty little drawing-room and went out into the garden. The fresh air was most grateful to him, and an expression of relief and happiness stole over his handsome countenance. "Thank God," he murmured, "they have all gone, now I can once more breathe freely."

His brother, the only one who had remained, had followed him through the open window, and heard these words.

"Bel," he said, coming up to him, "what's amiss with Stella ?"

Lord Belgrave turned round towards him. There was already enough day-light to allow Edwin to see that a great change had come over his brother's face, but this time it was a change that seemed to soften his expression, and rendered his handsome features more pleasing than ever.

"Don't speak to me about her, Edwin," he said.
"You'll never see her any more."

Edwin started. "Why?—what has happened?" he exclaimed.

His brother said nothing, but took out of his pocket the letter he had received during dinner, and handed it to him. Edwin unfolded and read it. It ran thus—

"You need not wait for Stella—she won't dine with you to-night. If you want to see her, you will have to go to Lord Twickenham's house in future."

It bore no signature. Edwin's pulse beat furiously as he read this, and when he had finished the laconic epistle he looked up at his brother with an expression of mingled amazement and indignation; but Lord Belgrave was perfectly cool and calm, his features seemed carved in alabaster, and were as impenetrable, by that pale uncertain light. Edwin looked once more at the strange note in his hand, and read it through a second time. It was more than his brother had done.

"Bel," he cried in a tremulous voice, when he had perused it again attentively, "this has been written by that fellow—that Spaniard, Juan! I know his handwriting."

"Very likely," answered Lord Belgrave coldly.

"I always was afraid of him. If you remember, Bel, I cautioned you against him long ago. So she has run away, and with a friend of yours, too!"

"Yes; with my best friend—the man for whom I entertained the greatest esteem! I suppose it is the way of the world."

"You take it philosophically, by Jove! I wonder you can be so indifferent."

"Yes, I am glad. It has been a lesson I shan't forget in a hurry. It was wrong of me to have loved her at all. I wish I had followed Alfredo's advice. I deserve what has happened; he predicted it. Henceforward I shall shun such society, and turn to the higher, truer paths of life. Believe me, I pity Charlie Twickenham more than I condemn him. I bear him no ill-will; nor do I even to that scoundrel Juan, who has been at the bottom of the whole affair. I feel much happier this morning than I have felt for a long time! Ah, Edwin, never again will I sink so low in my own esteem. I have sinned, but I shall do so no more. See, the bright, pure sun of a new day is rising—the darkness and the storm fly before it. Believe me, I shall do my best to render my life in future as pure and cloudless as the day it announces!"

CHAPTER XI.

A LIFE'S ROMANCE.

(Not by Charles Lever, either.)

LADY COWES lost no time in informing her daughter of Mr. Jobkin's proposal.

She enumerated all the advantages such a marriage would give her. She left nothing unsaid that might have induced her to accept him, and yet Lady Juliet remained unmoved.

"I do not care in the least for Mr. Jobkin. I cannot love him!" was all she answered.

"But, my child, think of the position he offers you; think of his wealth, and of his generous settlements."

"I do not care for money."

"I am glad to hear you say so, my dear; but yet you can hardly be indifferent to the things money can procure."

"It cannot procure happiness."

"Well, perhaps not, but it can increase it." She remonstrated in vain, for Juliet was determined not to marry Mr. Jobkin, though he was so immensely rich, and had offered to make her such splendid settlements.

"I could not marry a snob!" she said the next day, when her mother again broached the subject.

her or her son. You will never have such a chance again," she said.

"What a chance! You seem to have forgotten how you laughed at him the day he was introduced to us at Prince's, and said you wondered how they could have elected him."

"Did I say so?"

"Yes, you did, indeed; and I even recollect the pun you attempted to make on the occasion. 'I suppose,' you said to Lady Windermere, 'he has滑ed so much and so successfully upon thin ice in the City, that now he has got up in the world he wants to try his luck at rinkin in Belgravia.'"

"Ah, I remember now; and, by-the-bye, I also remember how you defended him, and said that you thought him very gentlemanly, and not half so common as people pretended."

"You know I hate to hear people abused. I would not speak ill of any man, nor yet make fun of people whose sole fault lies in being unaccustomed to the usages of society; but *that* is not a reason why I must marry the very first *parvenu* who proposes to me!"

"Mr. Jobkin is a *parvenu*; but I suppose so at first were all our ancestors, of whom we are now so proud. I assure you, I, for one, do not think the worse of him for *that*!"

"Jobkin! what a name!"

"He can change it, you know," Lady Maude suggested, who was anxious that her sister should get married.

"Oh, yes ; and become a Lord too, I dare say ; but that won't make him a gentleman !"

"Well, he is wonderfully refined, considering—and I am sure he looks like a gentleman, and behaves like one."

"A man has no business to look like a gentleman if he is not one at heart ; and I am sure no one ever thought of calling a gentleman's behaviour gentlemanly : it is a proof that the man is not a gentleman when his actions strike one as gentlemanlike. I never heard any one say that Lord Edwin behaved like a gentleman !"

"Always thinking of him !"

"Well, if you speak of a gentleman, I am sure you can hardly help thinking of him."

As will be seen by this, Juliet still believed Lord Edwin to be the one perfect model by which all men should be judged. Although she was now almost convinced not only that he did not love her, but that he loved Sibyl Fetherstone, her heart was still his. She had made no effort to forget him—perhaps because she felt that such a thing would have been impossible—and she still entertained a lingering hope, such a hope as true love alone can give, that he would some day discover her love for him, and forget even the beautiful Sibyl for her.

But it is difficult to hope against hope, and the poor girl grew thin and pale and miserable, thinking of him ; yet there was still in her enough of the pride so natural to her sex to recoil from acknowledging her weakness—though in her eyes it was by no means a weakness, but rather a passion to be proud of—this hopeless, yet ever hopeful, love of hers. Had any one asked her if she

of this. They had watched the passion as it grew in her breast from the very first; and though Lady Cowes knew but too well—like the good mother and wise chaperon she was—that Lord Edwin would be a very poor *parti* for her daughter, yet she had not the heart to forbid her thinking of him, or still less for taking any active measures to prevent it, but preferred allowing things to take their course, fondly hoping that the girl would see her own folly, and, when the time and the opportunity came, would marry according to her wishes.

This opportunity had now arrived; but things had been allowed to go too far. Juliet would not be persuaded to forget her Edwin, even though her sister assured her that he had forgotten her; and, in spite of prayers, persuasions, and even threats, declined the hand and the fortune which Mr. Jobkin had so generously offered her.

"You will never have such a chance again!" said her mother, sighing as she folded the note which Juliet herself had written to Mr. Jobkin, thanking him for his offer, but declining it.

"Then I shall remain for ever an old maid! I can't understand the prejudices people have against old maids. I am sure all the old maids I know seem as happy as the day is long, and have nothing to trouble them or give them any anxiety."

"Yes; but they also have no one to care for them."

"Do you think Mr. Jobkin cares for me? Ah, no! He has never seen me except in company, and even then he has only spoken to me half-a-dozen times altogether. No; he only cares for my title!—for my title, just think, mamma dear!—for a thing that is hardly a part of myself, and that four years ago belonged to some one else! Ah, no, he does not care for me! If I had thought that he loved me, I would have sacrificed myself and married him, and even pretended to love him, because I know what it is to love, and can pity one who loves without being loved in return!"—and the lovely girl sighed deeply—"but as it is," she added, rapidly passing her hand over her large blue eyes, which were full of tears, as if she would have banished a painful thought from her mind—"but as it is, he will soon forget me, and marry another girl who may happen to be a Peer's daughter, and who will suit him just as well. I do not pity him—he does not really love!"

It was now the eyes of Lady Cowes that were filled with tears.

"My child," she said affectionately, taking her hand in hers, "you are sad—you suffer—can you not forget that boy?"

Lady Juliet said nothing, but burst into tears.

"A penniless young fellow like that! And yet you love him?"

"I do not; who said that I loved Edwin?"

"Edwin! Your own words condemn you; what made you conclude that I was thinking of him? Ah, Juliet, it is useless to try and deceive me; you love Edwin Beauville!"

"And is that a reason why you should abuse him, and call him a penniless young fellow, as if it were his

"Oh, mother, mother, between you and me you will end by killing me! Let us speak of something else."

The letter was sent to Mr. Jobkin—though Lady Cowes tried hard once more to alter her daughter's decision—and from that day his name was only mentioned in the house as that of a mere acquaintance; but Juliet often thought of him in silence, and wondered what her family would say if Lord Edwin were to make a similar proposal, and what she herself would feel!

Time, however, passed, and Edwin rarely made his appearance in their house, and when they met at parties kept away from her, and hardly ever spoke. It seemed as if he did this purposely. "Perhaps Sibyl has asked him not to come near me, and he fears to displease her," she thought; and the mere thought made her suffer intensely.

She grew pale and thin, she hardly ate at all, and seemed to take no pleasure in anything she did; she went to balls to please her mother, but she seldom danced—she said it was too hot to dance—and when she did, she hardly spoke to her partner.

Oh, how often, when we are dancing with a lovely girl, to whom we have perhaps longed to be introduced, are we half-disgusted to find that she has nothing whatever to say, and pronounce her at once a namby-pamby school-girl, without a second idea in that lovely head of hers! Ah, how little do we think that perhaps while she is dancing with us she is thinking

of some one else—perhaps watching him as he whirls past her, holding in his arms a hated rival !

Perhaps those “budding misses” cited by Byron, who seemed to him so shy and awkward, and so much alarmed that they were quite alarming, and cared so little for what he said to them that he accused them of a nursery odour of bread and butter, were at the time lost in sweet reveries of a more passionate, more vehement nature than even he could have imagined; and their giggling, blushing, half-pertness and half-pout, was only a mask put on to hide the deeper, all-absorbing feelings that were burning in their hearts.

Oh, how little we know, what even those we pride ourselves on knowing best, really are, and feel, and think. How little we know what passes in the hearts of those lovely young maidens we meet every night in the ball-rooms of Mayfair, or every afternoon under the trees of Belgravia. We set them down at once as clever or stupid, slow or fast, when we have not spoken half-a-dozen words to them, and, perhaps—nay, most likely—they were thinking of something else, or looking at some one else, all the time !

The men who were introduced to Lady Juliet Standish about this time, and who had the privilege of speaking to her and dancing with her, found her, I dare say, a very silent and uninteresting partner, and went off to their clubs or their mess, to tell everybody that she was a silly girl, who had nothing to say for herself. “Ah—well, yes—pretty enough, but confoundedly slow, you know !” And yet Juliet was anything but a silly girl; she was as clever as any, and as well read and as instructed as most—but she was in love ! And though she did not roam through the woods in white satin, or rave through the

wonder at this? Poor Juliet had lately grown so thin, so pale, and so nervous, that she determined to call in a doctor—the usual resource of mothers in such cases, I believe. The medical man came, but of course could do nothing for her; though, being more of a man of the world than such men generally are in novels, he was not long in discovering the cause of her malady, and told the truth to her anxious mother, who, rather than lose her daughter, consented to do anything, even to speak to Edwin himself, and propose to him that he should marry Juliet!

"We must see what we can do for her," she said to her husband, who had always been against a marriage with Lord Edwin. "If not, she will slip through our hands like the Juliet in the play, and before long she will get married to him without any settlement whatever, or else she will—die! I should not be surprised at anything now, since I have lived long enough to see a girl refuse a man who proposed settling five thousand pounds a year upon her to spend on her dress alone, and a handsome house in Grosvenor Square, with sixty thousand a year to keep it up, as I believe Mr. Jobkin has."

Had Juliet been consulted, she would never have consented to her mother's speaking to Lord Edwin about her. She was too proud to submit to any such humiliation, as she would have considered it; but she was not consulted on the subject, and before she was aware of

any such arrangement, Lady Cowes had seen Lord Edwin and asked him *his* intentions respecting her daughter—putting the question in such a delicate, ladylike manner, that no man could have been offended.

Lord Edwin, who, of course, ignored the state of the case, and merely imagined that the Countess wanted to catch him—though he was such a small prize that no one, with the exception of a rich American banker, whom he had once met travelling in Italy, with three plain daughters, had ever tried to capture him—answered in an evasive manner, and told her, what was only too true, that there had never been anything serious between himself and Lady Juliet.

He liked her very much; a something indescribable, but yet always apparent, in her voice, in her looks, in her general manner, told him that she was not indifferent to his merits, and that his graceful figure and fair features, and languid, gentle, almost affected, yet at the same time reckless, manner, had pleased her fancy, perhaps touched her heart. Yet he believed himself engaged to Sibyl Fetherstone, and he would have considered himself the greatest wretch that ever lived, if, after that adventure at the Argyle Rooms, he had dared to speak of love to any other woman; so he promised Lady Cowes never to speak to her daughter again, so as not to give people room to talk (the plea on which the Countess had based her inquiries), and assured her that he did not love Lady Juliet, and never had loved her. After which he drank another cup of tea and left the house.

Lady Cowes was greatly pleased and yet greatly displeased, if I may be allowed to express myself in such a contradictory manner. She was pleased at the idea of having put an end to such a foolish affair, as she still

SHE MUST BREAK THE NEWS TO MARY, TOO, AS LONG AS SHE believed it was only her parents who opposed the match, she would go on loving him, and the consequences might be fatal. So that night she told her eldest daughter, Lady Maude, what she had done, and asked her to break it to her sister, which she did as gently as she could—yet the blow was a heavy one. All Juliet's hopes and longings came suddenly to the ground, and the fall was so great that it quite stunned her.

Then the words uttered by the unhappy Mary Stuart, and addressed to Edwin as the fickle Earl of Leicester, in the play they had acted at the beginning of the season, came back to her mind with all their awful meaning :—"Farewell, and, if you can—live happy ! You have dared to aspire to the hand of two Queens; you have despised a tender and loving heart; you have betrayed it to gain a heart proud and haughty. Go, fall at her feet, and may your recompense not turn into a punishment!"

But she could not again repeat the word "Farewell," and, uttering a cry of despair, she fell half-fainting into her sister's arms.

From that day a great change came over her. She never smiled—she rarely spoke—she never complained, but fell into a slow yet alarming decline, that made all her family despair of her life, and obliged them to quit England for a milder climate, where the doctors said she might perhaps recover.

CHAPTER XII.

DAMES OF HIGH ESTATE.

(Not by Madame de Witt.)

MR. JOBKIN had never in the whole course of his life been so put out—not even when the great American house of Bull and Thunder had fallen, and put all his affairs into such a mess—not even when his monstrous ball at Willis's Rooms proved such a failure that he actually read in the newspapers people boasted of not having been there—no, he had experienced many reverses, but none like this! His hand had never been refused before—never; and he would take very good care, as he informed his friend Mr. Thomson—who unfortunately knew of his intended proposal to Lady Juliet—that it should never be refused again.

"But I must show those people that I can get a wife without them," he exclaimed, soon after reading Lady Juliet's letter. "I must be married before the end of the season, and to a woman more worth having than that washed-out girl, who seems half-consumptive, and dares to write this school-girl nonsense to me!—to a Member of Parliament!—to a man of my wealth!"

With a despairing air, he once more turned his attention to that valuable catalogue of fashionable and eligible

THERE WAS THE LADY TURA—the pretty daughter of the Duke of Northlands—who was pronounced charming by everybody, and would do capitally; but then, he had never been introduced to her—he had never even seen her, though once he had gone to a ball at Preston House, to which Mrs. Boston Gilbert, after no end of difficulties, had managed to get him an invitation.

There were the two daughters of the Duke of London, who were also said to be very pretty, and who would do in every respect; but then, he did not know them.

There were also the two daughters of the Marchioness of Kilkenny, whom he had seen once at a concert, and thought very pretty; but he had never been introduced to them.

Amongst those he did know were plenty of Peers' daughters, and some of them exceedingly pretty too; but, somehow or other, none of them seemed so much struck with him as he might have desired, and he was afraid of exposing himself to another refusal like the one he had received from the daughter of Lady Cowes, a young lady of whom he had thought himself perfectly sure.

As he recalled to mind the faces of the numerous young ladies he had been introduced to that season, the stately figure and handsome countenance of Sibyl Fetherstone, with its perfect features, wondrous colouring, matchless hair, and proud smile, appeared suddenly before him in a peculiarly distinct manner.

"She is not a Peer's daughter," he said to himself, and

endeavoured to think of some one else ; but this he found rather more difficult than he had expected, for Sibyl was indeed a woman whose image no other could easily efface. "She is not a Peer's daughter," he repeated, when he again found himself thinking of her ; "but her father is a Minister. He may be Premier one of these days, and he might prove very useful to his son-in-law." Mr. Jobkin was ambitious, and the idea of being in office certainly possessed great attractions for his aspiring yet commonplace spirit.

Although he had promised himself not to let his friend into his secrets again, he consulted with Thomson that very evening about the possibilities of his becoming a Secretary of State or a Lord of the Admiralty.

"But you know nothing about politics, and next to nothing about ships, though you are always talking of buying a yacht."

"That does not matter in the least—I am an M.P. ; that is enough. Do you suppose any of the Lords of the Admiralty know anything about ships ? Besides, supposing I was married to the Premier's daughter, I should have the greatest influence in my favour."

"The Premier's daughter !—but the Premier has no children !"

"No ; not the present one, but Mr. Fetherstone *might* become Prime Minister any day."

"Ah !—so you are thinking of marrying the stately Sibyl ?"

Jobkin would have preferred not to tell his friend his plans, but as Thomson, with his usual penetration, had discovered them, and as he really needed some advice, he did not deny that he *had* thought of that young lady as a wife. "She is beautiful—eh ?"

Queen, while Duke and Duchess changed his place and filled his glass with splendid old port (for such he believed to be the office of the Lords-in-Waiting, who, he read in the papers, attended her Majesty).

"A Minister is better than a Lord any day," he said to himself the next morning. "I really must think seriously of Miss Fetherstone."

Three days afterwards he met her father in the House of Commons, and, drawing him aside into one of the deserted lobbies, he told him how much he *hadmired* his daughter, and asked her hand, offering to make the same handsome settlements upon her which he had offered only a few days before to Lady Juliet.

Mr. Fetherstone was struck by the brilliancy of the proposal. He was not a rich man himself, and consequently could appreciate to its full value the advantage of money; in fact, his appreciation of the advantages to be obtained by it was so great that it had perhaps alone induced him to marry the thrice-widowed Lady Twickenham. He therefore promised Mr. Jobkin to speak to his daughter, and to do everything in his power to induce her to marry him.

These were the very same words which Lady Cowes had used, and Mr. Jobkin, who dreaded greatly another refusal, inquired whether he thought Miss Fetherstone would view his suit as favourably as he did.

"Sibyl is a clear-headed, well-principled girl, who knows what is good for her, and will be guided, I am sure,

by my advice in such a serious matter. She is a good, high-principled young woman, and will make any man happy who is fortunate enough to win her. And now I think we have sufficiently discussed this subject. Will you come and dine with me to-morrow? There are several questions I should like to ask you, when we are both at leisure."

Mr. Jobkin felt relieved after this encouraging speech, but he was still troubled with doubts.

"Do you think Miss Fetherstone's affections are disengaged?" he asked.

"You mean, if I think she is in love with any one else? It seems to me that *you* should know this better than I. You know that the affairs of State take up all my time, and that I am seldom at home."

Jobkin hesitated before he spoke again.

"Well, you see, I do not know her intimately enough to have found out whether she may not already admire some one."

"No, I do not think so; her sister, now, I believe is what you call 'in love,' and with a man I don't half like—a Spaniard—a Mr. Fernandez, a great friend of my step-son Lord Twickenham. Do you know him?"

"Mr. Fernandez! Why, he is my cousin!"

"Your cousin!"

"Well, no; but he calls himself so—as great a scamp as I know!"

"Indeed!" Mr. Fetherstone exclaimed, very much alarmed. "What do you know about him—who is he? I know nothing, save that he is a friend of Lord Twickenham's, and that it was he who told me of their attachment, and begged my consent to their marriage."

"Their marriage! You do not mean to say that you

LORD TWICKENHAM : By-and-bye, where is he ? This poor mother is in a sad state ! It seems he has gone off with a ballet-dancer, or something of the kind, and no one knows where to find him."

" Well, you have only this Mr. Fernandez to thank for it all. Mr. Fetherstone, he is a scoundrel—a villainous, penniless scamp—that's what he is, take my word for it ! "

Mr. Fetherstone felt greatly alarmed.

" You don't say so ! But there is the bell. I must leave you now ; come to dinner to-morrow—we dine at eight, you know—and you can tell me all about it. A scamp !—a penniless scamp !" he repeated to himself, as he hurried away to listen to the debate that had just commenced.

That night he informed his wife of Mr. Jobkin's proposal, but Lady Twickenham was too much excited to pay much attention to what he said.

" I have found out where my son is at last," she said.

" Indeed ! And where is he ? "

" In Paris, Gerald—in Paris ! "

" In Paris ! "

" Yes ; and you must go and bring him back—immediately ! "

" I go to Paris now !—in the middle of the session ! Impossible, Elizabeth—impossible ! "

" But you must ! "

"I tell you it is impossible. I could not be absent from the House for a single night just now—it is as much as my place is worth."

"Then I will go myself."

"You!"

"Yes; I will go and bring him back, and in future I won't let him out of my sight. What will the Duke of the Isles think when he hears of this! Oh, Gerald! Gerald! there is no time to be lost—he might marry that girl."

"Marry her! Oh no, he is not such a fool."

"I tell you, you don't know Charlie—he is so generous—such a noble, warm-hearted boy! He will marry her, I tell you, if I don't go and bring him back at once."

"Then go."

"Yes, I'll start to-morrow morning by the tidal train."

"But do you know where to find him in Paris?"

"Yes," she answered; and, taking a French newspaper from the table, she showed him a paragraph, which ran more or less like this—

"We hear that at the Hôtel d'Alve there are stopping at present a Russian Prince, with a hundred retainers, and an English Lord with *one* detainer. The Prince is, we believe, the distinguished R.S.K——off; the Lord, the Earl of Tw——ham."

The next morning Lady Twickenham left by the first train for Paris. It was not until she had gone that Mr. Fetherstone found an opportunity of speaking to Sibyl of Mr. Jobkin's proposal.

CHAPTER XIII.

SECOND TO NONE.

(Not by James Grant.)

SINCE that first visit of Lord Belgrave to Bull Street, he had done nothing but think of the lovely vision he had seen there. Consuelo was always before his eyes. Ah! how well Alfredo had understood his friend, when he had feared to introduce him to her he so worshipped! How well had he foreseen what would happen, and tried to prevent it, even at the greatest cost to himself! So much had he dreaded the effects of her beauty on his friend's heart that he had preferred to quit London, and to leave the only woman he loved in the whole world, rather than introduce her to his friend, who, had he confided in him, would, no doubt, have helped him, and perhaps facilitated their marriage. And yet, in spite of all his care never to speak of her—never even to allude to her in any way—Lord Belgrave and Consuelo had been brought together—brought together!—and by Stella, the girl he had so despised!

It was strange how alike were these two men, born in such different spheres, brought up in such a different manner. Alike—not in personal appearance, for indeed it would have been difficult to find two men more unlike,

though both were, in their own way, exceedingly handsome ; but alike in their ways of thinking, in all their tastes and ideas, and even in their manner of speaking.

It was, perhaps, this strange peculiarity, which Consuelo could not help noticing, that attracted her to him. When Lord Belgrave spoke, she could imagine she heard her *Alfredo*. His ideas and opinions on almost all subjects were so very similar to his, and so very different to those of everyone else she knew, that when he came to see her she could not help feeling a certain amount of pleasure in his visits. He reminded her of *Alfredo* —he was to her like the picture or reflection of his mind, if I may so express myself; and as she could not have the beloved original, she was only too happy to be able at times to admire the likeness.

But this feeling was not love. Oh, no ! It was, on the contrary, a feeling so thoroughly opposed to any real liking for the man himself, that it could never turn into love ; it did but serve to increase the affection she bore *Alfredo*, of whom alone she thought when she spoke to this stranger.

Lord Belgrave, on his side, was falling desperately in love. He had never seen such a beautiful woman before, and, what was more, he had never seen a woman he could admire more. She was actually the realization of the ideal he had formed in his mind of female beauty—the realization of that ideal, but with all the unimaginable charms which only a reality can possess. And then, over and above her mere physical beauty, which had at first alone attracted him, he now discovered the still greater beauties of her moral nature—beauties which for him exercised a still greater charm, as he met with them so rarely.

~~WORLD, AS DISGUSTED WITH THE THINGS THAT HAVE~~
about, as disgusted with everything he saw and did, as
Lord Belgrave.

Her innocence and guilelessness, her wondrous sense and clear understanding, attracted him more perhaps than her personal charms—though it had certainly been the latter that had at first won his admiration ; and he often went to that poor house in that squalid back street, through a part of the town which was for him almost another world, and passed long hours at her side —hours that seemed like minutes to them both—for *he* spent them lost in admiration of her, and she in thoughts of her absent lover, whom this Mr. Lucas (for she was still under the idea that this was the name of their new friend) so resembled.

As he sat near her, watching her sewing busily at the work by which she gained her own and her father's living, he often noticed her abstraction, and thought that she was not quite indifferent to his society, as indeed she was not, and that she was more impressed than she liked to show with his personal appearance.

This idea was flattering to the Marquis, though unfortunately it was not a true one, for he knew that she ignored his real rank and wealth, and believed that all the admiration she might feel for him was due entirely to his own merits.

Since Stella's betrayal and flight he had sworn never to love another woman as he had loved her. He had declared this, and he was under the impression that he was keeping his word, and yet he already found himself in love. He tried, however, to convince himself that the love he bore Consuelo was not the same kind of love he had entertained for Stella, and that this passion could never end, like the other, in sin and dishonour.

But Lord Belgrave, though a good man at heart, a man incapable of committing a mean or ungentlemanly action, had lived all his life in a world where public opinion with respect to *some actions* is neither strong in its influence nor rigid in its morality. Moreover, thrown almost from his youth—with unbounded wealth at his disposal, and a position that placed him almost beyond the criticism of other men—amidst the temptations that make the first ordeal of youth—with ardent passions, and with an intellectual superiority of which he could not be ignorant—he had been led from one error into another, almost before he was himself aware of his fault: he had led, in fact, an almost profligate life—against his own inclinations, it is true—but still to the great detriment of his heart, whose surface it had hardened and iced, though the springs still ran fresh and pure below.

His good sense and thorough appreciation of manners had made him a profound philosopher of the great world in which he lived: I say the great world, for of the world without the circle of the great, Belgrave naturally knew but little. He knew exactly what people felt, and how they felt, and could not help seeing—though he was not, perhaps, really a conceited man—how infinitely superior he was, with all his faults, to the greater part of them.

—
this life, moreover, perhaps owing to his birth, per-
haps still more to his education—had been spent without
any high aims or fixed pursuits.

It is always a bad thing for a man with a superior
mind, and an ardent and passionate nature, not to have
from the outset of his career some paramount object in
life.

He had drifted about all his life in the immense
whirlpool called Society, making plenty of friends—
going to balls and parties, to theatres and casinos, to
great dinner parties and midnight suppers, during the
London season, and travelling on the Continent and
stopping at different country houses during the rest of
the year—always more or less bored, always more or less
disgusted, both with himself and with everything he saw,
as men must be who have no object in life. His life was
made up of amusements, but of amusements that did not
amuse him, and which he therefore considered duties.
These were objects, it is true, in their way ; but objects
that soon lose their attraction, and even with the most
frivolous are not calculated to satisfy the mind and heart,
in which there is generally an inborn aspiration after
something useful.

If we take into consideration all these things, we can
scarcely wonder that Lord Belgrave should have fallen
into an involuntary system of gratifying his own tastes,
following his favourite pursuits, and indulging his own
passions, without much thought of the harm or the

misery they might bring to others, or even to himself. And if his passions sometimes caused him to act as no God-fearing man ever should act, I do not think we should be right in blaming him, but should rather pity him for his blindness (for the moment we lose forethought, we lose sight of the duties we owe to God and to man, and we become, as it were, blind to everything but our own desires); though, of course, as the author of the book that depicts his character, I should be the very last person who should try to excuse his conduct.

Lord Belgrave loved Consuelo : he could not deny it, though he tried hard to fight against it, for he knew the dreadful consequences of indulging such a passion. Yet he loved her, and his love was stronger than himself. If Stella had not left him, if she had remained in his villa by the Thames—which, by-the-bye, he had just sold to Mr. Deanshome—most likely he would have succeeded in banishing the lovely Spanish girl from his thoughts. But now he was alone : Stella had gone—there was no other woman he cared for in the least, and his steps wandered every day to where his imagination always carried him, and that was—to Bull Street, to see Consuelo.

Poor Alfredo ! if he had but known ! But perhaps it was a good thing that he did not know, as things had turned out.

Had he but have taken the Marquis to Bull Street himself, and introduced Consuelo to him as his betrothed wife, Lord Belgrave would have looked upon her with such different eyes that most likely the feelings with which she had inspired him would have been of a very different nature. But as it was who could tell what would come of it all ?



CHAPTER XIV.

LOVE'S CONFLICT.

(Not by Mrs. Ross Church.)

SIBYL and Geraldine Fetherstone are seated in their little boudoir in Carlton House Terrace.

Their father has just informed them of Mr. Jobkin's proposal.

Sibyl is sitting by the window where she sat that night she went to the Argyle Rooms, and seems again lost in deep thought, as her large black eyes wander over the trees of the Park and seek the old Abbey beyond.

Geraldine is sitting near her, but she seems occupied only in watching her sister, and her eyes are fixed on her face.

A long silence would seem to have reigned between the sisters, for Geraldine hesitates before she speaks, and when at last she does so, she seems almost frightened at the sound of her own voice.

"So you would give up Edwin, who loves you, and whom you love, to marry this Mr. Jobkin!"

Sibyl seemed as if suddenly awakened from a dream by these words, for she turned sharply round, and looked for a moment at her sister before she answered—

"No; I would do nothing of the kind, Geraldine. But who told you that I loved Edwin?"

"Thank God, you are mistaken."

"And you are going to marry that snob?"

"That snob! I hope you do not mean Mr. Jobkin?"

"Do you mean to say you don't think him a snob?"

"Well, no; he is a snob, perhaps. But, then, so are you—so am I—so are we all, and ever shall be, as long as we live in what is called Society."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that there are snobs in every set—amongst the highest, as amongst the lowest, if you mean by 'snob' a person who pretends to be what he is not. Our society is a beautiful inlaid cup of the purest gold, which contains a strange compound of nobility and snobbism, the peculiarity of which is that you find it in equal parts and in the same perfection—though in different forms—where it sinks to the bottom and becomes dregs, as when it rises to the top and becomes *crème*."

Geraldine looked at her sister in mute astonishment. Her words often puzzled her, and she knew by experience that it was useless to ask for an explanation.

"And you admire that man?" she said, after a pause.

"Admire him! No; but I admire his money! Do not look at me so, Geraldine. I know it is very wicked to talk like that; but, then, if you come to think of it, I only say openly what thousands of others think, and try to hide even from themselves. My great fault is that of being too honest. I cannot hide my feelings, like

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most people; but I am not worse than they for all that believe me."

"A man without *h's*!" muttered Geraldine to herself.

"Oh, well, as to *that* you are wrong; he has plenty of *h's*, only I must admit he does not always put them in the right place. No; I think his fault is that of having too many; but, you see, he is so rich that he can afford to have *h's* to all his words if he likes."

"A man without a soul!"

"Oh, that is a blessing, I am sure. I hate men with 'souls'."

"A man without education!"

"Well, that is a pity, certainly; but then, it is his misfortune, not his fault."

"A man without manners!"

Sibyl remained silent for a few seconds this time.

"He certainly is dreadfully common," she muttered to herself.

"Common!" exclaimed Geraldine. "I should say he was common."

"It is a great pity. I am afraid not all the money in the world would make up for that."

"Nor for any of his other faults."

"He is not bad-looking."

"Well, he is big and strong, if you call that beauty."

"And he has sixty thousand a year!"

"Are you sure of that?"

"People say he has as much as that. I do not see why it should not be true."

"People always exaggerate. If you take my advice, you'll reduce that sum to the half, and then, perhaps, you will be nearer the truth."

"Well, thank God, I shall have nothing to do with

~~that is wrong, in this marriage ever made~~
But why should we bother ourselves thinking about it?
I dare say I shall refuse him."

"I wonder what Lady Twickenham will say to such a marriage. Do you think that papa mentioned it to her before she went away?"

"I dare say he did."

"She will never approve of such a *mésalliance*—she, who has such grand ideas!"

"Then I shall do without her Ladyship's approval—but no, Geraldine, she will be the first to approve of it. Remember how she married a City man herself, not so very long ago."

"Ah, but that was as her third husband; she had an Earl for the first."

"Never mind. I am sure we ought to be very glad that she did, for I believe we are at this moment living upon the money he left her, and I am sure no one thinks the worse of us for that. Money is money, you know. What does it matter, whether it comes from the City or from the country, from banks or from fields, provided the hands that spend it are clean?"

"You only think of the frivolities of life! Sibyl, I pity you!"

"Thank you; but believe me, I pity you a great deal more for only caring for romantic nonsense. But I dare say I wrong you. I see Lord Clare is quite devoted to you now; I am glad to see that you encourage him."

"I encourage him!"

"He is only an Irish Peer, it is true, and his estates are not worth much; but one can hardly call him an adventurer, and that is certainly more than can be said for all your admirers."

Geraldine blushed as her sister said this, and answered hurriedly, as if anxious to conceal any emotion which her voice might have betrayed—

"Why will you always plague me so? It is wrong, Sibyl, very wrong."

"Because you deserve it; and you resent it because you know you do. What can that Spaniard possess, who has so won your heart?"

"A heart!—and that is more than any of your admirers ever had!"

"What a treasure!—and do you intend to live upon that?"

"Sibyl, I won't be teased by you," Geraldine replied, blushing still more deeply.

"A tender point, I see," the beautiful Sibyl exclaimed, pouting her coral lips, while a smile of scorn passed over her handsome face. "Geraldine, I understand you now. It is all pretence, this love of yours. You believe it makes you interesting, but you are wrong, as usual. It does nothing of the kind—it only makes you look a greater fool than you are. I don't believe you love this Juan at all!"

"Not love him! Ah, Sibyl, I would do anything to prove my love—anything! I wish he were a poor peasant and I a Princess, that I might show the world how I love him, and shame you all, cold-hearted, frivolous girls that you are!"

"I am sure I hope you will do nothing of the kind,

him do so whenever you like. He loves you, I am sure he does. I can't imagine why, but I think your silly romantic ways have pleased him. Geraldine, you have only to throw down your glove to become Lady Clare. We can be married on the same day, you know. It would be awfully nice."

"Yes, we may be married on the same day, but *mine*, at least, shall not be a *mariage de convenance*."

"Then who will you marry?"

Geraldine was going to answer, but the door was opened at that moment by a servant who took the very words she was going to say out of her mouth—

"Mr. Fernandez!"

The two girls looked at each other in silence. At last, Sibyl, turning to the footman, asked into which room he had been shown.

"Mr. Fernandez," he repeated, "is down stairs. He came to call upon her Ladyship; but when I told him as she had left for Paris, he said that he would like to see Miss Geraldine if she would kindly come down to him for a few seconds. I hardly knew what to do, so I showed him into the library."

"You did wrong, James," Sibyl answered; "we cannot receive gentlemen visitors during Lady Twickenham's absence. Tell Mr. Fernandez that Miss Geraldine is very sorry, but cannot see him to-day."

The footman was going to deliver the message to

Juan, who was waiting in the library, and had already shut the door behind him, when Geraldine rose from her seat and walked straight to it.

"Sibyl," she said, "you have no right to give orders for me. He has asked for *me*, and I must see him. It would be very rude of me to send such a message as you have sent."

"Papa is at home, remember—he will not approve, I am sure, of your receiving visits from gentlemen."

"I don't care. He already knows that I love Juan. Charlie told him the whole truth, at Juan's express desire."

"Charlie! What a fine advocate you have found for your wild love! Go and make a fool of yourself, as he has done!"

Geraldine did not hear the last words, for she was already on the staircase, and the noise which the door made in closing completely drowned them.

Sibyl was left alone, and she once more resumed her seat by the window, and began thinking for the hundredth time that day of Edwin and of Jobkin; of the man she loved, and of the man whose money she wanted to possess. Which should she choose?

Had she loved Edwin with all the intensity of her ardent nature, such a question would never have presented itself to her mind; she would have scorned the idea of sacrificing her Passion for the sake of Fashion. But the love she bore Edwin was not a love capable of making great sacrifices. She felt that she was capable of an attachment infinitely more vehement and passionate than the one she felt for Lord Edwin; and therefore it was, that at times she even doubted if she really loved him after all, and that when Mr. Jobkin's tempting pro-

a grand, stately beauty which no one could help admiring, but which very few men could love. She had therefore gone to numberless parties and balls, receiving the undisguised admiration of all, but seldom, if ever, the hidden love of any.

Yet proposals, if I must speak truthfully, had not been wanting—but that she had received none she had cared to accept was easy to see, from the fact of her still being unmarried at her age.

Perhaps it was that, like so many young ladies who count too much on their personal attractions and their social position, she had begun by expecting too much, by looking too high. (I know a certain very pretty young lady who determined on coming out to marry nothing under a Duke, and consequently refused three Lords; her second season she consented to extend her choice to Marquisses and Earls; her third season she would have been glad enough to accept any one of the three Lords who first proposed to her, but these gentlemen did not repeat their offer, and she ended by marrying a plain Mister, and not a very rich one either, at the end of her fifth season.) It is certainly a great mistake for a girl to think that because she is pretty, and comes of good family, every man in England will be at her feet—for, as a rule, half these men pass her by, saying, “A handsome girl, by

Jove ! but stuck up !” or “ Good-looking ; but a confounded coquette! don’t you know ?”—and end by marrying women not half so good-looking, and perhaps of a lower extraction.

This was the case with Sibyl Fetherstone. She was too confident of her beauty, and this was perhaps the reason why, after having been out so long, Mr. Jobkin’s was actually the best proposal she had ever had.

Should she accept him ? Should she accept him—should she become plain Mrs. Jobkin—she, who had dreamt of being Marchioness of Belgrave ?

Lord Edwin, though poor, would give her a good old name and a title ; but then, what would be the use of a title with only five hundred a year ? It was better to be plain Mrs. Jobkin and have five thousand a year at her own absolute disposal.

Yet she loved Edwin. She could not convince herself that she did not, though she tried hard to do so, you may be sure, for she had lived too long in the world not to be fully aware of the value of sixty thousand a year, which Mr. Jobkin was said to possess. But she loved Edwin, and it was not an easy matter to forget him.

LOVE'S VICTORY.

(Not by Mr. Farjeon.)

IN the spacious library of Lady Twickenham's house in Carlton House Terrace we now find Geraldine Fetherstone and Juan Fernandez.

Geraldine was dressed in a pretty light silk morning costume, and looked exceedingly pretty, as she always did when in the company of Juan, for then her cheeks acquired a fresh rose colour, that added beauty to her not very bright complexion, and her eyes seemed to enlarge and sparkle with a brilliancy that lighted up her whole face.

Juan sat opposite to her on a very low chair. He was always handsome, but an acute observer would have noticed that his complexion, though still healthy, had lost much of the brilliancy which distinguished him only a few months before. His features, always rather marked, had now grown yet more sharp, almost too much so to be any longer called classical; his brows seemed to project more broodingly over his eyes, which had certainly sunk deeper into their sockets, but his eyes still sparkled with great brilliancy, and were now, strange to say, the only feature that reminded one of his sister.

The character of the man had begun to stamp itself upon his face, as our characters will in spite of all our care. His was now a face more striking for acute intelligence, for concentrated energy, for great cunning, than for mere physical beauty. But there was a something written in that face which said "Beware!" It would seem as if the hand of Providence had stamped that word on his countenance to warn people against the man. It was undoubtedly a something which would have struck any one—who had mixed much amongst men, and had made a point of studying the expression of their faces—with a sense of suspicion and distrust not easily to be overcome.

But then, how seldom do men or women pay any attention to these little characteristics; though many of them know full well that they must exist, and are only too reliable!

Certainly Geraldine did not, as she sat opposite to Juan in the arm-chair that summer afternoon, listening to the passionate words, and lost in admiration of his manly beauty, which, in her eyes, had lost nothing of that wondrous charm which had at first attracted her.

She thought she read in those large black eyes—which he could render so expressive when he gazed upon her—what only true and devoted love could utter. She had read all this and more in his burning glances; and at that moment, as she looked at him, a new sensation of joy and triumph filled her heart. The experienced Spaniard was fully aware that the fair citadel was tottering to its fall; so, with all the knowledge of a brave yet cautious general, he determined to make the decided attack that very day; but it must be an attack in which he could employ all his forces, and spare none of

more pure and more devoted than mine : I have never
could not have loved as I love. Even the far-famed
Romeo had loved another before he loved Juliet ; but
you—you are my first, my last, my only love ; for, after
having loved *you*, do you think I could ever love
another ? ”

Geraldine coloured still more, and bent her head with
a graceful inclination, casting down her eyes.

“ Oh, my love, my love ! ” exclaimed the amorous
Spaniard, taking her hand in his, and pressing it to his
heart, while he looked at her so intensely that she felt
compelled to lower her eyes again, which, for one
moment, she had raised at the sound of his voice. “ I
have loved you for a long, long time—long before you
were aware even of my existence. It was the fame of thy
beauty—angel of light ! —that brought me over from the
sunny shores of my country to the gloomy streets of
London. I saw thee, and I loved thee. I feel that
we were made for each other—something in my heart
tells me that it must be so—otherwise, why should we
both have fallen in love so quickly ? Ah ! it must be
so. I loved thee from the first. I love thee with a
passion which is seldom felt in this cold northern island,
and which, therefore, your friends—what can they know
of love ? —will tell you is too exaggerated to be true.”

“ Do you really love me so intensely ? ”

“ Do I love you ? Ah, would to God I did not love
you as wildly as I do ! ”

"You wish you did not love me? Oh, Don Juan, Don Juan, I fear you are but a gay deceiver after all!"

"If I have been a Don Juan, it was only before I saw you; since I have seen you, and know what love really is, I could not pretend to love another woman."

"Ah! now you confess that this is not the first time that you have sworn love."

"Forgive me, Geraldine. My Geraldine, see here at thy feet all the power, all the pride, of this heart, which once had boasted of being able to conquer without being conquered. I own myself conquered at last—you are the *victa victrix*. You have me in your power—one word from you might kill me, but another would make me the happiest of men. You would not be so cruel as to utter the first—you, who are so good, so fair, so angelic!" And the fascinating Spaniard threw himself at her feet.

"Oh, rise, rise, Juan," Geraldine said, moving her chair away from him.

"Yes; but not until you have forgiven me."

"Very well, I forgive you," she said coquettishly, drawing near to him again. "I forgive you, but on the condition that you make me a full confession, and tell me all your adventures."

The new Don Juan arose, but only to kneel down again closer to her, when, taking her hands in his, and looking up at her with eyes that seemed almost to set her very heart on fire, he said—

"Why need I speak of the past? What matters to you whether the Duchess of Vallumbroso should have gone mad because she could not succeed in making me love her; or how the lovely Countess Rosario de Fuenteclarisima, the greatest heiress in Spain, should have gone into a convent because I refused to marry her?—Ah,

"~~us~~ speak of the past, which does not exist for me, out of the present, of the future, which is all in all, because thou art to be for ever its guiding star!"

"Oh fie, Don Juan! I do not believe you love me at all. I dare say you spoke in the same way to all those ladies, and then"

"Ah, no, Geraldine, I could not refuse to marry you. I never knew what love was till now, and yet all those ladies believed in my words, which were not true; and now that I utter what I really do feel—for the first time—I cannot get the one I love to believe me. It seems like the old fable of the man who had cried 'Fire' so often that when his house was really on fire no one would come to put it out. You see, I make a clean confession to you of all my sins. I do not pretend to deny that I have often feigned to love; but I swear to you, by all that is most holy in the world—by my honour as a Castilian knight—that you are the first woman who ever inspired me with real love!"

"Oh, Juan!"

"Yes, Geraldine—my own, my beautiful Geraldine!—I loved you from the first time I saw you! I could not help it. Love is not a thing we can command, I assure you. I tried—and tried hard too—to forget you, for I knew that there was a great barrier between us, which the prejudices and the narrow-minded views of the heartless society in which you live had erected. I endeavoured to crush this passion as it grew in my

breast, for I perceived the gulf that lay between us. But, Geraldine, I could not. The accident which was the means of bringing us together, and which afforded me the blessed opportunity of saving you from a horrible death, must, I think, have been brought about by the express orders of the Providence that watches over us; for, Geraldine, had it not been for that accident, you would never have known me, though many mutual friends had often wished to introduce me to you. But I had preferred suffering in silence; for though the representative of an old family, as brave and as noble as any in Castille—you know I am descended in a straight line from Fernando de Cordova, and that the Duke de Medinaceli and the Duke de Feria are my first cousins, indeed I am nearly connected with half the nobility of Europe—my race and my estates have gradually decayed and fallen like my old and proud country, once the first in the world, and I am but a poor and obscure knight to wed such a rich and beautiful lady! I knew this; I knew that thy father—one of the rulers of this prosperous country, enriched by commerce—had been ennobled but recently by his grateful sovereign—a sovereign whose ancestors trembled at the name of mine; but those times are past, Geraldine! Ah, Geraldine, as these convictions came home to my heart, I strove to crush the newly-born passion, to shun thee, to avoid thy presence, and vowed never to speak to thee, never to listen to the sound of thy melodious voice, which I knew would only increase my madness. But this was worse than death, and I think I should have died of a broken heart had not that accident happened, and had you not yourself, dearest, opened paradise to me with thy lips, whilst slaying me with thine eyes!"

"No, no!" she answered, tears of happiness flowing down her blushing cheeks; "I could not doubt thee, my faithful knight, my Don Juan; but one doubt still troubles my mind—that girl, that woman who called herself your sister—she is nothing to you, is she? I am sure of it, but, you know, we women are so weak, so suspicious, perhaps so jealous, that I would fain ask you to repeat to me again that she is nothing to you."

Juan shuddered as the thought of his sister was suggested to his mind—of his sister, whom he had basely forsaken—and, for the first time since they had been together, lowered his eyes, so as not to encounter her steady gaze, that had in it all the irresistible penetration of truth.

"She is nothing to you, Juan—oh, tell me that she is nothing to you!"

"She is nothing; I do not know her!"

Geraldine gave a sigh, as if of relief, but remained silent, and seemed still lost in deep thought.

"Strange," she muttered, "that she should have the same name."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you know her name?"

"How can I—I never saw her in my life before!"

"Consuelo Fernandez!"

Juan started back, and rising from the ground walked towards the window which looked upon the gardens at the back of the house.

"How do you know *that*, Geraldine?" he said, with a strange tremor in his voice. "But, of course," he added with a laugh, still from the window, "as she wanted to pass for my sister, it is only natural that she should have taken my name."

"It was not she who told me; it was Lord Belgrave."
"Lord Belgrave!"

"Yes; it was he who recommended her to Lady Twickenham. It seems that she is a *protégée* of his."

"She a *protégée* of Lord Belgrave!" There was something so strange in the tone in which he said this, that Geraldine, though she was unable to see his face, was convinced at last that he knew more about the girl than he liked to confess. Her jealousy was instantly aroused, and, rising from her chair, she went straight to him.

"You seem surprised!" she said, placing herself between the light and her lover, and endeavouring to see his face.

"I surprised! No; yet certainly it seems strange for the Marquis to force his *protégées* upon his lady friends. Don't *you* think it strange?"

"No, I see nothing strange in that."

"Indeed? Well, perhaps it is because I am not used to the customs of this country, but it does surprise me. Tell me all about it, Geraldine, my love. How did he come to know her?"

Geraldine, still remaining in the aperture of the window, between the light and Juan, told him all she knew about Consuelo—that is to say, what Lord Belgrave had told Lady Twickenham, and what Lady Twickenham had told her, watching anxiously all the time the effects her words had upon him; but this time Juan managed to preserve his composure, and she was unable to detect the

~~more in the passionate love we have seen before—~~

"Why do we talk about people who are nothing to us—people whom we hardly know—when we can talk of ourselves ? Ah, Geraldine, Geraldine, if you knew how I love you!"

"Do you doubt my love ?" she said, forgetting all her doubts and misgivings.

"Far from it—no, I cannot doubt your love ; for if I did, I could not love you as I do. But do you think that your love is as love should be—all-absorbing ? Tell me all, my darling !"

"Juan, I love thee !—can I say more ?"

"No, not more; but you can say that a thousand times. It is a music that enraptures my heart—a music that would make hell itself a paradise to me."

And the great tempter fixed his large black eyes upon her, imparting at the same time to them that strange magnetic look which all the women at whom he gazed thus, were wont to mistake for one of unbounded admiration, and which, on this occasion, the innocent, unsophisticated Geraldine found almost as irresistible as the ignorant and misguided Polly Potts. Perhaps the nickname given to him at the clubs of "Look and Die !" was not quite so undeserved as some of those gentlemen thought.

He bent over her, and whispered something in her ear which made her blush, but which, from the effect it produced, would have seemed to have been far from

displeasing to her, for she allowed him to encircle her with his arms, and to approach his mouth to her lips.

Just at that moment the door at the other end of the apartment was flung open, and Mr. Fetherstone walked into the room.

One look sufficed to show how matters stood; with a quiet slow step he advanced to where his daughter stood, still clasped in the arms of the Spaniard, who had not heard the noise caused by the opening door, and who had not noticed his entrance, as he stood with his back to it.

Mr. Fetherstone walked straight towards them and placed his hand, which to her seemed almost like a block of ice, upon his daughter's shoulder.

Geraldine, who had seen him approach, but who had been too much taken aback to free herself from her lover's arms, now uttered a cry of anguish, and fell half-fainting upon the sofa which stood against the window.

"Sir, you have taken a mean advantage of the kind hospitality accorded to you in this house by my wife and myself—go! I say no more—go!"

Both Mr. Fetherstone and Juan were calm, almost painfully so, and their strange self-command at such a crisis was even more appalling than Geraldine's hysterics.

"Sir, I love your daughter, your daughter loves me," the Spaniard said, rising to the full height of his commanding figure, and brushing his raven locks from off his forehead. "I ask her hand of you."

"You!—you ask her hand!—the hand of Miss Geraldine Fetherstone?"

"I do."

Mr. Fetherstone smiled a cold sarcastic smile, which would have frozen the blood of most men, but which

~~house quickly, for my fingers are burning hot—call a company
of policemen to show you the way."~~

"Sir, do you mean to insult me?"

"No, I could not, if I would. This young lady is my daughter, remember. She is not a woman like——" and Mr. Fetherstone shuddered as he pronounced, in an almost inaudible whisper, the name which Juan himself had given to Polly Potts. "You see that I know more about you than you would care to hear at this moment, and that I should be justified in giving you into the hands of the police; but I forbear from so doing on account of the scandal which such proceedings would be sure to create. I prefer that my step-son, who will be here in a day or two, should prosecute you, and that the crime for which you should be ultimately condemned should be one in connection with which my daughter's good name would not be brought forward. Go! Let me not have to repeat that word to you again; and remember that this is the last time you see my daughter!"

Juan cast one long look of hate upon him, and then, taking his hat and his gloves, he placed the former on his head, and began putting on the latter very slowly. When he had finished, he walked to the door, which had remained open, and with a slow step, and without even turning his head to look back, he left the room and the house.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PLOT IN PRIVATE LIFE.

(Not by Wilkie Collins.)

I MUST have drawn the character of Juan Fernandez very badly indeed if my readers have not found out before this that he was not a man to be easily daunted, and that he would not hesitate in employing desperate resources under desperate circumstances.

On the present occasion, as he left Carlton House Terrace, expelled from Geraldine's house by Mr. Fetherstone, all hopes of ever becoming her husband seemed at an end; but when any other man would have despaired, Juan was more hopeful than ever. Perhaps he counted too much on her love for him; perhaps he thought too lightly of her father's threats; but as he quietly walked up Regent Street that afternoon, the idea of winning her hand and fortune was still as deeply rooted in his mind as ever.

But this was not the only idea that troubled him. He had learned that day, for the first time, that Lord Belgrave had made the acquaintance of his sister, and that he had taken her under his protection. This was news indeed for him, and he was not a man to allow such an opportunity to escape him; so,

way after having so basely denied and repudiated her? He thought of this, but his desire to see his father and to find out something about the Marquis's relations with his sister caused him to banish all scruples and boldly to enter the house.

Mrs. Potts was in the shop, busily engaged, as usual, in arranging her jars and newspapers, and he passed her without speaking, for he feared lest she should ask him news of her step-daughter, which he was unable at that moment to give.

He found Mr. Fernandez in the old room quietly smoking a cigar, and he was alone, Consuelo having gone out to do some shopping, as Juan took good care to ascertain.

Mr. Fernandez was accustomed to his son's ways. His long absence did not surprise him, as he seldom knew his whereabouts; but he was always happy to see him, especially when he had not done so for some time, and on this occasion he was perhaps more pleased than usual to welcome him, for he hoped to get some money out of him, the want of which he was now beginning to feel, in spite of all his daughter's care to conceal the dreadful truth from his knowledge.

Juan sat down on a three-legged stool, which seemed to be the safest seat in the room after the chair on which Mr. Fernandez himself was seated, and asked him point-

blank how he had made the acquaintance of the Marquis of Belgrave?

His father was greatly surprised. He did not know the Marquis, excepting by name, and since Alfredo's departure his name had not once been pronounced in that house.

"Yet it seems that this Marquis has taken Consuelo under his protection! Strange!"

"Very."

"Do you think the girl has gone wrong?"

"Juan!" the old man exclaimed, rising in his chair and looking his son full in the face, "remember that she is my daughter!" and then, when his indignation had subsided, he shook his head and quoted one of his favourite Spanish proverbs, "*Vineyards and maidens are difficult to guard.*"

"Particularly so," Juan added, "when the grapes are fine and ripe, and the owner has no money to pay the law that alone can prosecute the robbers."

*"Women and wine are things that can
Take the wit out of the wisest man,"*

Mr. Fernandez muttered, again recurring to an old refrain.

"Then, father, the best way is to make the best of it, and be friends with this Marquis, as we cannot afford to be his enemies."

Mr. Fernandez answered sententiously with another proverb—

*"A peach that is spotted
Will never be potted."*

Juan lost all patience. "Hang your proverbs, father

only played you were playing. Now my mother has
you have ever seen him. Who comes to the house to
see Consuelo?"

"No one that I know of, excepting Mr. Lucas."

"Mr. Lucas! Who is he?"

"A gentleman who comes sometimes to see us. He is
an Englishman, but he speaks Castillian well."

"What is he like?"

"He is very handsome, tall, very tall, rather large,
with dark grey eyes, light hair, and reddish whiskers and
beard; he is a thorough gentleman in all his ways,
though rather stiff in manner, and evidently out of his
element in this house."

"You need not go any further. That is the man
I recognize the portrait."

"Do you mean to say that Mr. Lucas is Lord Bel-
grave?"

"Yes. He has taken a false name, the better, I
suppose, to play his little game. Father, we must show
him that we can play as good a game as he can, though
we have not his cards. He is in love with Consuelo, I
suppose."

"I believe he is."

"I thought as much, from the first."

He then bent over his father, and talked to him for
a long time with an earnest manner, but so low that
had there been any one in the room at that moment he
would have found it impossible to hear a single word.

When he had finished what he had to say, he rose and prepared to depart, which he did soon afterwards, leaving his father more bewildered than enlightened, yet not wholly displeased with him.

Poor Consuelo! she little knew the plot that was being woven against her by her own family!

CHAPTER XVII.

NOT WISELY, BUT TOO WELL.

(*Not by Rhoda Broughton.*)

THE next day, towards the afternoon, Consuelo was sitting by the window, working as usual for her daily bread. A fresh tulle dress, evidently a ball-dress, lay on her lap, and caused the old and poor print gown she wore to look still more dingy and shabby than usual.

She was pale, very pale; her large dark violet eyes were sunken, yet at times they sparkled from under the long eyelashes that half concealed them with a languid fire, which alone revealed the ardour of her soul—for otherwise she seemed composed and resigned.

Ah, Alfredo! Why did you not take her with you? Ah, yes! he had said he feared dangers for her—dangers of the wide sea; dangers of wild beasts; and the dangers of still wilder men. But these dangers, what were they? She would have thought nothing of them with him! Who would pause to think of danger when in paradise? Danger!—what danger could there be by his side in any country, however distant, compared with the dull misery of living apart?

Danger!—and was there no danger in his leaving her thus behind? He thought that with her father she must

needs be safe: safe, when he was far away! He had thought that as he had not introduced her to his friend—that friend whom his heart told him he should fear above all others, though he had been so good to him, and loved him so well—he would never get to know her—and that she would never become his prey! Ah, how mistaken he had been!

Poor Consuelo! your lot was hard to bear! It was indeed hard to think of his loving looks and still more precious words; of the soft, firm clasp of his strong arm; of his stout heart and noble nature; of looks and words and kisses that had been; and of the vacant eyes and meaningless words and cold lips that now alone surrounded her.

As she sat, that long summer afternoon, alone in that poor miserable little room, in that out-of-the-way dingy little street, where the fresh breeze of the evening and the refreshing smell of the summer flowers never could come, she kept thinking of him who was far away—of him who perhaps was thinking of her at that very moment—while she stitched, stitched, stitched—and hot tears fell upon the ball-dress she was making.

The uproar of the dirty children in the street was so great, and she was so lost in thoughts of him, that she did not notice the noise which the door made as it turned upon its rusty hinges, and was not aware for some minutes of the presence of a stranger in the room.

It was Lord Belgrave, who had come to seek in that poverty-stricken house the happiness which the luxuriant gardens of Belgravia—so cool, so bright, so gay, that fine afternoon—where the most beautiful ladies of Mayfair, in their most gorgeous costumes, flocked to laugh and flirt, and enjoy themselves under the trees, listening to

that moment almost sacred in his eyes.

"Mr. Lucas!" she exclaimed, much surprised, when at last she looked up and met his admiring gaze—"Mr. Lucas, I had no idea you were here!"

"I have only just come. I—I hope I do not disturb you," the proud nobleman stammered; for the first time in his life feeling that his usual self-command was forsaking him, and that words failed him with which to express his thoughts.

"Disturb me! Oh no, you do not disturb me; but I am sorry to say papa is out. You came to see him, no doubt, and"

Her words gave him courage; he came close to her, and took her hand in his.

"No, Miss Fernandez," he said, looking at her for the first time with the eyes of a lover; "you are mistaken. I came not to see your father, but yourself! Consuelo—will you permit me to call you by that sweet name?"

"Sir!"

"Ah, Consuelo, does your heart not tell you what mine feels?"

"Oh, Mr. Lucas! Who has given you permission to address me thus?" She looked at him straight in the face, with that clear, earnest, penetrating gaze which only innocence of heart can command; and, as she saw his features plainly in the light for the first time, strange recollections came back to her troubled mind. She was

sure she had seen that man before. There was no mistaking those straight features, that fine open brow, that aristocratic mouth, that light beard, and those penetrating grey eyes; but at the moment she could not remember where she had seen him. Yet there was such an expression of power in that countenance, that, as she looked at him, she smiled bitterly, and said, sitting back in the chair, from which she had risen for one moment—"I forgot; you have the right of the powerful, the right of the wealthy—I am only a poor working girl, and you—you are, no doubt, a rich, powerful man."

"Miss Fernandez," cried Lord Belgrave indignantly, "it is your very poverty—your very weakness—that forces me to respect you, even more than if I found you a rich and courted young lady in the proudest mansion in England! But, Consuelo—you will not deprive me of the happiness of calling you thus! Surely you will not deprive me of the privilege which you would"

"Your words are strange. . . . I do not understand you."

Lord Belgrave bent over her then, and, taking her hand once more in his, he declared his love. Before she had time to make any reply, her father stood before her, and in a harsh voice—which, after the warm, passionate accents of Lord Belgrave, fell upon her ear cold as a stormy March wind—he informed her of his displeasure.

"Papa, you are angry with me? Angry!—why? What have I done?"

"Done? You ask me what you have done—ask, rather, your friend Mr. Lucas."

Consuelo looked at the Marquis in mute dismay.

‘A woman or hen that’s given to roam,
One of these nights will not come home.’”

“Sir,” Lord Belgrave now said, thinking that under the circumstances he ought to interfere; “are you mad or drunk? What do you mean by using such language to a lady—to your own daughter?”

“Father, father!” Consuelo cried, with piteous appeal, and in a tone which rose almost to a shriek; “I swear to you that this is the very first time that Mr. Lucas has spoken to me of love—the very first time—and that had you not entered the room at the moment I would have answered him . . .”

“Never mind what you would have answered. If Mr. Lucas loves you, let him marry you—you have my blessing. I won’t be too hard upon you, my girl, for, after all, I love you; but this is indeed the last thing I would have expected from you.”

Lord Belgrave, perhaps not over-pleased at having the girl he loved thus thrown, as it were, at him, muttered something to himself as he heard this, and moved back.

“Papa, papa, you do not mean what you say! Mr. Lucas, oh, do not take him at his word!” and she covered her face with her hands.

“I do, though. Let Mr. Lucas, who I believe is a rich man, provide a home for you till the day of your

marriage. I am a poor man, and cannot afford to keep you any longer."

He left the room as he said this, but so staggered were both Consuelo and Belgrave that it was some time before they were able to realise his departure.

"Oh, Mr. Lucas!" the poor girl exclaimed, throwing herself once more into the chair by the window; "to think that papa should turn against me like this!"

"Never mind him, Consuelo; I dare say he did not know what he said."

"No; he was not drunk, if that is what you mean—my father is not a man who drinks. I have never seen him drunk—never! I wish he had been, for then I might still entertain the hope that he said what he did not mean; but, as it is, what can I do?"

"I will protect you, Consuelo; you need not fear."

"Oh, impossible!—my own father, whom I have loved so!—I cannot leave him—I cannot!"

"He cannot love you, after what he said just now. Forget him, as he will soon forget you. Come with me: I will take lodgings for you, and furnish you with a home that will be more fitting for you than this horrible hole!"

"Yes, I dare say; and give me a carriage too, and a box at the opera, and servants in livery, and diamonds and laces. Sir, I thank you, but you seem to forget that I am an honest woman; but then, is it to be wondered at, when my own father—the father for whom I have toiled day and night ever since I was a child—treats me before strangers as he has done just now?"

Lord Belgrave shuddered as he heard this, and his thoughts wandered to the villa he had taken on the banks of the Thames for Stella. He could not bear to

~~taken the might or her might.~~

"Consuelo," he cried, putting his arm round her, "do you think I could mean to insult you? Do you suppose I could be guilty of one unworthy thought in such a moment as this? No, Consuelo; I have confessed my love to you. Do you think that a love inspired by you could be an unholy love?"

His words were so like those which Alfredo would have used on such an occasion, that she could not refrain from lifting her eyes and looking him again full in the face, and then, for the first time, it flashed upon her who he was. She remembered the portrait which she had seen in Beauville House that day when Alfredo had taken her to see it, and now her only surprise was that she had not recognised him before.

Belgrave, in the passion of his love for her, had knelt by the side of her chair, and was trying to attract her attention. She rose slowly, but with a calm dignity that made her look like a queen, and begged him to rise.

"This is a strange place for you!" she said, with a sweet smile playing on her delicate lips. "Rise, rise—I recognise you now. Ah, what would the world say if it knew? What would the world say if it saw you, the Marquis of Belgrave, at the feet of a poor girl like me!"

Lord Belgrave started to his feet, both surprised and bewildered. "You know me!" he exclaimed.

"Ah, my Lord, my Lord, it was wrong of you to try and deceive me thus."

"How do you know who I am?" he again exclaimed.
It was now Consuelo's turn to feel confused.

"A friend, a friend of mine," she murmured, "once showed me your portrait; but I only recognised the likeness just now, when you knelt before me and I looked down upon your face."

"Indeed?"

"Yes," she proceeded, regaining courage; "and that friend told me, as he showed me your portrait, that you were the best and noblest of men!"

There was a strange sarcasm in those words which stung the Marquis to his very soul.

"Your friend exaggerated when he told you that of me, beautiful Consuelo; but to prove to you that I am not quite as false and wicked as you at this moment seem to think me, I offer you, as an atonement, all I can offer—my heart and my hand!" And the proud nobleman again flung himself at her feet.

"You think I have tried to deceive you—to win your affection under false pretences—to wed you, perhaps, under an assumed name; believe me, Consuelo, such has never been my intention. As the Marquis of Belgrave, I ask you now to be my wife! Say, beautiful Consuelo, will you be the Marchioness of Belgrave?"

Consuelo covered her eyes, which were full of tears, with her hands, but remained silent and motionless.

"Speak, Consuelo, speak!—my life hangs upon your words at this moment!"

"This is nonsense, my Lord," she said, after a long pause, moving away towards the window. "You cannot mean what you say. I should be almost as foolish, were I to take you at your word now, as you are in saying what you have just said."

THIS MOMENT AS I SATE WAS IN MY MIND. SO TRUE WOULD IT BE FOR A moment that I am not fully aware of the sacrifice I am making to your love. I know well that there is scarcely a woman in England who would not at this moment wish herself in your place; I know full well what it is to be a Marchioness, and how many have staked everything to gain such a position; and I am glad that you, too, are able to appreciate the sacrifice I make to you when I offer you my hand and my coronet."

"Is it indeed such a great sacrifice that you would make to love?"

"It is the greatest a man in my position can make, Consuelo."

"Very well. Then I can make a sacrifice greater still to *my* love! My Lord, take back your hand—take back your coronet. They were never meant for me—I could not appreciate them enough. I quite agree with you; your love for me must indeed be great when it prompts you to make such a sacrifice; but think how much more intense must be my love when I am able to decline your title and your fortune for the heart of a poor man!—and this without a single pang," she added, again fixing her eyes upon him—her large violet eyes, which now shone with triumphant love.

Belgrave rose from the ground, and looked at her with a mingled expression of astonishment, displeasure, and admiration. He had been refused! He could hardly realize the fact. *He*—to win whose affections every woman

he had ever known had almost gone down on her knees before him—had been refused by the very first woman to whom he offered his coronet, and this a penniless girl too, who was obliged to work for her living !

To any other man such a rebuff would have been decisive; to Lord Belgrave, her strange unselfishness only increased his regard.

He looked at her for some time in silence. He then approached her, and said in a low tone—

“ You love another, then ? ”

“ Yes,” she murmured.

“ And that other . . . ? ”

“ You shall never know his name from my lips.”

She said this because, knowing as she did how intimate Alfredo had been with this man, she concluded that when he had not told him of their love it must have been because he had the strongest reasons for doing so.

“ Ah, Consuelo ! ” the Marquis exclaimed, “ would to heaven I were that man ! ”

There was something so sad, so heart-rending, in the tone in which he said this, that Consuelo was moved. She came closer to him and took his hand, but any words of consolation which she would have liked to have uttered refused to come to her lips.

“ You do not despise me for this, Consuelo ? ” he asked, seeing that her emotion prevented her from speaking. “ You do not think badly of me ? ”

“ Despise you ! Think badly of you ! Oh, no, no ; but . . . ” She dared not say that she pitied him. Such a word would have seemed so strange for a poor girl like her to have used to a man like him ! And yet at that moment there was not a man in the whole of London who needed more pity than did the Marquis !

pernaps :

"Yes, for both, perhaps. I am not so perfect as you believe me to be. I was wrong when I said that I refused you and your coronet and your fortune without a pang."

"Consuelo, it is not too late yet; recall your words! Think of the position I offer you, and think of *me*!"

"And the other?—the other who loves me—the other who has gone far, far away, across the sea, to work for me?"

"He cannot love you more than I love you. He is away, you say. Perhaps he has forgotten you—perhaps he will never come back."

"Would you advise me to forget a man who loves me, and who has gone far away to obtain a competency for me—to forget him for another man, simply because he happens to be wealthy and a Marquis, and says he loves me?"

"No, I could not advise you to do that. I dare say that man deserves you more than I do. I thought I was making a great sacrifice to my love, when, forgetting all the precepts of Society, I was ready to marry you; but you have convinced me that that poor man whom you love has actually done more—for he has left you to procure a fortune for you, and *that* is more than I could ever have done."

"Ah, Lord Belgrave!"

"Shall we remain friends?"

"Yes—friends."

"I might be useful to you—who knows?—perhaps useful to *him*."

"With what a tone you say that!"

"Oh, if you knew how I hate him!"

"You hate him! You don't even know who he is."

"Even if he were my greatest friend, I should hate him."

"Do not let us speak of him," she said. "Oh," she thought, "how well you knew what would happen, Alfredo, when you asked me never to seek to know this man. How right you were never to introduce us. But what you took such pains to prevent, fatality or Providence, has brought about, in spite of you—and in such a way, too!"

Mrs. Potts entered the room at that moment, and prevented Lord Belgrave, who had again taken her hand, from answering.

"Miss—Sir," the old woman exclaimed, as she entered the room, out of breath, "something dreadful-like has happened—your Pa"

"Well, what?"

"Speak, speak!—what has happened?"—Consuelo cried, rushing to her.

"Well, as I was a-coming upstairs, yer Honour I saw Don't you be frightened, Miss—it ain't so bad, after all"

"For God's sake, tell me all! Papa—where is he?"

"Your Pa? Well, shure, yes, as I was a-saying, when I came upstairs just now, I saw him stretched on the floor, dead-like. . . ."

"Dead!"

"La, Miss!—no, not dead!"

"Oh!—But where is he?"

~~said, trying to detain her.~~

"Never mind; he is in a fit, no doubt. Oh, great God!—once before he was taken ill like this, and I thought he would have died. Let me go—there is not a moment to lose!" And saying this, she hurried out of the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOST FOR GOLD.

(Not by Miss King.)

SIBYL's mind was made up. She had decided to marry Mr. Jobkin!

She had not decided in a hurry.. She had taken a long time to consider this, to her all-important, question, and had calmly weighed in her mind—fairly enough and certainly with wonderfully few prejudices for a girl like her—all the *pros* and *cons* of such a marriage.

She had decided to marry the rich City man—and yet she still loved Lord Edwin!

She loved Edwin—at least she still liked him better than any other man she knew. But then, during the last two months, since she had been so much with him, and seen so much of him, she had been able to convince herself that what she felt for him was not the all-powerful passion that can prompt to great sacrifices. She liked him, she admired him, she would have been very happy to have married him; but was he worth the sacrifice of everything else that she loved besides?

She had asked herself this question a thousand times, and at last she had come to the conclusion that he was a charming man—a most pleasing, sweet, and winning

his love. It was the wisest thing she could do, there was no doubt about that; it was by far the most sensible thing to do—just what her father, or her step-mother, or any one of her friends would advise her to do, were she to ask them—and she would do it—though so contradictory was her nature that if they had indeed given her such advice, she would have been the first to exclaim against and object to follow it.

It was at Lady Twickenham's villa by the Thames—the lovely fairy-like retreat of Raspberry Dale—where everything is poetic and sylvan, and where the azaleas and the roses and the jasmine and the tropical flowers in the verandahs were in full bloom.

She had gone there with her father to pass the day, and she knew that Lord Edwin intended riding over to see her. The time had now come when the fatal news must be broken to him. She was anxious—perhaps nervous—certainly more agitated than she cared to show; and as she wandered alone through the shady paths by the river, her heart beat faster than it was wont to beat, and the gloved hand which held the silk parasol trembled at the slightest noise.

She was beginning to realize that she was about to be guilty of a great iniquity. "I have encouraged him too much," she said to herself. "That dreadful adventure in those horrible Argyle Rooms! I went too far; I think I must have been mad at the time. What could have

possessed me to follow him to such a place? Why, oh why, did I confess to him my love! And he loves me. Oh yes, he loves me, and I love him, too! But I must not be foolish; I must have the courage to break it off. It is for the best—best for him, as well as for myself. And yet!" In vain she tried to reason thus; in vain she tried to convince herself that it was now too late to go back.

Give up Mr. Jobkin and all his money for this boy, for whom she merely entertained a passing fancy! It would be absurd, unworthy of a woman of the world, as she prided herself on being—superior to the weaknesses of ordinary girls. Oh no, she could never pardon herself such foolishness!

She heard footsteps on the gravel behind her.

She was conscious of his presence!

She turned and met the man she loved face to face—the man whom she was now going coldly to reject!

"My dearest Sibyl!" he said, advancing towards her with that sweet smile playing round his delicate mouth which had first won her fancy. "My dearest Sibyl!" he repeated, throwing such emphasis into his words as no woman could fail to notice, arising, as it evidently did, from a profound sense of admiration on the man's part; "what joy to see you again!" And before she could stop him, he had taken her in his arms.

"It is not so long since we parted though, is it?"

"Well, perhaps not—only a few hours; but time seems so long for me when I am not with you! And then, seeing you in a ball-room amidst a crowd of strangers is not like being with you here alone."

Sibyl had regained all her courage, and now she felt ready to speak. The palpitations of her heart had

subsided, and she was determined to tell him all—then and there.

“I am glad you have come. I want to speak to you—to speak to you alone.”

“Ah! my love!”

“Do not look at me in that way. Come, let us sit down here on the grass; there is no fear of any one interrupting us. Papa is busy in the house, and the walks are deserted at this hour. There, you may hold my parasol, if you like.”

They sat down on the grassy bank overlooking the bend of the river, under the long drooping branches of a large willow, and for a second or two neither of them spoke.

Sibyl was the first to break the silence. “You accused me of being cold to you last night at the ball,” she said, leaning on her right elbow, and mechanically pulling up the tufts of grass which grew under her hand.

“Cold!—you cold! Ah, no Sibyl: perhaps at times I may think you so, but, believe me, to me you will always be perfection.”

Sibyl shuddered. “Perfection!—I perfection!” she repeated dreamily. “Edwin, no one is perfect in this world.”

“I beg your pardon, dearest. To me everything seems perfect, in its way, you know. The very grass under our feet is lovely—don’t you think so?”

“And yet see how we tread it under-foot, and how we scatter it to the winds.”

For a few seconds she continued pulling the tender moss, and scattering it about; suddenly she turned round to him, and in a hurried low tone said—

“I am afraid that nothing will seem to you either

perfect or lovely after what I am going to tell you. I am sorry to destroy your illusions, Edwin—very, very sorry; but I must do so before it is too late."

"Oh, love! what do you mean?"

She again turned her head away from him. "All that you have ever heard of women's heartlessness, faithlessness, fickleness, will seem to you tame compared with what I am now forced to do. Edwin, we must part! Do you hear me? We must part—part for ever!"

"Sibyl!"

"It is but too true. Believe that I am fickle, false, heartless, perfidious—that a whim has changed me—if you will. My mind is made up: I can never be your wife!"

"Why? For Heaven's sake tell me why? Don't I love you?—don't you love me? You are my promised wife, before Heaven, Sibyl!—my own, my dearest, my beloved wife! You are all that I value in the world—my treasure and my comfort, my earthly happiness and my gleam of the something better that is to come hereafter! Do you think that we can part thus? Do you think that I shall let you go from me in that way? No, love; that night in the solitary street—away from all your friends, away from the gaping crowd that at times half turns your head and makes you cold even to me—you confessed your love"

"It was in a moment of temporary insanity. Calmly, coldly, and with all my senses, I now tell you that we must part, that I can never, never be yours!"

"Your language is cruel—too cruel, Sibyl. You have no right to say this to me."

"Time will teach you to look upon me as one wholly unworthy even of resentment."

the world ; we belong to it, we are a part of it, and we
neither of us can act in defiance of it. We are both
poor—poor in comparison with others. Common sense
should teach you that you ought to marry an heiress ;
common sense teaches me that I should marry a rich
man."

" Oh, hang common sense ! hang the world ! and the
half-a-dozen old women who constitute its tribunal, and
set themselves up over their afternoon tea to rule us all !
I won't be ruled by them. I love you—you love me—
who, who on earth can prevent our being married ? "

" Do you think my father will ever consent to such a
marriage ? "

" Your father ! You are of age, and do you intend to
sacrifice your happiness to please him ? "

" My happiness ! "

" You do not think I shall be able to make you
happy ? "

" Edwin, a great many things are required to make
our happiness ; different people have different ideas of
what happiness ought to be. I cannot say that 'love in a
cottage' is my idea of earthly happiness ! "

" Love in a cottage ! Ah, what do we care for palaces
and cities !—such things were made for those who are
not happy, that they may, in the hurry and bustle of the
world, forget the sadness of their hearts ; but for those who
love—for those whose hearts will always be full of the true
joy—the joy that comes from the soul—do you think we

shall need those vain and empty amusements to complete our happiness?"

Sibyl smiled.

" You can preach a charming sermon on rustic felicity, I see ; but how do you think you would like to practise what you preach ? You—the gay, the frivolous, the elegant young nobleman, born to shine in drawing-rooms and courts—whose delight is to talk scandal with the ladies over their five o'clock tea, and to bet and play billiards with men until fabulous hours in the morning—who are too lazy to rise to ring a bell, and who would go to the confines of the earth for a good day's sport—you! —the dandy, the charming, the exquisite Lord Edwin, the very flower of the *jeunesse dorée*! —how would *you* like to live in a miserable cottage in some out-of-the-way village, without hunting, without sport, without balls, and without clubs ? "

" You speak only of me as you have known me ; believe me, Sibyl, I can rise superior to all such things."

" Indeed ! For how long ? "

" Ah, Sibyl, you do not love me when you believe so little in me ! "

" No, Edwin, you are mistaken ; it is not because I do not love you, but because I love you too well, that I will not make my love a curse to you ! We cannot wrestle with the world. I should be accused of having destroyed your career—you would be accused of having buried me alive, as it were, in the very prime of my life, in the zenith of my hopes."

" I cannot reason with you," Edwin said, rising. " You know the strange empire you have obtained over me ; I only wish now that we had never met—I only wish I had never fallen in love with you. But, whatever

like a miser, while here, it can only please for a few seconds the careless eyes of a reckless, indifferent crowd."

He took his hat, which he had thrown down on the grass, and placed it on his head.

"Sibyl, farewell! I see you do not care for me, so I conclude you will be happy without me; I shall try to be happy without you, but I do not think I shall succeed. Ah, I was so full of bright hopes when I came into this garden—my heart was so light! . . . It has been a happy dream, this love of ours—a happy dream, nothing more! But how cold and frivolous the world will seem to me now I am once more awake!" As he said this, the first events of that season, the events that had led to this love, came back to his mind, and with them the pale, fragile image of Lady Juliet Standish—of that poor girl whose hand he had refused, though he knew but too well how she loved him—and he could not help exclaiming to himself, "I deserve this—it is only just that I should suffer in my turn! I might have married her and been very happy, but I was dazzled by this woman's beauty, and, like the thoughtless butterfly, I left the lovely flower that offered me all its sweetness, for the dazzling light of the all-consuming flame, and have ended by getting my wings burnt—perhaps my heart broken!" . . . He then turned towards Sibyl, who was still reclining on the grassy bank with her eyes fixed on the river, which flowed close beside her. "Sibyl, are we indeed to part thus?—will you not even give me your hand, *as a friend?*"

These words roused her from the reverie into which she seemed to have fallen.

"My hand!" she replied. "Ah, yes; good-bye. . . . You will think of me sometimes . . . and try not to think too badly of me. Believe me, it is for the best."

He took her hand in his—it was hot and dry; evidently she was in a fever, though she seemed so calm, and her words sounded so cold. He retained it in his own for some moments, and then, without looking at her again, quietly walked away; and soon the noise of his footsteps upon the gravel ceased, and the low murmur of the river and the music made by the breeze, as it played amongst the leaves in the trees around, were the only sounds which reached Sibyl's ear.

She then rose and cast one long lingering glance in the direction in which Edwin had disappeared—sighed deeply—then, sinking down on the grass once more, she wept bitterly.

CHAPTER XIX.

LOST FOR LOVE.

(Not by Miss Braddon.)

THREE days later, in the same garden, the handsome Sibyl was reclining in a comfortable arm-chair on the terrace overlooking the river; and by her side sat her accepted lover, Mr. Jobkin, while at a short distance from them Mr. Fetherstone and his younger daughter were sipping their coffee at a little rustic table.

It was night, and the moon shone brightly, rendering every object distinct and clear; yet that pale, colourless, cold tinge of melancholy which the moon always gives, and that is so delightful to lovers, seemed to oppress them all, and Sibyl, at times, was even forced to shut her eyes not to encounter the lovely view before her, which this night looked so cheerless and lonely.

The last time she had beheld this scene had been in the afternoon, when the rich warm glow of a summer sunset had rendered every object brilliant and dazzling. She had sat then in that garden by the side of the man she loved, and everything had seemed bright and glorious to her, though the words that had passed between them had been colder and more bitter than the coldest December night. It had been the last struggle of

light against darkness in her heart ; but now night had come, and the dark cold shades of evening had closed thickly around her.

Yet it had been her choice ; she could not complain—she did not complain. It was night, but a clear splendid night, illumined by a thousand stars, presided over by a silver moon ; yet even on such a glorious night she could not help thinking sometimes of the warm life-giving sun which had now set on the horizon of her young life, perhaps for ever, and she thought of it with a sigh.

She was dressed in a long flowing dressing-gown of white cachemire, which fitted closely, and defined with a few chaste but clear outlines the beautiful contour of her person.

Her hair was unfastened, and hung in long rich masses down her back.

Her feet were clad in white satin slippers, and rested upon a red velvet cushion.

Three days before, when she came to pay that afternoon visit to this fairy-like retreat of Lady Twickenham with her father, she had been found fainting on the wet grass by the river, just under the long drooping branches of a willow, which almost concealed her from view.

Mr. Fetherstone had taken her in his arms to the house, and had sent for a doctor immediately.

She had soon recovered from her fainting fit, but the doctor had advised her to remain that night at the villa, though she had assured them all that it was nothing—that she had never felt better in her life—and that she had merely fallen asleep.

Her father insisted on her sleeping that night at Raspberry Dale, and the next morning, when the doctor came from Hampton Court to inquire how she had passed

the night, he found her in a violent fever, and said she must on no account think of getting up on that day at least.

She was delirious in the evening, and her maid, who had come from her home in London that morning, told the doctor when he called again at seven o'clock that night, that she had talked a great deal to herself, and that at times it had been frightful to see her convulsions.

The next day she was better, but the doctor still advised her to keep her bed.

That morning she had risen for the first time, and as her now engaged husband, Mr. Jobkin, was coming to dinner, she had been brought down in the evening to the garden; for the doctor had said that the cool refreshing air of the evening would do her good, and this is why she was in her dressing-gown, and why her raven locks hung loosely about her swan-like neck.

Yet she still looked wonderfully handsome, though her eyes were sunken, and her cheeks were pale—and so Mr. Jobkin thought as he sat beside her, and tried his best every now and then to interest her with his conversation.

But all he said could not interest Sibyl, even had she tried hard to give her attention to it. She did not want to be interested by it—she thought his words ill chosen, and his sentiments too commonplace, to be even listened to, and all the answer she gave to what he no doubt considered his gentleman-like style of love-making, was a passing glance from her large languid eyes now and then—a glance expressive more of wonder than of love.

Her sister Geraldine, in the meantime, sat near her

father, a short distance from them, and never took her eyes off the pair.

In the stillness of the night it was easy to hear everything they said, and Mr. Jobkin's would-be poetical remarks often drew a smile from her.

Geraldine had come to Raspberry Dale directly she had heard of her sister's illness, and had seen enough of her since she had been there to guess that something had happened, and that Sibyl had not parted with Edwin as easily as she had at first imagined she would.

This is why she looked at her so attentively that night, and why there was so much sympathetic pity conveyed in her looks.

She, too, had suffered greatly ; she, too, had pined and cried ; for her father had told her that all must be at an end between her and her lover, and the thought of never seeing Juan again had afflicted her beyond measure.

But Geraldine had a poetic temperament, and therefore was never without hope. Besides, she was convinced of Juan's love for her, and she was sure of her own love for him, which was more than poor Sibyl had ever been, and therefore any sufferings were almost sweet to bear if they were borne for his sake.

She had sat for long, long hours in the night writing verses about him and herself and their sad fate, and thus relieving her sorrows, while her less romantic sister lay in bed, thinking of Edwin, and trying to convince herself that what she felt for him was not love.

She had not seen Juan since that day when her father had so cruelly sent him out of the house ; she had not seen him since then, but she had received numerous letters from him—letters which were so full of passionate tenderness, and vows of devotion and love, that even his

letter she had informed him that she was stopping at Raspberry Dale, near Twickenham, and that the Thames ran close under her windows—the Thames, which was open to all, and that any one in a boat could easily speak to those on shore.

He had answered this last effusion without loss of time, and had hailed the intelligence it contained with words which I am afraid only a girl in love would have been able to read without laughter. But his reply contained something more precious to her even than these wondrous words of love, and this was the prospect of a meeting; for he told her that that evening, a little after ten, when he supposed the grounds would be deserted, he would come to see her in a boat, and would expect her to meet him by the old boat-house at the end of the lower terrace—a spot which he had seen that morning as he went past Raspberry Dale in his boat, trying to catch a glance of the beautiful Houri whom the cruel Sultan, her father, would fain hide from the eyes of the Giaour.

The hour was fast approaching, and her faithful lover must be near at hand. Geraldine grew more and more excited as the minutes passed; and when at last the great clock over the coach-house struck ten, she was unable to contain herself any longer, and, muttering some excuse to her father, who still sat by the little table smoking his cigar, she hurried down the terrace, descended the marble steps at the foot of it, and a few seconds

afterwards was standing by the old boat-house, anxiously watching the few boats that still lingered on the moonlit river.

She had not long to wait. One of these boats approached the shore close under where she stood, and a light was thrice raised from it. It was the signal. She answered it, and then, going down the few steps of the old landing-place, which was now never used, a new one having been erected by the Countess nearer the house, she was able to receive Juan in her arms as he landed from the little boat in which he had come alone from Hampton Court.

Of course, a long and tender love scene ensued, which I shall spare my readers, as I do not want to make them laugh at this critical point of my story ; and then the lovers ascended the steps, and entered the summer-house, which was close by, and where, as Geraldine remarked, no one would ever think of looking for her. Indeed, the night was so clear, and the light of the moon so brilliant, that had they remained on the terrace by the side of the water, where but few trees grew, they would most certainly have been seen from the upper terrace, where the others still sat.

"Your father hates me, Geraldine," Juan said, kneeling beside her in his favourite attitude. "He hates me for certain political reasons, which just at present I am unable to disclose even to you, my love, having given my sacred word of honour ; but, believe me, dearest, they are only reasons of State : personally he has nothing against me ; but, you see, being a Minister, he could hardly give his consent to our marriage. Yet, if we were once married, I am sure he would be the very last man to refuse me admittance to his house."

With you upon me :

"Do you love me enough to run away with me and become my wife in secret ?"

"As Juliet became Romeo's wife in the cell of the old friar ! Oh yes !"

"And if you were my wife, would you not pine for the world you give up for my sake ?"

"The world ! Ah, you do not know how I hate it, and all its selfish, narrow-minded ideas ! If I were your wife I should never even think of such a thing as fashion."

"No ?"

"Oh no ; I should be quite content to live for ever with you in that old castle of yours by the waters of the blue Guadalquivir, and to wander by the light of the moon through the ever-fragrant woods of vine and olive trees, listening to the song of the nightingale and to the still sweeter music of thy voice, my Juan ! Do you remember the picture you drew of that old fine castle of your ancestors, which has stood so many sieges, when I asked you to describe to me the home in which you had passed your youth ? You are poor, you say—what do we want with money, we who love ?" I can sell my jewels—they will give us enough money to go to fair Andalusia ; and once in thy beloved country—that country of eternal spring, where the trees are ever verdant, the sky ever blue, the women ever beautiful, the men

ever brave—we shall live for ever happy, ‘the world forgetting, by the world forgot.’ We’ll see no strangers; we’ll shun the world; we’ll be the whole world to each other; and whilst in London men and women are wasting their existence in frivolous pastimes and learning best how to hate each other, we shall be wandering beneath the spreading vines and through the citron groves, and wondering how men can choose to be unhappy whilst the earth is so fair, and hearts can love so well. Oh, my Juan !”

The Spaniard could not help smiling to himself when he heard this glowing description of the *château en Espagne*, which he had built one day for her amusement, and of the romantic life which she expected to lead in it; but, though a highly poetical idea, he thought it better to soften it a little before things went too far, so that the truth should not come too abruptly upon her.

“ Your description is charming,” he said. “ Sweet Geraldine, how well you express my thoughts! Such a life as you have pictured would indeed be the life I should love to lead; but I have already told you that I am not a free agent. I must devote a part of my life to my country; and Spain, you know, expects great things from me. Just at present it would be impossible for me to leave England.”

“ Ah! but if we run away ?”

“ I will take lodgings for you, either in London or here at Twickenham; then, when once we are married, you will write to your father, and beg of him to give us his blessing.”

“ That will not be at all romantic !”

“ No, perhaps not; but it will be the wisest thing to do.”

~~Saying a word, "With a smile to my self, here we were on~~
landing-place. At about ten you can come down, bringing with you your jewels, and anything else you like to take away with you: you step into the boat, and I shall row you across to Hampton Court, where we can take the train for London. You see it will be as easy as possible."

"Can you not give me more time to think it over?"

"No; you must decide at once, my love; we do not know what time may bring forth. Your father may take you back to London, and then it will be more difficult—perhaps impossible."

"Do you really love me, Juan?"

"Do I love you! Do you think that if I did not love you I would endanger my position thus—my life—even my honour? Ah, Geraldine, it is because I love you that I am able to sacrifice myself without a sigh."

Geraldine gave him her hand, and tears of joy rose to her eyes and moistened her blushing cheeks. "I'll do it!" she said to herself. "I'll run away with him, if it is only to show them all how little I care for what they are pleased to call the world, and how I despise fashion. Sibyl, Sibyl, if you had not been hard-hearted and ambitious, you, too, might have been happy, almost as happy as I am—but no; you have chosen Fashion in preference to Passion, and prefer a City snob to a faithful though poor lover. Sibyl, you have often laughed at what you call my silly romantic nonsense—I shall live

to be envied by you, though my husband will be but a poor man and yours a millionaire!" Then, turning to Juan, she said aloud, "I shall be ready to-morrow at ten—at ten, remember!"

"Oh, my beloved!"

"Good-bye now, good-bye. I must not be missed, or I shall be watched to-morrow. Good-bye, my Juan, good-bye till to-morrow—ah, to-morrow!"

And saying this she hurried out of the summer-house allowing him to return to his boat alone, while she ascended the marble steps of the upper terrace, and rejoined her sister, who, with her father and Mr. Jobkin, was still sitting there, and had only just noticed her absence. As my readers have perceived, Geraldine was only too ready to fall blindly into the scoundrel's net, and to run away with him, for love had completely blinded her; and Juan was a man who, when he chose, could exercise a supreme empire over the minds of those who fell victims to his vile machinations, as we have had already occasion to see in the case of the poor misguided Stella.

But, fortunately for Geraldine, on this particular occasion Juan's wicked plans were not destined to be carried into effect. When he reached his lodgings in London late that night, he found the following strange epistle awaiting him—

"Oh jack come quick I am alone he is going i am alone his ma came i am misserable very misserable if you come all can be mended come do come I am here at the otel dalve as they calls it charlie goes to-morrow early come your own girl who loves you.

"MARY POTTS."

ruely necessary.

Should he go? Should he go, and leave Geraldine just at the moment when she was ready to fly with him? It seemed, to say the least of it, dangerous; yet he knew that something dreadful must have happened in Paris, or Stella would not have written to him. Besides, after all, he could write a line to Geraldine and postpone their intended flight for a day or two. In three days he could be back from Paris, and he should be free to run away with her then. Should she have gone back to London—well, after all, there was no more difficulty in leaving a house in Carlton House Terrace than in leaving a villa at Twickenham, though to induce her to decide at once he had that night told her that such a thing would be impossible.

So he passed the rest of that night in writing a long letter to Geraldine, telling her, in the most poetic language he could command, that, all things considered, it would be better to wait a day or two longer, and asking her, if she was still at Raspberry Dale four days hence, to go down to the old boat-house at ten o'clock, and to hold herself ready to fly with him then; but in the meantime to be as discreet as possible with her father and sister, and to make no inquiries after him, which might lead to a fatal discovery.

The next morning he posted this letter, and left London for Paris by the earliest train.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

(Not by *Wilkie Collins*.)

LADY TWICKENHAM arrived in Paris late in the afternoon, and she drove straight from the station to the Hôtel d'Alve, in the Champs Elysées, where her first inquiries were for her son.

Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse, she was informed, had gone out to drive in the Bois.

Horrible thoughts took possession of her mind as she heard this. Could it be possible that he had actually married her? Married *her*—a common theatrical girl like that! The idea was too horrible. Surely her son could not so far have forgotten himself. Her darling Charlie, the hope of the Twickenham family, that grand old family of brave knights and patrician ladies, could not have made such a *mésalliance*. In her horror for everything plebeian, her Ladyship often forgot that her own father had been an actor, and that her late beloved husband had been accused of having committed a great *mésalliance* when he married *her*. But such are the ways of the world—the proud Countess, though very gracious and patronising in her behaviour to Lords and Ladies, would not have condescended to speak to an actor now.

It was now late, and the lamps were already lighted in the gardens below, but the cloudless sky still reflected the last rays of that day's sun, and the twilight was almost as clear as the daylight one is generally accustomed to see in England.

Lady Twickenham allowed her maid to unpack the few things she had brought with her, and, sitting down in a large arm-chair, gave herself up to her anxious thoughts.

Had she looked out of her window at that moment, she would have seen a handsome carriage, drawn by two splendid black horses, going down the Champs Elysées, which attracted the attention of all the passers-by—chiefly small tradespeople—who were not a little surprised to see such a fine turn-out at a season of the year when fashion is supposed to have deserted its capital.

Had Lady Twickenham looked out of her window, the carriage would no doubt have also attracted her attention, and perhaps she would have recognized the fair-haired gentleman seated in it, with the white frock-coat and the tall white hat, as her son.

It was indeed the hope of the noble House of Twickenham who reclined in that landau by the side of Stella, and, if truth must be known, his thoughts at that moment were certainly a little further from the proud Lady Isobel Clanfyne, his destined bride, than his good mother would have wished.

Yet he seemed happy—very happy—and so seemed his companion, the lovely Stella; but of course I shall not enter into *such details*, as it would perhaps be thought wicked of me even to hint that people could be happy under such equivocal circumstances.

Stella was dressed all in white. She wore a white silk dress, covered with rich point lace, and a pretty little white chip hat, encircled by a long white feather, which hung down at the back, mingling with the dazzling profusion of her golden curls.

Since her arrival in Paris she had dressed almost always in white, to please Lord Twickenham, who loved to see her thus, and this strange fancy had won for her the name of “the woman in white” from the numerous persons who watched her every day as she took her afternoon drives through the Bois. They sat side by side in the carriage, but they very seldom spoke, and any passing remarks which either of them might have made during these long drives, would not, I fear, have been of sufficient brilliancy to deserve recording, even in these pages, where so much nonsense has already been written.

The sky was beginning to lose its warmer tints, and here and there an early star began to appear in the azure vault; the double line of gas lamps which runs from the Place de la Concorde to the Triumphal Arch at the end of the Grand Avenue, and which is the object of never-ending admiration to all foreigners, had commenced to sparkle amongst the dark trees on either side; and the Cafés-chantants, and the Cirque, and the ever popular Guignol, were beginning to fill. It was the hour when all the cares of life, all the business of the day, come to a temporary close, and the Parisian bourgeois, and the few foreigners who at this dead season of the year are the

ing from the Bois, through the Champs Elysées, winding their way towards the heart of the city; but amongst them none attracted so much attention as the equipage of the young English "Milor;" and it would seem as if neither Lord Twickenham nor his fair companion were quite indifferent to the general admiration they excited; for often the pretty little mouth of "the woman in white" betrayed a smile, and her eyes sparkled, as she looked around her and met everywhere looks of undisguised admiration and unbounded curiosity. Her plump rosy cheeks met the refreshing breeze of the evening, and her golden curls floated on it; her bosom trembled at its contact, and she shut her eyes now and then with an inexpressible feeling of mingled pleasure and pain.

Did she ever think of Lord Belgrave? Most likely not. The dazzling scenes around her, ever brilliant and attractive—the new and exciting life she had led since she had been in Paris—in Paris!—that *paradis des femmes!*—which she now visited for the first time, must have soon dispersed any sense of remorse or compunction she might at first have felt for the man whose trust she had so basely betrayed. No, she did not think of Lord Belgrave; but of the one man she really loved—of Juan, who still retained all his unbounded empire over her soul—she often, often thought.

Ah! how little did the thoughtless Twickenham know what was passing through the mind of his com-

panion when he fancied he discovered a tinge of melancholy in her usually but too bright face, and, with all the conceit of a lover, imagined she was thinking of him !

They traversed the stately Place de la Concorde, and ascended the Rue Royale towards the Madeleine at a brisk trot; but here the crowd of carriages obliged them to go slower, and it was some time before they reached the top of the Boulevart, and stopped at the Café Anglais, where they intended dining that evening.

The dinner was a long one, though they were alone, and it was late before they arrived at the theatre, where their courier had previously engaged a box for them.

It was the Théâtre de la Gaieté, and the piece was a long *féerie*, of which Stella understood not a word, nor, I dare say, did Lord Twickenham either; yet they sat it out, side by side, happy to have been able to go to the theatre without dressing, and happy to be able to have a box of their own from which to look down upon everybody else.

After the play, they got into their open carriage, which had returned for them shortly after twelve, and drove through the crowded streets to the Maison Dorée, where, in company of a few "friends," they sat down to one of those charming *petits soupers* for which this house is so celebrated throughout Europe.

At that moment Lady Twickenham, tired of waiting for her son's return, and fearing to lose her night's rest—so essential to the beauty of her complexion—was retiring to her bed, having previously given orders to be called early on the morrow, so as to be able to see her young hopeful the first thing in the morning.

I shall not attempt to paint Lord Twickenham's surprise and vexation when, on coming in from his early 'constitutional,' he saw his mother sitting at his breakfast table instead of Stella, nor yet the thrilling scene which ensued. I fear I should never be able to do justice to anything half so melodramatic.

Lady Twickenham had just succeeded, by means of mingled threats and entreaties, in convincing him of the unpardonable sin and wickedness of his conduct, when Stella's bedroom-door opened, and that young lady herself entered the apartment.

The Countess was indignant; Stella was too much bewildered to be able to realise the awkwardness of the situation (which, perhaps, was a good thing for them all); and Charlie felt too much ashamed of himself to say much; so his mother had it all her own way, and made him promise to return with her that very night to London.

Stella understood this much of the dispute, and hurried to her room to write to Juan, whom she still looked upon as her real protector, to tell him what had happened, and to ask him to come to her without delay.

How this letter reached its destination, and what effect it produced, my readers already know—that is supposing they have not skipped the last chapter. And

now it only remains for me to say how Lady Twickenham carried off her son triumphantly back to England, and how the unfortunate Stella was left alone in Paris with only a few pounds, which Lord Twickenham had given her on leaving, to pay her expenses at the hotel.

I must not forget to mention that just before leaving Paris, Lady Twickenham received a long letter from her husband, in which he told her of the startling events which had taken place since her departure.

Mr. Fetherstone had accidentally opened a letter, addressed to Geraldine, and he had discovered, to his horror, how far her passion for Juan had caused her to forget herself. Mr. Fetherstone's letter finished with the following paragraph—

"I am afraid all our hopes with regard to our children have come to an end now. It is strange that both your son and my daughter should have thwarted all our plans for their future happiness in this way. I fear, dear Elizabeth, that neither of them will be able, after this, to make the grand marriages we had hoped for them. I saw the Duke of the Isles yesterday, and he seemed very much shocked at Charlie's conduct. He told me that all projects for a marriage between him and Lady Isobel must now be at an end. You know how strict and serious he is, and how proud all his family are, so I am afraid that what he told me is only too true—all hopes of a marriage between Charlie and his daughter must now be given up.

"As I was coming home from Twickenham this morning, where, as I have told you, both Sibyl and Geraldine have been staying these last three days—a

... down, they are full of care now, and it will be nice for us to be able to keep them near us.

"Pray consider this, dear Elizabeth, and tell me what you think of it when we meet. I shall send the carriage to Victoria as soon as I receive a telegram from you saying by what train you will come back to your devoted husband,

"GERALD FETHERSTONE."

When Juan arrived in Paris the next evening, Lord Twickenham had already left with his mother, and he then learnt, for the first time, what had taken place.

"We must return to London immediately," he said.

"What!—leave delightful Paris?" Stella exclaimed.
"Oh, Jack, now you have come we might have such a jolly time here. I assure you I never cared for Charlie any more than I cared for Bel. I am sorry that he has gone; but now that I have *you*, I am sure I shan't miss him."

"Stella, this is not a time to think of amusements; I have business of the greatest importance in England; I must return there without loss of time."

"And I?"

"If you do not want to remain here alone, you must come with me."

"And what will you do with me? Surely, Jack, you won't go and take me back to Bull Street?"

"No; I'll see what I can do with you, when we get

to London ; but now we have no time to waste in talk —pack up all your things as quickly as you can. I suppose that fellow has given you no end of pretty things, eh ? Pack up everything as well as you can to-night, and to-morrow morning we'll start for London."

I need not add that "the woman in white" was seen no more in the Bois de Boulogne.

CHAPTER XXI.

T H R O W N T O G E T H E R.

(*Not by its Author.*)

BUT I think it is time we should return to our friends in Bull Street, and speak of the beautiful Consuelo again.

Heavily and thickly had the dark clouds of affliction gathered over that house.

My readers will remember that when we last saw the poor Spanish girl she had been called away by the land-lady to attend her father, whom the latter had discovered lying in a fit at his bedroom door.

Such had indeed been the case. Mr. Fernandez, over-excited by what his son had told him, and over-anxious that his daughter should marry the Marquis, had succumbed under the weight of responsibility which he imagined devolved upon him, and his excitable nature gave way.

The many trials and disappointments he had undergone since his arrival in London had greatly weakened his health, and this last excitement had been too much for him.

A long and painful illness ensued, during which the unfortunate Consuelo was obliged to nurse him day and night. Being constantly wanted at the bedside of her

poor father, she was unable to do any work ; and God alone knows what would have become of them both, had not Lord Belgrave come to their rescue.

His name and position were now no longer a mystery to them, so he was able to help them in a manner which otherwise would have been strange. It was not pleasant to Consuelo to feel that she was under an obligation to him, and to know that they were indebted for everything they had to his unbounded generosity ; but under the circumstances she could not possibly refuse. She would not have minded any deprivation herself ; but she could not allow her poor old father to remain without the necessary assistance which his dangerous illness rendered quite indispensable.

Lord Belgrave, too, did not offer assistance as if he were performing an ordinary act of charity, but quite as if he had been an old friend of the family. He not only sent his own doctor, and paid for all the things required, but he came himself regularly every day, and sat for hours with her by the side of the poor man's bed.

It was easy to see that he found a pleasure in so doing ; yet Consuelo could hardly realize this, and in her mind persisted in attributing it all to the goodness of his heart.

The influence of the Marquis over her increased every day in their new and more familiar position. They were thrown together as people even of the same class are seldom brought together in the ordinary course of events, and their esteem for each other increased with this intimacy.

The more Belgrave saw of Consuelo, the more he admired her, the more he felt assured that he had at last found a heart suited to his own. In her unselfish be-

realize how grand and noble her heart was.

Ah, it was indeed an inexpressible charm to him—wary of the selfish commonplace women he met in Society—to be able to sit near this beautiful young girl, and to watch the ever fresh, ever noble, inspirations and sentiments which came from her virgin soul, so foreign to all the guile and prejudices of the world. It was indeed an inexpressible pleasure for a man so painfully fastidious in what relates to the true nobility of character, to notice that, however various the subjects discussed, however trying the events of the day, no low or mean sentiments ever sullied those beautiful lips.

“She is perfection,” he repeated daily to himself, as he left that dingy poverty-stricken hole in Bull Street, and returned to the gorgeous halls of his palace in that part of the town to which his family had given its name. “Such are the natures that alone can preserve through years the poetry of life; such are the women who alone are able to render marriage the seal that confirms affection, and not the vain mockery of a ceremonial that severs the hearts while it unites the hands.”

And he was right. Consuelo was perfection, in mind as in body. It was, perhaps, not so much the mere innocence of inexperience that rendered her so superior to others, as it was not the unusual beauty of her features that made her one of the handsomest women that ever lived; but a something beyond—a something impossible to describe: it was a sort of moral superiority

to everything and everybody, that no one, when in her presence, could help feeling she possessed, yet which away from her it would have been impossible to realize.

Yet Lord Belgrave was not happy ; he could not be happy ; for he knew that this lovely creature—this perfect woman, at whose side alone he experienced the joy which nothing until then had been able to give to his heart—belonged to another, and could never be his.

It is true that she never mentioned this other favoured one, that even his name had not once passed her lips ; yet he could not but feel that her thoughts must often wander across the sea to where he no doubt was working and toiling for her sake.

Yet she preserved such an unaccountable silence on this subject that at times he fondly imagined her love for his hated rival was not quite so intense as it might once have been, and that probably time, distance, perhaps even his own presence, were beginning to cause her to think less of him, and might in time—who knows ?—end by making her forget him altogether.

Poets say that love cannot live without hope. If such be indeed the case, Belgrave must have entertained great hopes, for his love grew stronger every day.

One day, as they were sitting by the bedside of old Fernandez, who, after a few hours of delirium, had now fallen into a comparatively quiet sleep, something was said that forced Consuelo to speak of her absent lover.

"Ah, Consuelo, if you knew how I hate that man, I do not think you would speak of him," Lord Belgrave said, rising from his chair.

"This is nonsense," Consuelo replied, as she thought of the man she loved so well. " You do not even know his name."

compassion on me.

“ You forget, Lord Belgrave, that you promised me never to speak of love—never even to allude to it—and that it is merely upon this understanding that I consent to see you so often. Let us change the subject; let us speak of your friends since you will not have me speak of mine.”

“ Friends !—I have no friends !”

“ You have no friends ?”

“ No ; in the world where I live there are no friends—at least, none that you could call by that name. If you mean acquaintances, I can count them by hundreds.”

“ No, I do not mean acquaintances ; but is there really no one for whom you entertain more than a passing regard ?”

“ No, not in ‘the world.’ There good taste requires that our affections should be as shallow as our lives—in fact, as everything that pretends to be fashionable—and must be ready, at the shortest notice, to change. No, I have no fashionable friends ; but there is one man whom I may really call my friend, who has indeed proved himself to be so on more than one occasion. He is a countryman of yours, Consuelo, a Spaniard ; I think I have spoken of him before to you. He saved my life once, when out boar-hunting in the mountains of Andalusia, but he is away now.”

“ Do you miss him ?”

"Very much indeed. He was in London the early part of this season. He was staying with me, and it was then chiefly that I had opportunities of studying his noble character; it is only since he left me that I have been able to realize how much I like him. I wish he were here now, that I might bring him to see you. I am sure you would enchant him—you are just the sort of woman he would like."

"Would you not be afraid of his falling in love with me?"

"Oh, impossible; for he would know beforehand how much I love you, and such a thing would never enter his head, however much he might admire you."

"You think not?"

"Consuelo, we are bosom friends. If he introduced me to the woman he loved, I would shoot myself rather than fall in love with her myself, and I am sure he would do the same. Any feelings of love with which you might inspire him he would smother in his heart before they grew into real love. I feel convinced of that, for, remember, he is not a man of fashion. Ah, Consuelo, it would not be every man that I would introduce to you!"

"And supposing I were to fall in love with him?"

"For God's sake do not suppose such a thing—it would be too horrible!"

"Perhaps; yet I know your generous nature, and cannot help fancying that were such to be the case, you would not hesitate a moment but would give me up to him."

"Ah, Consuelo! you do not know what love is. Were I the best, the noblest, the most unselfish of men—which I am not, God knows—I could not do such a thing. Do not let us speak of this any more. I fear that I could

hate even Alfredo, as much as I hate that man you say you love, if you were to love him."

Consuelo trembled as she heard this, and, to hide her emotion, busied herself with the medicine bottles which stood upon the table beside her father's bed, and bent over them as if looking for some particular one.

The subject of this unknown lover of hers was not again mentioned in that house; and Belgrave, in the course of time, began really to hope that she had forgotten him. He was as devoted to her as he could well be, and, though he was not allowed to speak of love, he neglected no opportunity of showing his affection for her.

Consuelo, too, feeling how much he suffered, and how truly he loved her—perhaps even for the very reason that she was unable to return this love—was kind and amiable to him—dangerously kind, fatally amiable, for she inflamed his passion to fever-point. But she was so innocent herself as to be utterly ignorant of the ways of the world.

Thus the time passed in that wretched street in Soho; thus the time passed, until at length the fatal crisis arrived—and arrived only too soon.

CHAPTER XXII.

TWO MARRIAGES.

(Not by the Author of John Halifax, Gentleman.)

THE first thing Lady Twickenham did on her arrival in London, accompanied by her son, was to take the train straight to Twickenham, her pretext being her anxiety to see her step-daughter Sibyl, who was still staying there, though by this time almost completely recovered; but her real motive was to take her son away from town, so as to keep a closer watch upon his movements than she might have been able to do in London.

Mr. Fetherstone, who had gone to Victoria Station to meet her, accompanied her to Raspberry Dale, and the House having by this time adjourned, he had plenty of time to discuss with her all the numerous advantages of that plan which he had first mentioned to her in his letter.

Lady Twickenham at first did not like the idea at all. It seemed such a come-down for her son to marry a Miss Fetherstone, after she had for a long time looked forward to an alliance with the noble, almost Royal, house of Clanfyne; but then, it was true she herself was married to a Fetherstone, and no one thought any the less of her for that—in fact, it even gave her a certain standing in

to write a whole chapter about her. I would call it after that charming novel of Miss Broughton's, *Red as a Rose is She*, and which, I think, all who had ever seen her would have agreed with me in thinking very appropriate—and I am sure I could have made it highly interesting; besides, such a capital moral of worldly philosophy might be drawn from the history of her life—but I fear both space and time would fail me, so I must give up the idea for the present, and content myself with recounting only those events which bear most directly upon my present story.

“Yes, to my tale—for I find
Digression is a sin, that by degrees
Becomes exceeding tedious to my mind,
And, therefore, may the reader, too, displease—
The gentle reader, who may wax unkind,
And, caring little for the autho'r's ease,
Insist on knowing what he means; a hard
And hapless situation for a bard.”

Even Lady Twickenham—though she was as blind to her son's faults as most mothers—was forced now to confess that all ideas of a grand marriage for Lord Twickenham must be given up. His recent escapade had created the greatest scandal. That season had been particularly devoid of excitements—there had only been one trial for murder at the Old Bailey, and as the murderer was an ugly old woman, she could hardly be expected to interest the fair and gentle ladies who attended her trial,

though they flocked in hundreds to see her, having nothing better to do; strange to say, no lady of any social standing had eloped; no young Marquis had blown his brains out; there had been wondrously few divorces and conversions—so the fashionable world of Mayfair, having nothing more interesting to talk about, discussed the conduct of our young Earl in every possible and impossible way, and made him and Stella the subject of general conversation.

In fact, this young lady awoke one fine day to find herself famous; and, on her return to London with Juan, was not a little surprised to see her portrait stuck up at all the photographers, and, in the windows of the most fashionable modistes and milliners, hats and cloaks ticketed “à la Stella,” which every respectable young lady in England thought it her duty to buy at once.

When the report got about that Lady Twickenham had gone herself to Paris after her son, Society was happy. Such a good story had not been heard for many a day, and you may be very sure that improvements and additions were not wanting, even to this “capital story.”

Some “kind friends,” of course, were not wanting either, who took very good care to inform that Lady herself of all these stories, and to give her the very latest version of them too; and, such is the marvellous constitution of our society, that the proud Countess of Twickenham—to get an invitation to whose house ninety-nine persons out of a hundred would have gone down on their knees—was powerless to contradict those reports, and anyone, however much “in Society,” or “out of Society” he might be, was free to discuss her conduct and make fun of it.

it costs me—to prove to the world that I am still able to hold my own."

It was easy enough for Mr. Fetherstone and his wife to arrange this marriage between themselves, but when it came to telling Lord Twickenham and Geraldine about it, it did not appear such an easy matter, as the two latter looked at it in quite a different light.

Lord Twickenham laughed heartily at the idea when it was first mentioned to him—which certainly was not a good beginning.

And Geraldine, of course, shed copious tears, and swore by this, and swore by that, and by everything besides,—as her favourite heroines would have done in a similar situation—that nothing on earth or out of it would induce her to consent to such a marriage.

But Mr. Fetherstone was not going to be thwarted in his plans. With all the caution and skill of a professed politician, he undertook to convince his daughter of the advantages she would gain from such a marriage, taking very good care to inform her at the same time that he would never consent to her marrying Juan, whom he knew to be a miserable adventurer, who only loved her for her money.

Lady Twickenham, in the meantime, talked her son over; and Charlie, who, as my readers most likely have already discovered, was very weak-minded, and who, by this time, having had quite enough of the fair Stella,

felt very much ashamed of himself for his late disreputable conduct, at last agreed to marry his step-sister.

They did not dislike each other; this they were both obliged to confess—they had now lived so long together that they were accustomed to each other's ways; and Geraldine agreed that she would just as soon marry him as any other man she knew—Juan, of course, excepted.

The night arranged by the handsome Spaniard for Miss Fetherstone's flight with him had arrived.

He went by train to Hampton Court, near which the Twickenhams' villa was situated. He hired a small boat, and at the hour agreed upon between them rowed towards Raspberry Dale.

It was a fine starry night, but there was no moon, and the river, shaded at this point on each side by tall trees, looked very dark. It was in every respect a night fitted for such an adventure; but in vain did he wait by the stairs of the old boat-house—Geraldine never made her appearance.

The letter in which he had informed her of his plans had been intercepted by her zealous father, and the poor girl, fortunately for herself, had no idea that her lover was waiting there for her.

After waiting two hours, Juan, very much disappointed, rowed back to Hampton Court, and went to the hotel there, where he remained the night.

The next morning the first thing he did was to go to the lodge at Raspberry Dale—for he dared not approach the house itself after what had happened—and inquire if anything was the matter with the younger Miss Fetherstone.

No; the eldest Miss Fetherstone had been unwell

Court, in the hope of either seeing her or receiving a message from her. But he was doomed to be disappointed. Could she have forgotten him? Impossible! He was sure of her love; he knew but too well the influence he exercised over her. She could not be so indifferent to the "inexpressible sufferings of his heart," as he styled his anxiety in his letters to her; but yet he could not remain for ever at that little hotel, so he returned to London, where Stella was awaiting him in his lodgings, and began to think seriously of giving up all hopes of ever marrying the Right Honourable Gerald Fetherstone's daughter.

One day, about a month later, as he was passing by Hanover Square, a great crowd of carriages attracted his attention. Evidently a grand wedding was going on at the fashionable Church of St. George's. A crowd of idlers had collected on either side of the steps of the portico, and as the company were coming out at the time, and it was impossible to pass by, or yet to cross the street, on account of the crowd, he stopped and waited for the guests to enter their respective carriages.

Eight young ladies, all dressed alike in pretty dresses of blue and white silk, were coming out at the time, and remained standing in the entrance, where eight more

young ladies, also dressed alike, but in white and pink, joined them.

This unusual number of bridesmaids seemed to produce a great effect upon the crowd outside, until some one whispered that there had been two marriages, and that consequently there were two sets of bridesmaids.

A great rush was now made, as a young lady, dressed all in white, and wearing a wreath of orange blossoms, appeared. She was very tall, and of a stately and commanding figure, such as is rarely seen now-a-days. Her hair was black, and showed off to perfection the splendid diamonds she wore in it. Juan had no difficulty in recognizing this lady, and he was horrified when he thought *who* the other bride might be.

Mr. Jobkin was walking just behind her with Lady Twickenham. A large close carriage drove up to the door at that moment, the coachman looking very important in his powdered wig and showy livery, with an immense bouquet of white flowers on his breast. Sibyl and Mr. Jobkin entered it, and were driven away at a brisk pace, amidst the cheering of the street boys.

While this carriage was attracting the attention of the crowd, Juan's eyes were directed towards the church ; and it was with mingled feelings of rage and disappointment that he saw Geraldine advancing through the crowd, resting on the arm of Lord Twickenham, and attired as a bride.

She was dressed very much like her sister. A rich veil of duchesse lace fell from under her wreath of orange blossoms, above which shone a countess's small coronet in diamonds. She also wore beautiful jewels on her neck and arms ; but, not possessing the personal

crying.

"Umph! Girls always cry when they are married," a man said behind her.

"She is not half so handsome as the first one," remarked the old woman.

"Well, I don't know," said another man, so loud that a policeman requested him to "shut up!"—"I wouldn't like to be that dark woman's husband, myself. I am sure she is one of those women who will have her own way in everything, come what may."

"Nor I the husband of this one," observed another man close by, who, by his dress, it was easy to recognize for a pastrycook. "I hate these milk-and-water women, who are that soft that they generally end by running away altogether, just like *blanc-mange*."

Juan, however, hardly heard these rude remarks, although they were made close to him. His whole attention was fixed upon the girl he had for so long hoped to make his wife, and who had now already become another's.

Geraldine was very pale, and her eyes showed but too plainly that she had been crying; but, as this is a luxury often indulged in by brides, no one attached much importance to these evident marks of sorrow. But she seemed quite composed now, and was able to enter the carriage, which had driven up to the church, with a light, firm step.

Lord Twickenham entered it after her. He, too, was

pale, and had certainly not the look of a happy bridegroom.

The rest of the company entered their respective carriages, and also drove off; and soon afterwards the crowd had dispersed, and Juan was left alone standing on the steps of the church, lost in profound thought.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CAN YOU FORGIVE HER?

(*Not by Anthony Trollope.*)

How long Juan remained standing there he himself could not have told, but he must certainly have remained a long time, for a policeman came up to him at last and requested him to "move off," which he mechanically did.

I dare not enter into his thoughts. I fear they were a little too worldly, even for this book, and I must not forget that I am writing for the innocent and virtuous daughters of Mayfair.

And, indeed, who could have told what was passing through his mind at that moment?—though, by the dark shade which had come over his face, and by his distended nostrils and quivering lips, it would not have taken much penetration to guess that his thoughts were anything but pleasant.

That nameless expression written on his handsome countenance, which said "beware!" in a language which, though plain, so few understood, came out with a wondrous clearness this day; and few and sadly inexperienced must have been the men who would have trusted him had they seen him at that moment.

The fond hope he had nourished in his wicked heart

for so many months had fallen to the ground with a crash ; the girl he had longed to make the stepping-stone to his vile ambition could now never be his. Yet she might still love him—but what could that matter to him now ? She could never be his wife ; he could no longer hope to inherit Mr. Fetherstone's wealth. He never even thought of her feelings : what was she to him now ? —a stranger—less than a stranger ; as he had never cared for her, such a thing as pity for her unfortunate fate could not enter his heart. No ; all his pity, all his sorrow, all his thoughts were for himself ; and yet, of all men in the world, he was the only one who could have known what Geraldine's feelings must have been at that moment, and how much she should have been pitied—though, according to "the world," she had made one of the most brilliant matches of the season.

As he walked through Hanover Square with his hands thrust into his pockets, and his eyes bent upon the pavement, an idea seemed suddenly to strike him ; he raised his head and smiled—a cold cynical smile, horrible to behold even upon his handsome face ; he quickened his steps, crossed the Square with a determined air, and entered Oxford Street, along which he walked until he arrived at the turning, past the bazaar, which leads into Soho Square.

A few minutes later he had entered Mrs. Potts' little shop, in the always dirty, but anything but silent, Bull Street, and was asking that highly respectable old lady if his father was in the house.

" Your Pa ! Shure, no ! Why, don't ye know as the poor man died a fortnight ago, thereabouts ? "

" My father dead !" Juan exclaimed, covering his face with both his hands.

OUR WOMAN.

"She is gone, sir ; she left two days afterwards, she did."

"Gone !—But where ?"

"I don't know. The tall, proud-looking gentleman as was always a-coming to see her, took her away, I believe."

"The . . . Great God ! Did you know who he was?"

"No, sir ; I don't think as I ever heard his name. He looked like a foreigner though, and always spoke some foreign lingo to them. I am really sorry, sir, but shure I can't tell ye where they have gone. They paid me my rent all right, so I can't complain ; but I much fear as the poor girl felt very miserable, and now I remember she often asked me about you, and wanted to know if I had seen you."

Juan stayed to hear no more, but with a wild, low cry, which resembled greatly that of a wild beast at the Zoo, as Mrs. Potts afterwards informed her neighbours, he left the house never to enter it again.

It was only too true. Old Fernandez had died—died after a long and painful illness, in the arms of his loving daughter—of that daughter he would have sacrificed to win a few pounds for himself.

Lord Belgrave had been with him to the last, helping the delicate Consuelo to nurse him, happy to be able to pass his time by the side of her he loved so well.

As long as her father lived, Consuelo saw no harm in the Marquis's visits, but once dead, his presence began to alarm her. She felt that she had done wrong to allow him to come so frequently ; she also felt, now, that without intending it she had encouraged him in what she still considered his mad infatuation for her, and that now only two paths remained open to her—to fly from him, or to marry him.

To fly from him ! Where could she go ? Her brother, the only person whose protection she might have claimed, had disowned her—denied her ; besides, where was he ?

She had no other relatives in England. Away from her country, without friends or relatives, without money, what could she do ?

If Alfredo had been there to take care of her—but where was he ? She knew not ; he had never even written to her since his hasty departure. Could he have forgotten her ? Impossible !—she was too sure of his love ; and yet during the last two months strange thoughts had come into her mind—thoughts which true love should always ignore, for sooner or later they are sure to cause its death.

Why had he not written ? Of course, a thousand reasons might have prevented him, and one of these reasons—when she thought of it quietly, the only one that would really have prevented *him* from writing—might be death !

Oh, such a thing was too horrible to think of, for she still loved him as she could never hope to love any one else ; and to forget, to try and forget, for a time at least, these harassing thoughts, she encouraged the visits of Lord Belgrave—the man she knew he loved best—and

He felt the change which had come over him, and he was not sorry for it; for he knew that she, for whom he would have gladly sacrificed everything, was really worthy of him.

He admired her, and respected her, perhaps even more than he loved her, and this was the reason why he felt so anxious to make her his wife.

Yet, he was not blind to the consequences of the step he was contemplating. There was no denying that such a match would be a very poor alliance for him to make—an alliance that would bring him neither advantageous connections nor additional fortune. But then he needed neither, and Society had taught him to give an exaggerated importance to his own merits, and to the value of his position and surroundings.

He prided himself on despising the world, and yet he was but its spoiled child, after all, and he would not have despised it, nor wilfully shocked its opinion, for any possible consideration. Public opinion he believed to be generally a good judge of good and evil, but he also knew that, if you indulge it, it becomes a most pernicious gossip, that will meddle in things with which it should have no business; and in those things where public opinion is impertinent, Belgrave scorned and resisted its interference as haughtily as he would have done the interference of any insolent member of the insolent whole. "The world is like a nettle," he used to say; "if

you come in its way, it stings, however slightly ; but if you at once grasp it firmly with a bold hand, it has no power to inflict any pain." "The world is like a dog," he had heard his father say ; "let a man once show that he feels afraid of its bark, and it will fly at his heels ; but if he fearlessly faces it, it will leave him alone, and even fawn at his feet if he flings it a bone."

The Belgraves had always been a very proud and exclusive race, and Lord Belgrave himself was especially noted for his natural haughty and serious manner. What in his brother seemed only indolence and langour, perhaps at times even affectation, in him looked more like pride and hauteur ; yet we know that this was only a mask which he assumed before the world, for in reality no kinder or warmer-hearted man ever lived. But with such a character as he loved the world to believe he possessed, he would not have liked to give the lie direct to his past life by marrying a woman so inferior in position to himself.

He thought all this over long and seriously, for he really loved Consuelo as few could have loved ; and the more he thought about it the more convinced was he that a marriage with her could never be thought a *més-alliance* by any one. To begin with, no one in England knew who Miss Fernandez was—she might be a Duke's daughter for all that his friends knew or would most likely ever know. Her name, it is true, was common enough ; yet, strange to say, it was the name of some of the proudest families of Europe. The Duke of Arion, the Duke de Feria, the Duke de Medinaceli, the Duke of Frias, the Duke de Hijar, the Duke de San Lorenzo, the Duchess de Uceda, the Marquis del Arco, the Marquis de Javalquinto, the Marquis de Malpica, the Marquis de Villalba

was going to marry might be a near relation of one of these grand families—in England who could tell? The Peerage alone could inform them, and it was easy enough for him to make her name sound grand there; besides, once Marchioness of Belgrave, who would ever dream of questioning her descent?

I mention all this to show that Lord Belgrave was not acting blindly when he, for a second time, proposed for Consuelo's hand, but that he knew well what he was about, and only did so after mature and thoughtful consideration.

But Consuelo could not make up her mind to marry him so easily as he had made up his mind to marry her.

It was on the day of her poor father's funeral, when, in the lowest of spirits and with tears in her eyes, she had exclaimed in anguish that now she had no one in the whole world to protect her.

"You have me," Lord Belgrave had said, taking her hand affectionately. "Will you not give me a right to protect you?"

She had trembled, and answered nothing, but she had not withdrawn her hand from his.

Three days afterwards she had left the house early in the morning, and, mustering all her courage, had gone to Mr. Jobkin's house at last. "He hates me," she thought; "at least, I know he dislikes me very much; but he is my cousin, after all, and perhaps he will take care of me now that I am alone in the world."

Strange that she should have sought protection against the man who loved her, from the man who hated her; but such was the state of her mind at that time that she hardly knew what she did.

Mr. Jobkin, she was informed by the footman, who looked at her worn-out clothes and at her tearful face rather suspiciously, was at Twickenham, on a visit to Mr. Fetherstone, the Minister, whose eldest daughter he was going to marry.

She inquired no more. How could Mr. Jobkin take any interest in her case, now he was going to be married and most likely to leave the country for a happy honeymoon trip?

She returned to her wretched home, which looked in her eyes even more miserable and desolate than ever after seeing the house of the rich banker, and that evening, in a fit of desperation, she accepted Lord Belgrave.

Here must end the First Part of this book—my three heroines being married at last; and, as is the case but too often in this world, none of them having married the man she loves, my readers will, therefore, be right in concluding that the eventful part of their history can hardly end thus. I would recommend those amongst them who still feel an interest in the stately Sibyl, the romantic Geraldine, or the beautiful Consuelo, to read the Second Part, and find out how they each fared in the fashionable world in which they were now fated to live—perhaps more by circumstance than by choice.



SECOND PART.



FASHION AND PASSION.

SECOND PART.



CHAPTER XXIV.

VANITY FAIR.

(*Not by Thackeray.*)

A YEAR later, and towards the end of another London season, several of our old acquaintances were assembled one fine summer evening in one of the pleasantest drawing-rooms in Mayfair.

It was Sunday, and most of the guests there had passed the afternoon at Elizabeth Countess of Twickenham's villa by the Thames, admiring the freshest of flowers, and discussing the freshest of news. The day had now come to an end, but the chit-chat and the ices had not, and the smooth sunny lawn of Raspberry Dale had been abandoned for the picturesque drawing-room of Lady Windermere, in the most fashionable of London squares.

It was one of those small but most delightful of all dinner parties, which only the most successful leaders of the fashionable world are able to give; dinners at which

William and his daughter—she would, we are duly to say, still unmarried—Lady Cowes and her two daughters, and Lord Edwin Beauville; of the rest we need not speak—they are, and most likely will for ever remain, strangers to our story.

Lady Juliet Standish is undoubtedly the belle of the evening. She has but lately returned to London, and this is her very first appearance since her return. Sad misgivings had been entertained concerning her during the last winter by her numerous friends and admirers, for it was whispered that the poor girl was in the last stage of consumption; and they who had seen her at Cannes, where she had been with her mother ever since she first left London, now nearly two years ago, said that it would be a miracle if she ever made her appearance again in a London ball-room. And when the next season came, and Lady Cowes' pretty daughter was missed by all, people came to the conclusion that their worst fears had been realized.

But, fortunately, these people were mistaken. Lady Juliet, though she had not cared to undergo the fatigues of a London season so soon after her illness, was now completely recovered, and—save for the loss of her long auburn curls, which the doctor had sacrificed on the altar of health—she was once more the charming young lady of two seasons ago.

She had grown thinner, and her cheeks were no longer rosy, as they had been before, but her eyes seemed to

have acquired a depth of expression, and, altogether, she looked, if I may be permitted so to express myself, more spiritual. She wore her hair, which had grown rather darker, cut short, and on the top of it a pretty little cap of white tulle, not unlike those we see in the portraits of Charlotte Corday, and which became her greatly. People who before had never even thought of casting a second glance at her, were now the first to confess that she was a very pretty girl; besides, her late illness had made her quite interesting, and this was the reason why Lady Windermere—who, like all the leaders of fashion, delighted in bringing around her all interesting people—from Pum-pumoff, the wondrous new pianist, to the young Marquis of Man, whose late conversion was creating such a sensation—seized upon the circumstance of Lady Cowes being in town for a day or two, on her way from the Continent to her marine home in the Isle of Wight, to give a little dinner-party in her honour, and to ask a few of her dearest friends to see this highly interesting young lady.

To make the entertainment still more interesting, she had also invited Lord Edwin Beauville, who every one knew by this time to have been the cause of Lady Juliet's alarming illness.

It was thus that they met for the first time after a year's separation; and though the motives which had prompted this meeting in the worldly mind of their hostess were not the best in the world, yet both of them rejoiced at having the opportunity once more of seeing each other, though in a room full of strangers.

Indeed, I doubt very much if Lady Juliet would have accepted Lady Windermere's invitation had she not known that Lord Edwin was to be there, or whether

thirteen months ago, when, under the cool shade of the trees of Raspberry Dale, Sibyl Fetherstone had in so few words destroyed all his hopes and longings, and altered the entire purpose of his life. We have not spoken of him since then, but my readers will no doubt have imagined what he suffered in that interview, for he had loved Sibyl dearly, and he still loved her with all the passion of which a nature like his was capable. But he was not a man to give himself up either to the excess of joy or despair; even his most intimate friends were ignorant of what had taken place for weeks afterwards; and though he felt the blow as deeply as any man could possibly have done, still he managed to hide his disappointment from the world.

He left London the day after his visit to Twickenham, and only returned after a long absence, during which he had been amusing himself with a few intimate friends of rather wild character, with whom he had frequented the most fashionable casinos and spas on the Continent. But in vain did he try in the midst of the wildest dissipation to forget the sufferings of his soul. Sibyl, or rather the passion which she represented in his heart, was always before him; he could not forget what he had felt—nay, he would not have forgotten it for worlds, though he did try so hard to forget the cruel-hearted woman who had inspired such feelings in his warm heart.

Tired of Continental life, he had returned to England, where he certainly was not destined to recover his peace of mind.

Of the details of his "fast life" I shall say but little, a piece of forbearance for which I consider myself entitled to the everlasting gratitude of my readers, who, if they have not had their curiosity on this subject more than satisfied by the innumerable novels of the last four years, must indeed be insatiable. Suffice it, therefore, to say that Lord Edwin gave himself up to all sorts of dissipation, in hopes of recovering his lost happiness, but without any marked success; and that towards the end of that London season he had voted town life altogether "a bore," and had accepted an invitation from the Duke of Northland to go and shoot over his extensive moors in the north of Scotland.

Lord Edwin was fond of sport, but he had heard that a grander sport than even the far-famed grouse-shooting was to be had at the Duke's princely castle. An Italian heiress, a youthful Countess of surpassing beauty, was stopping there; he had already met her in London two or three times, and he had private reasons for believing that the lovely daughter of the Duchess de St. Gennaro had not been quite indifferent to the few passing attentions he had been able to pay her in the crowded London ball-rooms where they had met.

Never before had he been so fully aware of the necessity of mending his fortunes as at that particular time, for since his brother's marriage all chance of receiving an addition to his slender income from him seemed to have vanished, and the life he had been leading lately was not the most suited to make that income go very far. Careless and indolent as he was in al-

and yet he was expected to live like men who possessed princely incomes, and pay his bills as readily as they did.

Under the circumstances, only one course was open to him—he must make a good marriage, that is to say, buy a fortune by means of his rank, as so many others buy rank every day by means of their fortune.

But the idea of marrying a provincial heiress, the vulgar daughter of some wealthy manufacturer, was most revolting to him; the very names of Manchester and Birmingham sounded horrible in his ears, and he could not make up his mind to go there in search of a wife.

Such was the state of his mind, when he met the Countess Idalia at a ball at Preston House. She was the only daughter of the Duke de St. Gennaro, a wealthy Neapolitan nobleman, who had married an English lady. Besides being a great heiress, she was very pretty, and, what is more, exceedingly elegant. Lord Edwin could not hesitate for one moment. Here was the woman that he wanted—she had everything that he needed—she seemed made for him; but yet there were great obstacles in the way. Was it likely that one so beautiful, so rich, so much sought after, would condescend to marry him, a poor second son, who had nothing to offer in exchange except his good name and his handsome face? The more he thought of this, the more convinced was he of the impossibility of such a thing.

Her mother, who it was whispered did not get on as well with her Italian husband as might be desired, had brought her to England, evidently with the idea of her marrying an Englishman ; but she was an ambitious woman, and Lord Edwin knew already by experience how low he was valued in the London fashionable marriage market. It was not likely, therefore, that the proud Duchess of St. Gennaro would ever think of him as a desirable son-in-law ; yet he had danced half a dozen times with the lovely Idalia, and he had, as I have before hinted, some reasons—though, in truth, based on rather slight grounds—to believe that she herself was not quite indifferent to the attentions he had shown her from time to time.

Such being the case, it is not to be wondered at that he should have so readily accepted the Duke of Northland's invitation to his castle in Scotland, where he knew the Countess Idalia had also been invited.

He was making his preparations for leaving town once more, when Lady Windermere's dinner invitation arrived. Her dinner was to have been on the Sunday following, and he had decided to leave London the previous day ; so most likely he would have refused it had he not been informed at the same time, in the charming little note which had brought the invitation, written upon maize-coloured paper with brown borders, and surmounted by an artistic monogram, that Lady Cowes and her daughters would be of the party.

The mere name of Juliet brought to his mind a crowd of recollections whose course he could not well restrain. "Here I am going to the north of Scotland after a girl who does not care in the least for me, and who most likely would laugh me to scorn were I to

“MY SISTER—HOW COULD I BE A WOMAN, FOR WHOM TO DAY,
whom I now almost hate, I might have been the husband
of this girl. I might have been comfortably off with a
settled future, whilst now——?”

If he had never loved Juliet as he had loved Sibyl, at least he had always been fully aware that what he felt for her was of a purer, nobler nature than anything he could ever feel for the beautiful siren to whose allurements he had so blindly sacrificed his happiness and welfare; for my readers no doubt remember the handsome offer which his brother had made him if he agreed to marry the Lady Juliet. Now all this was at an end; Lord Belgrave was himself married, and had ceased to take much interest in Edwin's private affairs; yet he felt he owed something to the girl whom he knew had once loved him so well, and so he put off his journey and accepted Lady Windermere's invitation.

Never before had Juliet seemed so lovely in his eyes. Now that the scorching rays of Sibyl's glances were out of sight, he could behold the purer, clearer light of the star-like Juliet, and discover charms in her, which, until then, he had passed over unnoticed.

Certainly, her illness had improved her greatly, and her short hair only added a new charm to her graceful well-proportioned head. Lord Edwin was charmed with her, yet he dared not express his admiration, not even by his looks, for the very reason that he had once told Lady Cowes plainly that he could never love her

daughter. Yet what he felt for her at that moment, if not love, was, at least, that wondrous all-absorbing admiration which only too soon turns into love.

Had she been a stranger to him—had he never seen her before, never admired her before—he would not have hesitated to sit near her, perhaps to conduct her to the quiet conservatory, where he might have expressed his admiration in terms as warm as the rules of good society would have permitted; but knowing her as well as he did, and remembering what had taken place between them, he dared not approach her—he even felt afraid of looking at her too much; while she—she, on her side, was too proud to come to him and say she forgave him without being asked, though well she could see at that moment how he longed for her forgiveness.

The poor Juliet had suffered greatly. Sibyl Fetherstone—the girl she had been led to consider her best and dearest friend, the girl in whom she had put all her confidence, all her trust—had taken from her the man she loved, though Sibyl was fully aware how great that love was; and, what was more, after making of him her tool and her plaything for a couple of months, she had heartlessly cast him aside as a child throws away a doll of which it has got tired, and married a man Juliet herself had refused only a few weeks before! Thus, Sibyl had not only broken Juliet's heart, but also broken the heart, she greatly feared, of the man she loved even better than herself; and all for what?—for the senseless amusement of an hour! Ah! Juliet had indeed been sadly tried, and it is a wonder that my readers see her still alive.

Lady Windermere's guests sat watching them with that cold-hearted, half-cynical, half-compassionate smile of indifferent curiosity which so characterises the spoiled

gether as if they had always been the best friends in the world, and never more than friends. They knew very well that everybody's eyes were upon them, and felt so much the awkwardness of the situation, and the necessity of appearing to look indifferent, that they talked with animation of a thousand things which neither of them cared the least about.

After dinner the ladies retired to the back drawing-room—a long room elegantly decorated and furnished in the Louis XIV. style, which opened upon a pretty little conservatory, at the end of which a lovely landscape, lighted up by an artificial moon, with a castle and a distant view of a lake, which looked tantalisingly real, had been painted by the artistic hand of the accomplished mistress of the house.

"It is all nonsense, my dear," said Lady Tottenham, sitting down beside Lady Windermere, on a sofa near the conservatory. The other ladies having gone into the front drawing-room to inspect some new games which had just arrived from Paris, they were alone, and could talk without fear of being overheard—not that I believe for a moment such a consideration would have had any weight with them. "It is all nonsense; I do not believe they care for each other at all. I watched them narrowly throughout dinner, and when I tell you that I did not surprise one smile, or even one look, between them that might have led me to suppose there existed any

secret understanding between them, you may be very sure that they do not care for each other any longer."

"And yet," Lady Windermere remarked, thoughtfully, "that girl has been at death's door, and they say it was because Lord Edwin had refused to marry her!"

"Who told you that pretty story?"

"Who?—nobody, that is to say, everybody. It went the round of London last season, and everybody believed it."

"Then you may be very sure, dear Lady Windermere, that it was not true. But never mind—thank you very much, all the same, for your clever idea of inviting them together, and especially of asking me to see the meeting. You are always so good, so kind-hearted!"

Lady Windermere bowed, highly pleased with herself, for, fortunately, she did not hear the muttered epithet which Totty thought fit to add to her remark, and which was not exactly calculated to flatter her Ladyship's vanity.

"By-the-bye," said Lady Tottenham, with a smile that she tried very hard to render sweet and innocent, but which the peculiar formation of her mouth transformed into a rather cynical grin, anything but pleasant to behold; "what have you heard lately of that new woman, Lady Belgrave?"

"Lady Belgrave! Oh, don't ask me, my dear; is it possible you have not heard the stories which are told of her?"

"You don't say so! Nothing against her conduct, I hope?"

"Well, no; people do not talk scandal of her yet; but, believe me, they *will* soon."

"Do tell me; you know something?"

the young matron, and so was awaiting a new outraged feelings to learn that after all Lady Belgrave was not worth knowing. "What is there against her?"

"Nothing and everything," was her friend's startling but rather contradictory answer. "To begin with—who is she?"

"I do not know any more than you do."

"Well, no more does any one."

"Wait a moment. Here is Lord Edwin, who of course will be able to tell us everything," she said, beckoning to Lord Edwin to approach; he had just entered the room with the other gentlemen. "Dear Lord Edwin, come and sit here, and tell us what you know of your charming sister-in-law."

Lord Edwin approached the two old ladies, and took a seat near them; the harassing emotions he had experienced at the dinner-table had unmanned him, and he hardly knew what he was doing.

"Of Lady Belgrave?"

"Yes."

"What do you know about her?"

He looked at them in mute surprise.

"I know nothing about her," he answered, stretching out his long legs.

"Why, don't you know who she was before her marriage?"

"I did not know her before she married my brother."

"You don't mean to tell us that you don't know even her name?"

"Oh yes, I know her name; it is easy enough to know that—does not the Peerage tell everybody?"

"And you know no more than the Peerage?"

"No, nothing more."

Lady Windermere took from the table that Bible of the English nation, which always lies upon the drawing-room table of every self-respecting family in her Majesty's dominions, and also on those in President Grant's. The book opened, strange to say, precisely at the page where Lord Belgrave's name appeared in full. "Here it is—let us see what it says about her," she continued, as if this was the first time she had ever looked at that particular paragraph, and read aloud—

"Married on the, &c., &c., to the Señorita Doña Maria de la Consolacion Fernandez de Sevilla y Montero, daughter of Don Jose Carlos Fernandez de Sevilla, and of Doña Maria Montero."

There was a silence after Lady Windermere had finished, when two ladies joined the circle, and having been informed what was the subject they were discussing, they glanced over the page to read the interesting fact for themselves.

"That certainly sounds very grand, but it does not tell us much," Lady Tottenham remarked.

"I wonder if she is a relation of the Medinacelis?" said Lady Pencarlin, who was one of the ladies who had just joined the group, taking a seat by the table. "I met the Duchess de Medinaceli when I was last in Paris. The Medinacelis are one of the principal families in Spain, and their family name is Fernandez, I believe."

"I do not think, though, that my beautiful sister-in-law belongs to that family—at least, I have never heard that she did," said Lord Edwin, rising.

Lady Belgrave, who had been a public subject of doubtful merit, and still more doubtful conduct, before she married old Sir James Pencarlin.

" You are right, Lucia; I shall certainly not call until I have found out all about her."

" You are speaking of Lady Belgrave?" said a gentleman who had heard Lady Windermere's last words, joining in the conversation. " How beautiful she is!"

" Beautiful!" exclaimed Lady Tottenham; " fie, Lord Charles, I had no idea you could have such bad taste."

" Why, don't you think her pretty?"

" Oh dear me, no! I cannot say I admire those quiet women who pose for being statuesque."

" Well, you see, the poor thing is afraid of moving or saying a single word, for fear of disclosing her ignorance. I am sure she should be excused."

" Nay, nay, I'll hear nothing against her," said another lady; " I think her really pretty, and for a Spaniard you must allow that her complexion is wonderfully fresh."

" Yes, when it is freshly put on, I dare say."

" Unfortunately I have never seen her, excepting in the evening, so I can't judge, but I thought I detected paint upon her face."

" Oh, Lady Windermere, an artist like you could not be mistaken."

Lord Edwin, in the meantime, thoroughly disgusted with the turn the conversation had taken, had retired

to the front drawing-room, and had seated himself on an ottoman in the centre of the room, near Lady Juliet.

"They seem to be having some fun in the next room," she remarked when she saw him.

"Yes," he replied; "at the expense of their neighbours, as usual."

"Oh, I might have known that you were talking scandal," she said with a sweet smile; "but how is it that you have deserted them—you, who are such a master of the art?"

"I, Lady Juliet!"

"Yes; have I not heard you say plainly, a hundred times, that there was nothing you loved so much as scandal?"

Lord Edwin bit his lip until the blood almost came. "Oh, she cannot love me when she can believe this of me!" he thought; and to change the conversation he informed her that he was leaving town the following day for Scotland.

"Ah, you are going to the Northland's?" she said. "I hear that the Countess Idalia Corricolo is stopping with them; you know her, no doubt; is she really as beautiful as people say? You know I have not been in London for two seasons, so I have not had a chance of seeing any of the new beauties."

"Yes, she is very beautiful, and as rich as she is handsome, and as aimable as she is rich," he answered, looking her straight in the face, to see if he could detect any signs of annoyance or jealousy; but he was not enough of a physiognomist to discover her thoughts through the smile which, like most young girls, Lady Juliet could command when she wished to hide her real feelings.

Lord Edwin was prepared for this, and managed to turn his head away just in time to hide the blush which he felt was burning on his cheek.

"No; he does not care any more for me now than he did last year," she thought, with a sigh. "It was silly of me to think that it might be otherwise. At all events, I am glad to see he has been able to forget Sibyl," and the poor girl turned very pale.

Miss Tottenham entered the room at that moment, and went straight to a looking-glass, in front of which she remained for some time, arranging her curls. Lady Juliet, in order to hide her confusion, drew Lord Edwin's attention to her.

"Look at Miss Tottenham: any one would say her future depended upon the way her hair was arranged."

Lord Edwin laughed. "Well, you can't condemn her for looking at herself in a glass; it shows that she knows her difficulties, and can face them."

"Ah, Lord Edwin, when will you give up making puns? But see, my mother is saying good-bye to Lady Windermere. We are leaving town to-morrow morning; so I dare say she wants to get home early."

"So you leave town to-morrow!"

"Yes; and so do you: how strange!"

"But you go south, while I go north. Ah, such is life! We meet but to part! When shall I see you again?"

"I can't tell; most probably next summer—that is to

say, if I am strong enough to bear the fatigue of another London season."

"A year, then, to wait! A whole year before I see you again."

"It seems a long time, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does."

"To look forward; but to look back it is quite another thing. It seems to me only yesterday that we acted that piece at Lady Tottenham's: do you remember it?"

"Oh, yes. How well Lady Brightly acted the part of Mary Stuart."

"Yes. Do you remember that last scene? I recollect every word. I don't think I ever heard anything which made such an impression upon me—particularly her last words: 'Farewell, and, if you can, live happy! You have dared aspire to the hand of two Queens; you have despised a tender and loving heart; you have betrayed it to gain a proud and haughty one. Go, fall at her feet, and may your recompense not turn into a punishment!' Ah, it was grand!"

Lord Edwin was much moved, for, strange to say, Schiller's words had turned out only too true in his case, and his thoughts wandered immediately towards Sibyl.

"How well Miss Fetherstone acted her part too," he said, more like a man who is thinking aloud than as if he were speaking.

"Yes; she is a born actress. Have you seen much of her lately?"

"I? Yes—perhaps—no—what am I saying?" he muttered, much confused. "No, not since her marriage."

Lady Juliet looked at him in silence. "He cannot

was sure now that Juliet must despise him too much to love him any longer, he felt himself so despicable in his own eyes.

CHAPTER XXV.

CASTLE DANGEROUS.

(Not by Sir Walter Scott.)

IN one of the most northern counties of Scotland, on the shores of the German Ocean, on a well-wooded hill of commanding height, stood the grand old castle of the ancient Earls of Northland, which the distinguished family of English origin now bearing that name had obtained, and succeeded in raising to a Dukedom.

Little, if anything, remains of the original structure, but the numerous alterations and additions have been so well designed and so magnificently carried out, that on seeing the beautiful modern chateau-like edifice, no one would ever think of regretting the grim old towers and frowning battlements of the ancient fortress.

It was at this castle that Lord Edwin Beauville arrived one fine summer afternoon, a couple of days after we last saw him, at Lady Windermere's.

The sun was setting beyond the restless waves that rolled blue and cold in that northern sea, only here and there dashing in grand majestic breakers, crested with silver surf, upon the shining rocks, when he alighted from the train which had conveyed him thus far—almost to the very gates of the castle.

wnen they all met in the grand saloon.

The graceful Duchess of Northland received him with all that suavity and refinement of manner which so characterised her, and, as was to be expected, deputed him to take down to dinner the youthful Countess Idalia, who stood by the side of her handsome mother, the Duchess of St. Gennaro, looking the very picture of loveliness.

She was not tall, but beautifully proportioned; neither was she particularly bright or lively, but her manner was so refined, and her movements so graceful, that it would indeed have been difficult to find any one more charming. But Edwin was too full of the image of Juliet to be able properly to appreciate the charms of the lovely Italian. Throughout the dinner he was rather too much absorbed in his own sad thoughts to care to make himself agreeable to the spoiled daughter of Fashion, as he would have done had he been more in the mood; yet such was the power of his winning address that the young Countess hardly noticed his pre-occupation, and when the ladies retired to the drawing-room, she observed to Lady Florence, the daughter of the house, who was about her own age, that Lord Edwin was one of the most agreeable men she had ever met, which made the English young lady smile.

There was a large party stopping at the castle at the time; amongst others, the Earl and Countess of Clap-perton, Colonel and Mrs. Major, Lady Barkington, and her husband, Mr. Stick, besides four or five engineers,

friends of the Duke, who had come to view his last experiments in coal-mining and engine-driving, and his two sons, the Marquis of Preston and Lord Robin. So that it would have been impossible for any one to have found the time long, for in this mixed company surely there was enough to gratify the greatest diversity of taste. Lord Edwin, however, was not yet himself, and not even the prospect of winning the great heiress, and making her his wife, was brilliant enough to enable him at that moment to forget the girl he now feared to have lost for ever, though he was convinced she had once loved him dearly.

After dinner he again found himself by the charming Idalia's side. The Duchess of Northland was sitting near her, so he did not hesitate to draw his chair up and begin talking to them, as being the two persons most sympathetic to him in that room. For the Duke had retired into a distant corner, to talk over machinery with his engineering friends ; and the younger people were playing a noisy game in the next room, which could have no attractions for him in his present frame of mind, while the Duchess de St. Gennaro was talking in a low voice with Mrs. Major at the other end of the long saloon.

The Duchess looked as elegant and gracious as ever. She was dressed entirely in white, and from her neck hung a large cross made of five immense diamonds, joined by long stems of white enamel. The Countess Idalia was also dressed in white, but her slender waist was encircled by a broad blue satin riband, and a velvet to match encircled her swan-like throat. Her glossy chestnut hair was coiled in massive twists above her fair brow, and behind was permitted to fall gracefully over her lovely shoulders.

about to suspense with a great deal of useless prattling, which, of course, everybody would skip.

When the ladies retired for the night, and the men descended to the smoking-room, Lord Edwin was made the object of many jokes with respect to the charming young lady to whom, almost without knowing it, he had dedicated himself the entire evening.

"Never mind, Beauville," Lord Preston said, offering him a cigar; "you are right, she is a lovely creature, and I should advise you to persevere."

"She is immensely rich, is she not?" some one asked.

"Yes, very rich indeed; at least, her father is, and she is his only child, so I suppose it will all be hers. They have a magnificent palace on the Chiaja, at Naples," Colonel Major said, "and another at Rome, besides no end of villas."

"How is it, though, that the Duchess does not live with her husband?"

"I believe they do not get on very well together; but she has a large fortune of her own, and some of the finest jewels in the world."

"When I met the Duchess and her daughter at Rome last winter," one of the gentlemen remarked, "she called herself simply Donna Idalia Corricolo, and now I see that you all call her Countess—how is that?"

"I believe it is because she is afraid we should mistake her rank. You know that the Italian *Donna*

is very different from the Spanish Doña, and that in Italy, as in England, the daughter of a Duke ranks as high as a Countess, so I suppose that is the reason why she calls herself Countess Idalia."

When they were retiring in their turn, the Duke came up to Edwin and gave him a friendly tap on the shoulder, saying, as he did this, in his usual blunt but amiable tone, "Never mind what these youngsters say, Beauville. You had better go in for the charming Italian; she is as pretty a girl as you will ever see, and will be immensely rich. I do not think you can do better."

The Duke, though anything but a courtier of that fickle goddess Fashion, at whose altar the greater part of the men of his rank daily sacrifice their happiness to win a few smiles, was well aware of the pecuniary necessities which position forces upon one, and the sacrifice which it implies, and had himself married a rich heiress, as people said, more from family reasons than from love.

"But do you think that she cares enough for me?" Lord Edwin asked, rather bewildered.

"Care for you!—of course she does, or if she does not yet, she soon will, and it will be your own fault then if you do not succeed in winning her hand."

"But her mother. . . ."

"Oh, leave her to me. Win the daughter's love, and don't trouble yourself about the mother, and it will be your own fault if you do not become ere long one of the wealthiest men in England."

With these words still ringing in his ears, Lord Edwin retired to his room, and was soon asleep, dreaming of the beautiful Idalia, and of the great things he would do with her money.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IDALIA.

(*Not by Ouida.*)

ON the following morning the breakfast-bell brought them again together in the spacious saloon, where that meal was served, the dining-room being considered too dark in the day-time.

Idalia looked even prettier in her light summer morning-dress than she had done the previous night, but her mother the Duchess seemed to have entertained some secret misgivings of what was going on, for she took a seat next to her daughter, so that as the chair on her other side was occupied already, Lord Edwin was forced to content himself with a seat on the opposite side of the table, from whence he could indeed admire her as much as he liked, but could not possibly hold any conversation with her.

After breakfast the Duke started with his engineering friends in the train, of which he himself drove the engine, to inspect his newly-found coal mines ; and Lord Preston and his friends went off shooting ; but Lord Edwin, though very much pressed by both parties to accompany them, preferred remaining with the ladies, and escorting them in their morning walk to the neighbouring wood.

It would have been only too easy to see how greatly displeased the Duchess de St. Gennaro was at this unexpected arrangement; but Lord Edwin paid little attention to her not very polite remarks, and prepared to accompany the young ladies, to the great delight of at least one of them, who said, with a sweet smile, as he opened the hall-door for them—

“I am so glad, Lord Edwin, to find you are not as uncivilized as our other gentlemen, who prefer shooting poor birds to ladies’ society.”

“Indeed, Lady Idalia,” he answered, colouring with pleasure, “I, too, am very fond of sport.”

“Then I suppose we ought to appreciate your conduct all the more.” And allowing the other ladies to walk on a little in front, she continued talking to him in that half-playful, half-serious tone, which young ladies only employ with those they particularly like, until they reached a sequestered dell through which, overhung by beautiful trees, ran a little stream that, gliding from one stone to another, lost itself a few yards further on in the ever-rolling sea.

“What a lovely spot this is!” Idalia exclaimed, sitting down upon a moss-covered rock which overhung the little stream, while Edwin, shutting his eyes in his old languid way, flung himself on the grass at her feet.

Beneath them the brook ran swiftly, branching out here and there into little streams, dashing over rocks and stones, foaming here, gliding there; always singing in that sweet dreamy way that makes one long to sleep for a while and dream sweet dreams. The trees rose high on all sides, tall dark firs and pines, and graceful shrubs, and, beneath these, huge lichenized rocks, dark shale cliffs, and crags of white sandstone rising up every-

by the waters, while the sun gleamed through the feathery leaves which waved gently overhead, lighting up this rare luxuriance of woodland flowers and ferns, greatly enhancing the beauty of that lovely spot.

"What a charming place for a *siesta*!" Idalia exclaimed after a time, casting a side glance at his handsome manly form, as it lay stretched full length at her feet. "If I were alone, I think I should not be long before I imitated you, Lord Edwin. It would be difficult to imagine a lovelier spot for an afternoon's sleep."

"Who would think of sleeping, though, in such a place as this, where there is so much to see, so much to admire; and surely, Countess, you would not like to be alone in such a spot, for if there is anything which could render this lovely place dull, it would be solitude."

"I don't think so. I love nature too much ever to feel dull. I should be perfectly happy, could I live all by myself in such a place as this."

"Ah, it is easy to see you have never been in love. Do you think Virginia would have uttered such a sentiment? —and surely no one could have been a greater admirer of nature than she was."

Idalia's cheeks flushed visibly, as Edwin said this.

"You see, Lord Edwin," she answered, after a short pause, "I have not yet found my Paul. But how funny you should have hit upon Bernardin de St. Pierre's story, for, strange to say, it happens to be my favourite."

"Really!"

"Yes."

"I think it must have been sympathy then, for I too am very fond of it. Charming story, is it not? And then," he added, to change the subject—for to say the truth, he had never read and consequently felt rather afraid of having to pass an examination in it—"I am so glad you like the country: I am awfully fond of it too."

"I like the country in England. There is nothing I enjoy more than staying in an English country-house."

"Do you intend to stay here long?"

"I do not know; but I hope we shall stop until the Duke goes south."

"Then that will not be till the end of the autumn."

"How long do you think of staying here?"

"I had thought of paying some other visits in Scotland, but I think I shall give them up and remain here, that is to say, if you do not all get tired of me before then."

"Oh, Lord Edwin!"

The rest of the party, wandering amongst the trees, had gradually left the banks of the stream, and when Edwin looked round he discovered, to his intense delight, that they were quite alone. I shall not repeat what he said then; I am afraid it would be unfair to him—for you may be very sure, dear reader, that he only meant it for the pretty ear of the lovely girl at his side, who, although she pretended to be rather shocked, and evidently felt not a little confused, could not have the cruelty to be angry with such a charming worshipper as the sweet Lord Edwin. When the rest of the party joined them, a perfect understanding existed between them, and Idalia

"*Traj, mamma, tu non scendi me,*" she answered in the sweet language of Petrarch; "Lord Edwin is such a charming fellow!"

"A charming fellow! And what business have you with charming fellows? You seem to have forgotten what you promised me before coming here."

"Oh no, mamma, I assure you I have tried my best to gain Lord Preston's regard. It is not my fault if he does not care for me."

"Yes it is; a girl like you ought to be able to fascinate any one."

"Ah, but Lord Preston won't be fascinated," she answered, with great innocence.

"That is because he can see only too plainly that you do not really care for him."

"Well, and supposing I do not, what then?" she replied, with an arch smile.

"Oh, Idalia, you silly girl, how can you let such a chance slip through your fingers!"

"Now, mamma dear, do be reasonable," she said, sitting down beside her and taking her hand. "Lord Preston and I like each other pretty well, but I assure you he will never love me any more than I shall be able to love him. You know very well that of all people in the world you should be the very last to advise me to make a *mariage de convenance*." The Duchess's brow clouded over as her daughter said this, but a smile soon appeared on her finely-chiselled lips when her daughter

added, with an irresistible smile, " You know you wish me to be happy."

" And so you love this young man ? "

Idalia blushed, but said nothing.

" And the imprudent fellow has already had the audacity to propose to you ? "

" Oh no, mamma ; he has not done that yet, but he will soon, I dare say, supposing I were to give him just a little encouragement."

" Which you will, of course ? "

" Oh, mamma dearest, he is so nice ; you have no idea how well he speaks, and he admires me so much ! "

" Are you sure it is yourself he admires ? "

" Oh ! "

" I did not want to offend you ; but, you see, being an heiress, it is but natural that I should be cautious—not that I think for a moment that Lord Edwin Beauville would be a man to marry only for money."

" Oh no, he is too noble for that."

" Very well, I shall not stand in the way of your happiness ; but think well before you say anything decided to him. Remember that you are taking a step which you will never be able to retrace. I can say nothing against him, but consider the splendid chance you are throwing away."

" I really do not see why I should be made a victim to Fashion, like so many other girls ; it seems to me that one of the privileges of being an heiress ought to be that one can marry whom one likes. I shall be a Duchess one of these days, without the trouble of marrying a Duke, and as for money, I shall always have more than I shall well know what to do with. Of course, I could understand your objection to my marrying a nobody

~~ON THE TERRACES~~ groups were walking on the terrace which overlooked the sea, talking in groups, and watching the many ships which, with their white sails spread, were making their way through the tranquil waters of the bay.

The sun was high on the horizon, but dark threatening clouds were fast gathering overhead; the storm was near, yet the waters presented a surface as of liquid gold, upon which the numerous fishing-boats looked like so many black specks, while the white crests of the waves of the distant ocean, like wavelets of silver, were seen rising and falling, afar off upon the tranquil waters of the golden bay.

The trees on the other side, and the numerous towers and turrets of the castle which rose behind them, were in deep shadow, and over the neighbouring hills the dark thunderclouds rolled, impelled by the force of the approaching storm.

It was a curious sight, this struggle between the elements, this strange mixture of light and shade, and every one felt more or less influenced by it; so much so, that they still lingered upon the terraces though they knew that at any moment the clouds might break and the rain descend in torrents upon them.

The Duke was walking with Mrs. Major, and seemed much interested in her conversation. The two Duchesses were standing side by side, leaning over the stone parapet, and the other guests were walking up and down in groups, watching alternately the dazzling sea,

and the clouds gathering over the hills. Lord Edwin, of course, had found his way to the young heiress's side, and was talking to her in his usual winning way, when Lord Preston suddenly exclaimed that a yacht was in sight, and seemed to be making for the pier below the castle.

A general cry was raised as to whose it might be, and glasses and telescopes were instantly produced to gratify curiosity.

It was a large sailing yacht, and its white sails were fully set to catch the wind, which, however, was not very favourable.

"Whoever it is will have to remain in the bay to-night," the Duke said, coming up to where the Duchess stood, and offering her the glass through which he had been looking.

"Have you any idea, Pres, who it can be?" asked Mrs. Major.

"No. I do not know that yacht, but whoever is on board will be welcome here."

A messenger was instantly despatched to the pier to wait until he had learned whose yacht it was, and who was on board. It was not long before he returned with the news that a boat from the yacht had just come on shore, and he had learned from the men in it that she was the *Romola*, and that her owner, Mr. Jobkin, the M.P. for Brightborough, with his wife and a few friends, were on board.

The rain was now beginning to fall, and several claps of thunder announced that the storm was fast approaching, so every one sought refuge in the castle, but not before the Duke, in his usual blunt but hospitable way, had sent word to the owner of the yacht that he would

more face to face with Sibyl Fetherstone !

CHAPTER XXVII.

SIBYL.

(Not by Mr. Disraeli.)

EDWIN and Sibyl thus met once more.

Sibyl!—but no longer the young lady he had known before, lovely and fascinating, it is true, but still only a girl. The year which had elapsed since he had last seen her had sufficed to develop the lovely bud into a beautiful flower.

Yes, there she stood before him, more beautiful than ever; there she stood, with that well-known look in her large black eyes which he had found so irresistible in times gone by, and a smile, as of defiance, on her full coral lips; there she stood once more in his path, but the wife of another!

She was plainly though richly attired, and her long black velvet dress, without any trimming, had evidently been made by one of the first of Parisian dressmakers.

The body was high, but the rich fabric, which fitted closely to the figure, only served to reveal the unsurpassed beauty of her slender waist, and lovely form. Round her throat she wore a black lace ruffle, and black Chantilly lace fell over her delicate hands, on the fingers of which sparkled many precious rings.

Her face was pale, but her full red lips were redder than ever, and her large lustrous eyes shone with an unnatural brightness.

Twisted in her black hair, and only here and there visible, lay coiled an emerald serpent, looking wondrously natural, whose large head, with its immense ruby eyes, stood up as if ready to spring.

Thus, though her dress was by far the plainest and simplest in the room—for all the other ladies were in low bodies and short sleeves—Sibyl looked the most elegant, and every eye was fixed upon her with admiration, not unmixed with dread—for there was something horrible in that cold smile of hers—something almost devilish in her look.

Lord Edwin remained for a few seconds like a statue; he could not have moved one step either backwards or forwards, and when he attempted to speak he found he could not utter a word. He felt (I fear the comparison will only make my readers smile, and yet it is the only one I can find that can describe his sensations at that moment) very like the poor dove which is introduced into the box of the boa-constrictor, and would fain fly away from it, yet feels irresistibly attracted, by a fascination it can neither comprehend nor resist, towards the animal, whose bite is death. Perhaps the dark green coils of the emerald serpent which Sibyl wore in her hair, and whose red eyes sparkled with such a fiery glare, had something

to do with this strange feeling which for a few moments so completely overpowered him.

When the dinner was announced, he succeeded in rousing himself from this state of stupor, and, making a great effort to recover his self-possession, he went up to the Countess Idalia as usual, and offered her his arm.

He sat next to her at table, and tried his best to appear interested in her conversation—perhaps never before had he taken such pains to please the charming heiress; but Sibyl was sitting opposite to him, and every time he raised his eyes he met the fiery ruby orbs of the serpent, and the still more dreaded eyes of this modern Cleopatra.

Idalia could not help noticing the effect this strange woman seemed to exercise over Edwin, and felt so uneasy and nervous that she could hardly think of anything else.

When dinner was over, and the gentlemen had joined the ladies in the drawing-room, Edwin again sought the side of Idalia, and, with the pretext of seeing the storm, which was now raging with intense fury, he conducted her to another room which happened to be less brilliantly lighted, and there, standing at one of the large windows out of Sibyl's sight, he was once more able to talk to her as he had done on the previous days.

In the meantime, the Duke, uneasy about the safety of the yacht, and also fearing Mrs. Jobkin would get wet through going on board in the little open boat, was trying hard to persuade her to remain for the night at the castle.

"Oh, she doesn't mind the sea; oh Lord! no—not she," Mr. Jobkin was saying at that moment.

"I don't mind the sea one bit," Mr. Jobkin exclaimed once more; "I shall go back, hany'ow—I am accustomed to it."

Sibyl smiled, and said in a calm tone, "It is really charming to hear you, *mon ami*; it really does one good in these days of cowardice and laziness." And then, turning towards the Duke, she said with a little laugh, "When you consider that the poor fellow is as sea-sick as any one can possibly be whenever it is the least rough, it is really wonderful to think what an amount of moral courage he must have."

Mr. Jobkin flushed crimson, and his eyes shot one glance of fury and anger at his wife, who, however, met it with a cold cynical smile, and a look of supreme contempt.

"You know, Mrs. Jobkin," he said, in vain trying to speak calmly, "everybody cannot be a born-sailor like you. . . ."

"No," she answered coolly; "no more than everybody can be a born-gentleman."

The Duke and his wife exchanged glances and smiled.

"You will stop, Mrs. Jobkin?" said the Duchess.

"No, thank you very much, Duchess," Mr. Jobkin answered for his wife; "we prefer returning to the yacht."

"Answer for yourself, *mon ami*," said Sibyl, rising. "You can return with your friends; I shall certainly

avail myself of the Duchess's kind offer, and will remain here to-night."

Once more Jobkin cast a look of anger at his wife ; but this time Sibyl did not even deign to notice it, and, without saying another word, swept past him as if she considered him unworthy of a look, while her long black velvet train almost carried him off his feet.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Jobkin and his friends, three gentlemen who were cruising with him, returned to the yacht, which was rolling about in the bay ; and Mrs. Jobkin was conducted by the Duchess herself to the room she was to occupy that night, which was situated in one of the towers of the castle.

When the gentlemen descended to the smoking-room, of course all the conversation was about the Jobkins. Many funny stories, more or less improbable, were told of him, and all agreed in laughing at him and admiring his beautiful wife.

"I wonder how she could marry such a confounded snob as that!" Lord Preston said.

"Some people would do anything for money," Colonel Major answered, casting a side glance at Edwin, which made the blood rush to his face, the allusion seemed so very pointed.

"He is very rich, is he not?"

"Oh yes, immensely rich, or she would not have married him."

"It is strange she did so, notwithstanding his money, added Lord Preston ; "I should say a woman like that could have married anyone she pleased."

"I believe the marriage was entirely made up by her step-mother," said the Duke, coming up and joining in the conversation. "You know she married her son, Lord Twickenham, to the other Miss Fetherstone."

~~EDWIN~~ EDWIN said, looking in the direction of ~~EDWIN~~,
“but I suppose it is the right thing to do.”

Edwin, who was lying half-asleep on an ottoman near, heard the young man’s words and saw the look, and again he flushed. “How they all despise me,” he said to himself; “but they cannot despise me more than I despise myself; I do not love this Idalia, and why should I lower myself by trying to win her love?”

As they were leaving the smoking-room that evening, the Duke again approached him, and said—

“I am glad to see you are getting on so well; I am almost sure you will win her now.”

“No, I shall not,” Edwin said, with rather more spirit than he usually displayed; “for I do not intend to persevere. I shall never be able to love her.”

“And you would give her up now?”

“Yes.”

“Let me advise you to consider before you do anything so rash; think of her wealth, and think of your prospects. I am sure if your brother were here he would be the first to advise you to marry her.”

“And yet he himself has married a woman rich only in beauty!”

“Ah, but Lord Belgrave is a rich man, remember.”

“And I am not yet a beggar. I thank your Grace very much, but until I am, I shall take very good care to preserve my self-esteem.”

“You speak like a boy, Beauville. You know very

well that the Countess Idalia is as pretty and as pleasing as any woman could possibly be."

"I wonder, Duke, you do not persuade your own son to marry her then, as she is so rich, and so accomplished, and so noble, and so beautiful!"

The open brow of the Duke clouded over for a moment, and after a short silence he answered in an undertone—

"Between ourselves, I believe that is what her mother wants; she is a clever plotter, and has laid her plans well, but the Marquis of Preston is not to be caught by such vulgar means."

"So," thought Lord Edwin, as he proceeded through the long corridor to his bed-room, "I have discovered now why the Duke is so anxious I should marry the rich Italian: he is afraid his son should fall in love with her; I thought there must be something of this kind, or he would not have been so generous with his advice."

As he walked along the dimly-lighted corridor, full of these thoughts, he was not a little startled to see in front of him, standing by one of the windows, a tall dark figure, that looked more like a spectre than a living person, so motionless and silent it stood there.

Edwin, however, was not a man to be frightened by ghosts; so, springing forward, he almost caught hold of the figure. What was his surprise, however, when by the lurid glare of a flash of lightning, which suddenly illuminated the corridor and for one moment rendered the entire scene as clear as day, he recognized Sibyl, the woman he had once so loved.

He remained speechless, and as if thunderstruck. Any one who had seen him at that moment would have

all the softer feelings of his loving nature had been awakened, and he felt a peaceful joy, such as he had not felt for many years.

But the sensations he had experienced that night at the sight of Sibyl had been of a very different and wondrously complicated nature: all the love, all the passion with which she had formerly inspired him had returned to his soul, but in such a way as to render him more miserable than happy. Her large black eyes, so intensely fixed upon him, burnt his heart. He could feel the pressure of those lips upon his own trembling ones; the very sight of her caused him at once supreme joy, and an indescribable terror.

For one moment he remained motionless; when at last he was able to speak, he muttered more than exclaimed—

“ You, Mrs. Jobkin !”

Sibyl, who had also been startled by his unexpected appearance, was some time before she could answer.

“ Ah, you frightened me,” she said. “ I felt so anxious about the safety of the yacht in this horrible storm that I could not make up my mind to go to bed, and as I could not see the sea from my room, I came here to this window . . . that I might catch a glimpse of it, as it is tossed about by the enfuriated waves.”

“ I confess I was frightened, too,” Edwin said, recovering his self-possession. “ I never dreamt it could be you, Mrs. Jobkin.”

A slight tremor ran though her frame, and she sighed.

"Ah, I was Sibyl once!" said she, but so low that Edwin only just caught the words; but even this was enough to bring back to his mind all the love he had once felt for her, and in trembling accents he cried—

"Ah, Sibyl, to think that we should meet thus!"

Sibyl was too much moved to answer, for she, too, could not help recalling the transports of joy she had experienced in his company in the days that were gone never to return; and, as she thought of the past, hot passionate tears started to her eyes, and almost hid him from her sight.

"Ah, Sibyl, I loved you so!"

"Enough! enough!" she cried, making a great effort over herself; "the past is past. I am his wife now."

"His wife!"

"With what a groan you say that."

"And you love him?"

"Love him! How can you ask me such a thing? Do you think *I* could love *him*?"

"Oh, my Sibyl!"

"Oh no, no; what am I saying? He is my husband, and of course I love him."

"You are trying to deceive yourself. No, Sibyl, you do not love him."

"And what right have you to say so, Lord Edwin?"

"Oh, I forgot! I forgot! Forgive me! You are no longer free to love whom you like."

"Do not let us speak of that, or I shall go mad. I hear that you, too, are about to be married."

"I!"

"Yes; to the Countess Idalia Corricolo."

"Sibyl!"

" You do not love her ! Yet I saw you flirting with her the whole evening. You do not love her ! Yet you conduct her to a distant corner, and remain alone with her for hours at a time ! "

" Do not condemn me——"

" I do not condemn you ; but let me beg of you, if my advice still has any influence with you, not to marry simply for money, not to sacrifice your whole existence to Fashion—as I have done."

" Then I must quit this house immediately. I have gone too far to stop now."

" Come with us in our yacht, and to-morrow by this time you will already be far away from the fascinating Italian."

" Go with you in your yacht ? "

" Yes."

" But Mr. Jobkin : what would he say ? "

" Oh, you forget that you are a Lord," she replied, with a little laugh. " He will be only too pleased to have you. Have we not been bothered, ever since we set out on our cruise, with the greatest bore of a man that ever lived, simply because he calls himself a Prince ? "

" You mean Prince Dacaraca, who is travelling with you ? "

" Yes ; I do believe my—Mr. Jobkin would put up with anybody if he happened to have a title."

" Your offer is too tempting ; but what excuse could I make to the Duke ? "

"Oh, excuses will not be wanting. Say, for instance, that you have long been wanting to see the Orkney Islands, and that perhaps such a good opportunity may never present itself again."

"Oh, Sibyl!"

"You must not call me Sibyl—at least, not before people. Consider what they would think—and what Mr. Jobkin would say!"

"Oh, it is too horrible to think that such a man can be the arbiter of your destiny, of all your actions, and that he can dictate whom you should know and whom you should not know."

"He cannot force me to like those I dislike, or to hate those I love."

A loud clap of thunder, accompanied by another flash of lightning, completely drowned Edwin's reply. Sibyl shuddered, and with an involuntary movement put out her hand towards him, as if to seek shelter in his arms from the storm which was raging outside with renewed violence; but she checked herself, and leaned instead against the casement of the window.

"How small the *Romola* looks!" she exclaimed. "See how she tosses about in the bay at our feet! Ah! it is fearful to think that any one of those waves might sweep her to the bottom of the sea, and drown all on board!"

Edwin shuddered, too, as she said this. "Yes," he answered; "we seem to hang over our graves by a single thread—by a thin thread that the weakest hand might cut!"

There was an awful but unpremeditated suggestion in these words—a suggestion, however, which Sibyl either did not see, or did not choose to notice; for after

~~have to set sail soon after breakfast.~~

"Well, I shall go with you," he said, and then he remained standing alone by that window for nearly another hour, watching the progress of the storm, and wondering whether what he had decided to do was for the best.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OUGHT WE TO VISIT HER?

(Not by *Mrs. Edwardes.*)

I THINK it is time I should speak of our other heroine—Consuelo—or my readers will begin to forget her.

What had become of her since her marriage to Lord Belgrave is a question which no doubt those who have taken any interest in her have already put to themselves many times, and I dare say have blamed me for not telling them before this.

The truth is that there is very little indeed to tell, although it is true I might well fill three volumes with a detailed description of everything she did and saw during the time she has been out of our sight, and, perhaps, even three more if I were to give a minute account of her various impressions during that time, for everything was strange to her in her new life. But I will spare my readers all this, as I know by experience how dull and uninteresting all such accounts must necessarily be; and, after all, of what little consequence could the impressions of a poor foreign girl like our heroine, dropped suddenly into the very heart of the world of fashion, be to the general run of people born and bred within its sacred precincts.

time was naturally, "How was she? and the inevitable and all-important one then followed, *Ought we to visit her?*

As was to be expected, a great and influential party rose against her from the well-filled ranks of the anxious chaperons and tender-hearted mothers who had for so many years tried in vain to induce him to marry one of their innumerable young ladies. But the name of Marchioness of Belgrave carried a weight with it which not even the wrathful machinations of the virtuous matrons of Mayfair could counterbalance; besides, as nothing could be said against her, even by her most disappointed rivals, the question of *Ought we to visit her?* was soon settled in the affirmative.

One very powerful reason was, that the London world of fashion had not yet forgotten the brilliant entertainments which had been given in former days at Beauville House, and now that Lord Belgrave had at last married, there seemed to be a chance of that great mansion being once more thrown open to society. There were very few who lost the opportunity of leaving their cards upon the young Marchioness as soon as they heard of her arrival in town early the next season from the Continent, where she and her husband had been travelling since their marriage.

Yet there was still a great number of people who, not caring much for parties, or not having daughters they were anxious to take to as many balls as possible,

or who considered themselves too grand to call upon an utter stranger, hesitated about leaving their cards at Beauville House. But these were few, I must confess, and very high and mighty indeed they thought themselves.

There were several others too, who, having called at the beginning of the season, and their cards having been mislaid, or perhaps through Lord Belgrave's advice their visits not having been returned, were now up in arms, and there was hardly anything bad enough they could say against her. Amongst these were, for instance, Lady Windermere and her friend Lady Tottenham, and we have already seen how these good ladies discussed her. But, after all, these were but very insignificant stumbling-stones in Consuelo's fashionable career —though in the world of fashion the mice can at times cause more mischief than the lions; and, taking it altogether, Lord Belgrave had few reasons to be dissatisfied with the reception accorded by his friends to his young and beautiful wife.

Directly after the marriage, which had taken place very quietly in London, Consuelo had started with the Marquis for the Continent, where they had remained until the commencement of the following season, travelling from place to place, and visiting the principal cities of France and Italy, without remaining long in any of them.

The life they led during those eight months was indeed delightful. They had everything that could make travelling pleasant and entertaining; and for Consuelo, who had seen so little of the world, and had until then only known the monotonous routine of middle-class life, the new one she had entered upon possessed enchant-

experienced every day the satisfaction of discovering new qualities to admire in the woman he had chosen to be his wife.

On their return to England, early in the spring, they took up their residence in the princely mansion of the Belgravias, in the Square to which that illustrious family had given its name, and in which, during their absence, a magnificent suite of apartments on the first floor, which had not been inhabited since the late Lady Belgrave's death, had been re-decorated and re-furnished for Consuelo's accommodation.

I shall not describe her feelings as she took possession of them. It seemed so strange to her, even after having been more than eight months Lord Belgrave's wife, to enter that house as its mistress from which one short year ago she had been dismissed with scorn by a contemptuous butler and a laughing footman! She could hardly realize her position, and when, conducted by that same butler, who was now all bows and civility, to the principal saloon, she sat down in the same gilt arm-chair she had occupied the day she had first visited the house with her poor father, she could almost fancy herself the poor Spanish girl once more, and, what is still more strange, almost wished that she still were so.

Great curiosity reigned in the higher circles of the London world as to what the new Marchioness of Belgrave

was like; for although every one had heard long and more or less exaggerated accounts from the few who had seen her, and the *Graphic* had published a portrait of her at the time of her marriage, hardly any one had even an idea of what she would really be like. Besides, as Lord Belgrave had been a man whom the feminine world had found it impossible to marry, it was only too natural that this world—which, after all, is, par excellence, “the world”—should have been anxious to see the woman who had at last succeeded in winning his coveted hand.

The day when she was formally presented to the Queen at Buckingham Palace was the first time their curiosity was gratified.

It was an unusually large “Drawing-room,” and the crowd on the staircase and in the ante-rooms was so great that many ladies, anxious for the preservation of their dresses, had retired to the further end of the comparatively empty ball-room. Amongst these, and forming a little group apart from the rest, stood our friends—Lady Tottenham and her daughter, Lady Brightly, Mary Marchioness of Bury, and a few others, together with Lord Clare, and three other men. Lady Brightly was sitting on the highest bench, from which she could command a full view of everybody as they came through the gallery door and crossed the ball-room to take up their station near the as yet closed door at the other end, which was to admit them, through a long succession of rooms, to the presence of her Majesty. Lady Tottenham and Lady Bury, who looked charming in her best diamonds and curls, were discussing the probabilities of the Sultan ever paying his debt, and lamenting the ill-luck they had had in buying so much Turkish stock, when Lady Brightly, with her merry voice, called their

moment was indeed worth looking at, so much so that every one turned round, and even the people near her made way for her to pass.

She was tall with a slight but graceful figure, attired in a most beautiful and costly Court dress. Her train, which she carried, according to the approved fashion, over her arm, was of white satin, and hung gracefully over a dress made entirely of cloth of silver, embroidered with large stars in diamonds. Round the body, which was also of white satin, and cut low, disclosing her beautiful shoulders and finely-rounded arms, a deep fringe of diamonds and sapphires fell like a cascade of icicles; splendid diamonds shone on her shapely neck and in her ears; and upon her dark brown hair, which was simply but becomingly dressed, shone a large tiara of diamonds and sapphires, whilst at the back, and placed amongst the blue and white feathers which hung gracefully behind, could be seen the small coronet of a Marchioness, in precious stones.

But even this splendid toilette was thrown into the shade by the wondrous beauty of the face of the wearer. It was the face of an angel rather than of a woman. Those large dark violet eyes, which flashed through their long black eyelashes; that small mouth, with its delicate red lips; those features, so perfect, and so devoid of all harshness; that pale but almost transparent complexion; seemed indeed to belong more to the representations

we see of some fair saint than to a mere woman; yet there was such a sweet smile on her lips, such a languid sympathetic look in her eyes, that, in spite of the extreme beauty of the face, it was easy to see that it was indeed a woman's heart which beat under that snowy bosom, and beneath those glittering diamonds, which almost dazzled the eyes and bewildered the senses of the beholders.

Who can she be? was the question whispered on all sides—a question which, however, was soon solved when the gentleman, wearing the Lord-Lieutenant's uniform, who was walking by her side was recognized to be Lord Belgrave.

Yes; this woman, so beautiful, so elegant, so wonderfully attired, was no other than Consuelo—the poor girl who had come to London one year previously without a friend, without a protector, save a weak selfish old father and a rascally brother—who had been almost on the point of perishing from hunger and privation in one of the poorest quarters of the metropolis!

Of course, all conversation turned immediately upon her, and Lady Bury even forgot her Turkish Bonds, and spoke no more of them that day. The sensation she had created was indeed greater than even her proud husband could have expected, and when later on, in the Presence-chamber, before all the Court, her Majesty stooped to kiss her, a prolonged murmur was heard, which was more than a suppressed whisper, and which was proof sufficient that her beauty and grace had not passed unperceived by the English Court.

After that, the London world had plenty of opportunities of beholding and admiring the new Peeress. Several grand balls were given at Beauville House that

beautiful dresses and costly jewels, which, on awaking in the cold cheerless light of a winter morning which announced to her a long and tedious day of labour and privation, she had been forced to dismiss from her mind, with many a sigh, as visions too fair ever to be realised! How often, too, while hurrying through the crowded streets to some distant shop to obtain a few of the necessaries of daily life, had she envied the proud ladies who passed by in their carriages, enveloped in rich furs, and wearing sparkling jewels in their ears, while she stood there, poorly clad, weary, and cold!

But I shall not speak any more of those times. All this was over now; her fondest, wildest dreams had been more than fully realized; she was now rich and noble; no one could have a finer house than the one she lived in; no one could possess finer dresses or more expensive jewels, and no woman could have a kinder, more indulgent, husband than she had. But amidst all this splendour, with all these luxuries, was she happy?

Ah, this is a question difficult indeed to answer! The world deemed her happy, and had every reason for doing so; but she herself was too true a woman to feel really satisfied with her brilliant lot, though I must do her the justice to say that she did try her very best to forget the man she had so loved—the man who had gone away to a far distant country to toil and win a fortune for her, and whom she could not forgive herself for having jilted.

Lord Belgrave was so good and devoted to her, that

the very fact of feeling herself unable to give him any real love in return for all his kindness to her made her low-spirited and miserable.

Besides, Belgrave was a man she could hardly understand. His cold, reserved, patrician languor chilled her, and stopped any advances which she would have wished at times to make; for he still loved her as much as ever, though, the first passion having now cooled down, his love was too deeply hidden in his heart to be displayed at all times.

The strange fact, too, that Lord Belgrave and Alfredo should have resembled each other in so many respects, and yet be withal so very dissimilar, was a great misfortune for her, for she could not speak to her husband without being reminded of Alfredo.

When she was in society, amidst all the splendour which was so new and so strange to her, and surrounded by so many people whose gay agreeable conversation could not but amuse her, she forgot her former lover and could be as light-hearted and bright as any other woman, though a certain tinge of melancholy always hung over her and rendered her still more charming; but when talking alone with her husband, Alfredo immediately came back to her mind, and she could hardly refrain from comparing the proud, scornful man of the world she had married, with the warm-hearted, noble-minded man she had jilted.

Thus we see, gentle readers, that no one in this world should be envied merely for their worldly position, for it is not always the richest and the most powerful that are the happiest.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE "ROMOLA."

(*Not by George Eliot.*)

THE summer sun was setting one fine evening in August on the northern seas. The impetuous waves from the ocean, which the rapid tide swept through the Pentland Firth, could be seen breaking in seething foam on the bold rocks of the Caithness coast; the distant hills of Pomona and the peaks of Hoy were bathed in golden light, mellowed by the great distance, while the purity of the atmosphere, which I believe is clearer in these northern regions than in any other place, threw a charm over the whole scene.

Upon this ocean, like a beautiful white bird floating on the diaphanous ether of the clear blue sky, a little yacht was making its way towards the largest of these islands, the one which bears the lovely name of the fair Goddess of Fruits, and which is also known as the mainland of Orkney.

On the deck of this yacht, seated in low and comfortable arm-chairs, made of wicker-work, were a lady and five gentlemen. The lady wore a yachting costume of blue serge, and a glazed hat, round which was tied a blue ribbon, with the name of the yacht, *Romola*,

written on it in golden letters. Could my readers see her as she sits there, with her eyes closed, half-awake, half-asleep, with an uncut novel on her lap, they would have no difficulty in recognizing her, by her handsome face, and the abundant dark hair which fell in thick masses from under her sailor's hat, to be no other than the beautiful Sibyl.

The gentlemen were—her husband Mr. Jobkin, the owner of the yacht; and his guests, the Prince Dacaraca, Mr. Thomson, Doctor Grant, and lastly, Lord Edwin Beauville, who had only joined them the previous day, when they left the princely castle of the Duke of Northland.

The conversation was general, though neither Sibyl nor Edwin took a very active part in it, for both of them seemed lost in deep thought.

The Prince, who was a tall Russian of no small pretensions, and whom Mr. Jobkin, with his violent love for titles, had picked up in London the previous season, was speaking at the time with an earnestness of manner and a solemnity of countenance which greatly contrasted with the smiling faces of his listeners, who were evidently very much amused with his discourse.

"I tell you that such a thing never happened to me before."

"I quite believe that, nor to any one else either," the Doctor said, casting a side glance towards Sibyl, who, however, was too absorbed in her own thoughts to notice it.

"It is a shame! Here am I brought into a case of—what do you call it?—breach of promise of marriage! when I never even proposed to the girl!"

"Do tell us all about it, Prince," said Mr. Thomson, who was Jobkin's greatest and most intimate friend.

more interesting to talk about?"

"Lord Edwin has not heard it yet," Mr. Jobkin said, in his usual pompous manner, and without paying any attention to his wife's remark. "Let me persuade your Imperial Highness to tell it."

"Oh, I have been shamefully treated," burst out the Prince, as soon as Mr. Jobkin had ceased speaking. "You must know, Lord Edwin, that last season, in London, I met a young lady—a very pretty young lady, who fell in love with me."

"You mean with your title," interposed the Doctor.

"Well, it is the same thing. I did not love her, oh no; but she was big and pretty, and I did not dislike her, until one day I saw in the papers that his Imperial Highness the Prince Dacaraca—that's me—was engaged to be married to Miss Jessie Pendennis. Of course, I was furious—I rushed to her house, and asked to see the young lady; she received me alone in the drawing-room, and when I told her what I had read, and asked her the meaning of it, she burst into tears and fell at my feet—yes, at my feet! She then told me that she had put it in herself, but that I must not say anything about it to her father, or contradict it in any way, for if he found it out he would be dreadfully angry and punish her much. She also told me that she would have four thousand a year when she married, and as she was big and pretty, and as I did not want to get her into trouble with her father, poor thing, I consented to become her husband.

Her family—a very good family—were enchanted, and that very day I went with her to order the dresses and the writing-paper, which she said she should like to have with her name, Jessie, in gold, surmounted by a princely crown. We were engaged for nearly a week, and several of my friends made her fine and costly presents—amongst others, Mr. Jobkin here. . . . ”

“ Yes, I bought her one of those beautiful bracelets in gold and diamonds, that cost me several ‘undreds,’ ” interposed Mr. Jobkin.

“ But when we came to arrange about money matters the whole thing collapsed. Oh, we could not agree at all, by no means ; for, just think, I found out that she would only have four hundred pounds a year, instead of four thousand, as she had told me ! But after no end of bother, as I had said I would marry her, I consented to take her with that. ‘ You know I do not love you,’ I told her, ‘ and that you do not love me, but as we have got accustomed to each other, I don’t mind marrying you.’ ”

“ Now, if that wasn’t generous and gallant,” said the Doctor, “ I should like to know what is generosity and gallantry ? ”

“ Ah ! but listen. That girl, though she was so big and so pretty, turned out to be a greater cheat than she was a beauty, for the next day I learnt that although she would have four hundred pounds a year, it would only be at the death of her father ; so I told her that, as we could hardly live upon nothing, we had better not marry at all.”

“ That was wise of you ! ”

“ Yes ; but she would not listen to anything of the kind, but insisted on marrying me ; and now you see her family are going to bring me in for a case of breach of

one of them burst out laughing, even the serious Sibyl, who had not heard half the Prince had said so absorbed had she been in her own thoughts.

Soon after this the Captain came to inform Mr. Jobkin that they were approaching Kirkwall, and to inquire whether he would like to anchor there for the night.

"Yes, certainly," he answered, "it will be quiet in the 'arbour, anyhow, and we shall have a chance of sleeping comfortably for one night, at least."

"There are some sights in the town worth visiting, I believe; and some curious old Druidical stones a few miles inland—you could easily drive over to see them to-morrow, sir."

"I 'ate sight-seeing," Mr. Jobkin answered; "but my friends can land and see what there is to be seen, if they like."

"Oh, how unselfish!" Sibyl said rising; "since when have you learnt to be so polite?"

"I am always polite, but I do not like to be put upon, for, after all, I am the master here."

"And don't you let everybody know it, too!" the Doctor muttered between his teeth, as he descended the companion ladder.

The *Romola* anchored in Kirkwall harbour, and the next morning, in spite of what he had said the previous day, Mr. Jobkin accompanied his wife and guests on shore, and visited with them the fine old cathedral and famed ruins of the Bishop's and Earl's palaces.

After doing this, and after having walked through some of the quaint streets of the old town with their little shops where the celebrated Shetland shawls are sold, they hired a small waggonette to convey them to the stones of Stennis.

These justly-famed relics of the ancient inhabitants of the country are situated at some distance from Kirkwall, about half-way between that town and Stromness, which is the second largest town in the island; so that the drive was a long one, and, the springs of the carriage not being very good, and the roads rather out of repair, anything but a pleasant one.

Having arrived at the borders of the lake, on the other side of which the stones stand, they were obliged to get out and walk the rest of the way, the road not going any further. The day was oppressively warm, and the grass being still wet from the recent heavy rains, this walk was exceedingly disagreeable, and was rendered even more so by Mr. Jobkin, who kept complaining all the way, accusing his wife of having forced him to undertake the excursion against his wish, which was not the case, for Sibyl seldom interfered with her husband, and would certainly have been the very last person in the party to have wished for his company on this occasion.

The celebrated stones of Stennis—or, as they used to be called, of Stenhouse—stand upon a little promontory which rises between two large lochs, and that can only be approached by a bridge, very primitive, but picturesque; the whole sight is imposing, for the stones, which are indeed of immense size, form a perfect circle, similar to the still more famed relics on Salisbury Plain; and the scenery around, with the waters of the lochs and the dark mountains beyond, which stretch for miles in a

scorn, bleak, forbidding aspect of the country around could have no charms, and the mighty ruins before them, erected by a race of which they knew so little, possessed no interest for them; so, after resting for a little while on some of the fallen stones, they were preparing to return to the waggonette, which had been left at the other side of the lake, nearly three miles across the grass, when the guide they had brought with them from Kirkwall informed them that there yet remained to be seen the old Pict's House, which had only been discovered a few years before, and which everyone who came to the island ought to see ; so, very much against their wish, they directed their steps to this house, which was said to be about a mile and a bittoch from the lake, the bittoch, as I believe is generally the case in Scotland, proving to be somehow or other longer than the mile.

The old Pict's House was certainly a very interesting relic of the former inhabitants of the island, though the question of whether it was really a house or merely a burial-place has not yet been decided ; but Mr. Jobkin, who was tired out with the long walk, was furious with the guide for bringing him all that way to see what he considered not worth going two steps to behold, and swore that the whole thing was a snare and a delusion, the house having been built up on purpose to take in English tourists.

Here, however, the waggonette met them, and the whole party, very much out of humour, and Mr. Jobkin

scolding all the way, arrived two hours afterwards at the quaint little town of Stromness, and found the *Romola* already waiting for them in the harbour, and, after walking through the one long street which constitutes the town, they returned on board for the night.

CHAPTER XXX,

A TERRIBLE TEMPTATION.

(Not by Charles Reade.)

THE next day the *Romola* left Stromness harbour early in the morning, for it had been decided that they would dine in Caithness ; but unfortunately it was a very rough day, and the waves of the Atlantic kept rolling through the stormy Pentland, tossing the yacht backwards and forwards in a manner anything but pleasant for those on board.

Mr. Jobkin, who really suffered greatly from seasickness whenever it was the least rough, was lying in his luxurious berth in his cabin, which had been swung upon double springs, so as to render it as comfortable as possible. His guests—the Prince, the Doctor, and Mr. Thomson—all felt more or less uncomfortable, and were lying on the sofas in the saloon below, while Sibyl, who was never sea-sick, and who loved to watch the waves as they rose and fell around the vessel, had gone up on deck, and was reclining in one of the arm-chairs, which the captain had lashed to the mast for safety.

She had been sitting there since early morn, and the motion of the ship had rocked her, if I may so express myself, into a sort of half sleepy reverie, when Lord

Edwin, who was generally very lazy in the morning, and hated early rising, but who was, however, a very good sailor, stepped on deck.

The scenery around them at that moment was grand in the extreme, for on one side rose the high cliffs of Hoy, almost perpendicularly out of the water; while on the other side the lofty ridges of Rausay, bathed in the full light of a mid-day sun, rose behind the dark and frowning rocks of the mainland of Orkney.

For some minutes he remained watching the lovely scene; for although Edwin was not an enthusiastic lover of nature, yet such scenery as this could hardly fail to impress any one with a profound, however fleeting, sense of admiration. And then, turning round, he beheld, sitting close to him and with her eyes half closed, the beautiful woman he had once so loved, and for whom he felt, almost against his own will, all the old tenderness was but too fast returning.

It was the first time they had been alone since he had come on board; for Sibyl, with unusual care, had always managed to avoid such an occurrence, dreading, perhaps, her own weakness, for she felt but too well that she still loved him.

Edwin, who had many times cursed the presence of strangers, now trembled, for the continual restraint he imposed upon his feelings made him sensible of the danger in which he stood. Should he not shun this dark temptation, that was gradually drifting him, like a rudderless ship, on the shoals of destruction? Should he not fly the witcheries of this woman, whom he knew but too well to be fatal to his happiness, and shun the charm of her presence while he yet had the power? Ah, even at that moment he would gladly have done so, for he

felt that almost insensibly she was gradually acquiring that strange influence over him, which had already proved so fatal to his happiness; but suddenly, as he was turning round to leave the deck, she opened her large languid eyes, and, raising her beautiful head, cast a long and passionate glance of tenderness towards him—a glance which he could not resist, and which brought him again to her side.

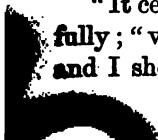
"You are up at last, Lord Edwin!" she said, with a bright smile, which lighted up her face in a moment, as the sun brightens a flower which before had looked pale and drooping. "I had no idea you could be so lazy. Why, I do not believe you can even give me the excuse of having been ill, for you look fresher and brighter than ever. Oh fie, Lord Edwin! fie! to lie in bed when we are passing through such lovely scenery as this!"

"Perhaps all of us cannot appreciate the beauties of nature as highly as you do, Mrs. Jobkin. Everybody, you know, cannot be born with such a superior soul!"

"True, true," Sibyl replied, lowering her eyes, and the bright smile leaving her face as suddenly as it had come, and again looking downcast and sad. Strange to say, Edwin guessed that she was thinking of the uninteresting plain-matter-of-fact City man on whom, to gratify her mistaken ambition, she had thrown herself away; and, sitting down beside her, he said, in a low but melodious voice, which made her tremble all over—

"Ah, how you must suffer, having to live always with a man whose matter-of-fact sentiments can never appreciate your noble and high-minded ideas!"

"It certainly is trying at times," she answered thoughtfully; "very trying. But he is kind and warm-hearted, and I should not complain; and though at times rather



rough and ungentlemanly, he means well, I assure you. But let us change the subject, as this one can hardly be pleasant to either of us—let us talk of whatever is most pleasing to yourself."

"Then I must talk of—you!"

"Ah!" rejoined Sibyl, with one of those artless smiles which no woman can restrain when she receives a compliment; "you are unusually gallant this morning!"

"Oh, Sibyl! do you think I have ceased to love you?"

"Lord Edwin!" she said, with a *hauteur* that almost froze him; "Lord Edwin, you seem to forget that I am now a married woman!"

"Ah, would that I could forget it," he replied, turning pale.

"I never shall, I can tell you," she said in a low voice, but with a crimsoned cheek and flashing eye.

"Oh, Sibyl! surely you cannot love this man! I want no more—nothing more—but tell me you do not love him!"

Sibyl shook back her hair, which hung loosely over her shoulders, and with flashing eyes, and nostrils curled with scorn, she gazed upon him. "How dare you ask me such a question?" she exclaimed; and then, when she saw his pale face, his downcast eyes, and trembling lips, she added, in a softer tone of voice, "You are dreaming, Lord Edwin: wake! wake!" and, with her old raillery, "remember you are no longer in your berth."

"Ah no," he replied, while his colour came and went, and he could hear his heart beating; "I am not asleep—though I fear I am dreaming!"

"Then you must have lost your head."

"Nay, Sibyl, say rather my heart!"

he might say as a joke, she replied—

“I thought you told me once that I had no heart.”

“I did, I believe, once—that is to say when I thought I possessed it; but you have a heart—and what a heart!”

“Well,” she said, with a cold and scornful smile, as she thought of her husband, “unfortunately it is already lost and won.”

“Sold and bought, you mean.”

A dark shade crossed her proud brow, a haughty smile curled her beautiful lips, and she said, somewhat peremptorily—

“I began to talk in jest, but I see that you want me to end in earnest.”

“So it is ever with love.”

“Enough—that word must never be uttered between us again—you understand me—never!” And turning round so as not to see his imploring eyes, which she felt were fixed upon her, and which she feared she perhaps might not have the power to resist, and pressing her hand to her beating and agitated heart, she rose, and with a quick step swept past him, and disappeared down the ladder which led to her private cabin.

Once there—where no one could see her and watch her movements, she flung herself on the sofa, and gave vent to the feelings which had so oppressed her during her interview with Edwin by bursting into a flood of tears, which she allowed to flow unchecked, as she had

done that evening—now more than a year ago—when at Raspberry Dale she had so basely jilted that very man for whom she now felt all the love of which her passionate nature was capable.

"I have been playing with fire," she cried, when she felt a little more composed. "I have been playing with fire, and I have been burnt. Oh, why did I invite him! Why?"

The fact of the matter was, that the sight of Lord Edwin flirting with another woman, and that woman a noble and beautiful heiress, had been more than she had been able to bear; and feeling at the time no real love for him of which she need have been afraid, she had asked him to accompany her in the yacht merely to prevent his falling in love with Idalia—for women, I believe, are jealous of their old lovers, even when they have ceased to love them. But now she could deceive herself no longer, for she felt within her *that* which made even the sight of that man a sin, and she wanted to be good; yes, with all her faults and failings, she had tried hard to preserve her innocence—her innocence, which she felt now fast flying away from her with the swift wings of this returning love, which had once been so pure and so holy, but which now the bonds that united her to a man she could neither love nor respect—though she had sworn to do so at the foot of the altar—had rendered wicked and sinful.

Edwin saw no more of her that day, for she kept below purposely, fearing to find herself again alone with him. He, too, was much agitated, for the old mysterious influence which Sibyl had exercised over him the previous year was again tormenting him. Alone and downcast, he paced the deck of the *Romola* with an uneasy step and a still more uneasy mind.

and rose and fell like the pulsations of his beating heart. Afar off, amid a blaze of light, the flaming orb of day seemed to rest on the western flush of the Rausay hills, which were still bathed in light, while everything between was already veiled in shadow, and the waters of the Atlantic, dotted with the white sails of the herring-fishing boats, grew gradually darker as the light died away behind the distant island.

Edwin stood on the deck watching the sunset, and the gradual fading of light amidst those grand solitary seas seemed to soothe and sadden him; for the earth felt sad and lonely to him at that moment, and his happiness appeared to fly from him like the wild sea-gulls, that alone could be said to live amidst these rugged crags.

The darkness became every moment greater, and the lofty cliffs alone lighted by the sun's last rays stood out against the cloudless sky. As he watched the growing shadows, Edwin experienced an agitation and a regret hitherto unknown to him; and as the day faded away into the mists of evening, he felt that his sun too was setting, and that henceforward his life would be sunless and cheerless, like the approaching night.

Thus the yacht made its way through those northern seas, passed the lofty cliffs of Pomona, and the famous Old Man of Hoy—a colossal rock which rises from the sea to a height of several hundred feet on the western coast of the island of that name, and which was the last to reflect the declining sun, and seemed to stand

there alone in the ocean, detached from the other rocks, as Edwin, who watched it with intense anxiety, felt himself to stand alone on the ocean of life—and, after leaving the Orkneys, crossed the stormy Pentland, and anchored in Broila harbour, on the coast of Caithness, near which rose the stately castle of the Forsinard family.

Sir Ronald Forsinard sent a messenger on board, as soon as he heard of their arrival, to invite them all to dinner that evening—an invitation which Mr. Jobkin readily accepted for himself and all his party.

It was a very dark and rough night, and a heavy sea was running when the party left the yacht, about seven o'clock, in a little boat, to proceed to the castle where they were to dine. Mr. Jobkin and his guests were sitting at the stern of the boat, and as Mrs. Jobkin, in her usual half-playful, half-cynical mood—which, however, on this occasion was only assumed to conceal from Edwin, who was sitting near her, how deeply what he had said that morning had affected her—was joking her husband, and accusing him of being the very worst sailor she had ever seen, Mr. Jobkin, in a moment of anger, had insisted upon steering the boat himself, to prove that though he was a bad sailor in one sense of the word, he was a good one in the other.

On an ordinary occasion he might have steered well enough, as indeed he had often done before; but on this night his doing so was incurring a risk which might but too easily prove fatal both to him and his friends, for, as I have said before, a heavy sea was running at the time, and he was totally unacquainted with this coast.

Instead of steering towards the port in the town, which lay at some distance from the castle, he made

OOUKIN, WHO WAS exceedingly heavy and awkward, in getting out of the boat slipped upon the sea-weed-covered rocks, and, missing his footing, fell into the water.

A cry of horror rose from the entire party, for a heavy wave, sweeping back at that moment, carried him in an instant some distance from the shore, and the poor man, being almost unable to swim with his great coat on, was with great difficulty trying to make his way back to the rocks.

"Great God, he'll be drowned!" cried Sibyl, pale and horror-stricken, covering her face with her trembling hands.

"Save him, save him!" his friend Mr. Thomson exclaimed, out of breath, and addressing himself to the sailors. "A hundred pounds to the man who rescues him! A hundred pounds! Oh that I could swim!"

But nobody seemed inclined to respond to this appeal, for the sea looked dark and dangerous, and large infuriated waves kept dashing in, and then falling back further and further with the fast-descending tide.

Again Thomson's voice was heard amidst the roaring of the sea and the whistling of the wind, which was rapidly increasing; "Two hundred pounds to the first man who jumps into the sea!"

No time was to be lost. Edwin, who still stood upon the rock on which he had landed, looked towards the terrified Sibyl, who, leaning on the Doctor's arm, had her large black eyes fixed on him. This one look was

enough to decide him. He divested himself of his coat and waistcoat with wondrous rapidity, and approached the edge of the rocks.

He cast a rapid glance round him, and the appalling fury of the storm made even his gallant heart tremble and waver for a moment in its generous purpose ; then, looking back, he again met Sibyl's imploring gaze, and he thought he detected in it an avowal of her love. A terrible temptation then took possession of him. Why should he expose his life to save that of a man he had now grown almost to hate ? Should he not rather allow him to perish ? Once Jobkin dead, what could prevent his marrying Sibyl, the woman he had loved so long, so passionately ? He wavered for a few seconds, but his noble heart prevailed, his good angel won the contest which for one moment had waged in his soul and had almost conquered his good resolution ; and exclaiming, almost aloud, "What is the use of my wretched life to me now !" he plunged into the boiling surf.

A shrill cry that expressed even more horror than the one before uttered escaped from Sibyl, and she fell unconscious into the Doctor's arms.

Edwin was a bold and practised swimmer, and the next wave brought both him and the terrified Jobkin again to land.

A short discussion now ensued as to what could be done under the circumstances ; for, of course, both Lord Edwin and Mr. Jobkin were wet through, and the latter was much exhausted ; but as it would have been folly to have thought of returning to the yacht in such a sea, they decided to go up to the castle, which was not many yards distant.

As they made their way over the rocks, Sibyl, who

in the sea—and, in a voice which betrayed the deep emotion, she whispered in his ear, in a tone which destined to haunt him for many months afterwards—

“Thank you, Edwin; thank you for saving his life! Oh, would that I could thank God as easily for having spared yours; but I dare not utter such a thought of Him!”

CHAPTER XXXI.

HE WOULD BE A GENTLEMAN.

(Not by Samuel Lover.)

THE Castle of Broila stood at the mouth of the harbour of the same name, and fronting the town, which rose on the other side of it, with its dark slate roofs and white church spires, behind the forest of masts of the numerous herring-boats which generally crowded the port.

The site was an old and historic one, for a castle had stood there for many centuries, braving the storms of the furious Pentland Firth and the gales of the neighbouring ocean ; and many and bloody had been the sieges which it had stood in the old days of war and strife. But the present castle was a new structure, and had been erected upon the foundations of the ancient building by the present baronet, whose love for building and whose architectural taste are so well known both in England and France.

At the time of my story, the new castle of Broila was scarcely finished, yet it already presented an imposing appearance, as it rose upon the steep rocks at the harbour's mouth, with its many turrets, its clustered gables, its lofty roofs, and its frowning tower, from which waved the white flag of the Forsinards.

on board the *Romola* on the Caithness shore.

The Duke of Northland had telegraphed that he and some of the party staying at the castle would come over and lunch with Sir Ronald and Lady Forsinard; and Mr. and Mrs. Jobkin and their friends had been invited to meet them.

The row from the yacht to the castle on this occasion proved a very agreeable one, for it was a fine bright day, and a fresh breeze was blowing from the south, which only caused just enough movement upon the waters to make the motion of the boat pleasant. As they neared the shore, however, and saw the rocks upon which they were to land, an indefinable sense of dread took possession of the whole party, for it had been on these very rocks that two nights before they had had such a narrow escape, and it was in silence that they landed this time.

To climb the steep ascent to the castle, Sibyl again took Lord Edwin's arm; but her heart was too full to allow her to utter the sentiments which she felt at that moment, and Edwin, noticing her embarrassment, in the usual half-careless, half-playful manner which was so natural to him, yet which many who did not know him would have attributed to conceit or affectation, made a few passing remarks, which, though insignificant enough in themselves, had the intended effect of restoring her self-possession.

Edwin was one of those men of the world who, perhaps because they feel sadness more intensely than their neighbours, are always so anxious to banish from their minds all thoughts which might remind them that life, after all, is not the amusing pastime which they would like it to be. He was one of that large class of Englishmen whom we see every day staking their money on cards, making up their books at Newmarket, lounging down their club steps, smoking their cigars in all proper and improper places, and swearing good-humouredly in all the gay places of Europe where amusement can be found—from Monaco to St. Petersburg; one of those men with the handsome pale face and gentle quiet ways that seem to vary so little, be they in love, in anger, in pleasure, or in pain; with the contemptuous ring in their voices, and the easy, indolent, devil-may-care insolence, at which, however, no one could ever take offence; who wear the tightly-fitting Poole-cut coats, with dainty flowers in their button-hole, and speak in that careless, half-fashionable, half-slangish jargon which no outsider can imitate; he was one of those men who dare to laugh at all created things, and who hold that easy, languid, convenient philosophy which has as its first thesis that nothing on earth is of any importance; one of those men who always seem light-hearted and gay, for whom life would appear to contain nothing but pleasures, and whom, however, so little ever really succeeds in amusing.

He was one of these men, and he possessed nothing besides to recommend him, excepting his good looks, fair complexion, tall graceful figure, delicate hands, and a good-natured, and, at times, most unselfish, heart. Yet, such was the fascination of his manner that at that moment Sibyl—who was always comparing him with the

When they arrived at the castle—which, I must not forget to remark, had two doors in its principal façade both exactly alike, making it very difficult to know which was the door one should go in at—they found that the Duke and his party had already arrived, but, instead of bringing only a few friends with him, as he had telegraphed, he had brought upwards of forty people, for whom there was scarcely room in the temporary drawing-room, for the real drawing-room was still in the hands of the decorators.

Lady Forsinard, however, received them with her usual careless grace, and conducted them to the room where the rest of the company were already assembled.

The Duke, who had only come to Caithness to inspect the new railway, in which he had taken such an active part, had driven the engine all the way, and his hands were consequently anything but clean; for he good-humouredly refused to go upstairs and wash them, when asked by his host if he would not like to do so; he however, offered his arm to Lady Forsinard, and they entered the dining-room, which fortunately happened to be large and spacious, the rest of the party following without any special order.

The Duchess de St. Gennaro had come with her pretty daughter, and while the Duchess of Northland and Sibyl absorbed everyone's attention, Edwin had managed to approach her and linger by her side. However, when lunch was announced, Mr. Hopestone, Sir Ronald's

nephew, came up to her and offered his arm to conduct her into the dining-room in such a way that she could hardly refuse. Mr. Hopestone, or as he generally was called in that castle, "Sweet Willie," was a very sweet youth indeed, exceedingly handsome, and with all the ways of a man of the world; and it was consequently with a deep sigh of vexation that Edwin was compelled to relinquish the lovely Idalia to him, and escort instead the Countess of Clopperton, for whom he had formed quite an aversion during his late stay with the Northlands.

The luncheon, as was to be expected, was a very long affair, though the Duke was in a great hurry, as he was anxious to go on to Wick, and kept sending little notes to his wife at the end of the table, begging her to make haste.

Edwin had found a place near the Duchess, but unfortunately far away from the Countess Idalia, whom he could see across the table flirting and laughing with "Sweet Willie." He did not love Idalia, and since he had seen so much of Sibyl he was fully convinced that he would never be able to love her as she undoubtedly deserved to be loved; yet it was not pleasing to him to see her so gay and animated by the side of another, and that other a handsome young man; besides, during the few words he had been able to exchange with her in the other room, he had fancied that she was piqued with him, perhaps displeased with the way he had left her after saying that if she remained with the Northlands till the end of the season he would remain too; anyhow, she had been cold and reserved—altogether very different from what she had been before, and now seemed to have forgotten him altogether.

took very good care not to interrupt the Countess Idalia's flirtation with "Sweet Willie" by saying anything to him; though the previous evening she had sat side by side, and also flirted the whole evening, for Mr. Hopestone was a great talker, and could make himself very agreeable.

After lunch the Duke started by rail for Wick, accompanied by his engineering friends, Mrs. Major, and a few other ladies; and Sir Ronald insisted on showing the two Duchesses the various beauties of his place, taking them down to the rocks to show them the castle from the sea, and up to the top of the tower to admire the view.

In the meantime, the rest of the party went for a walk over the cliffs to a point known as the Lady Johannah's Seat, from whence a lovely view could be obtained of the sea and the Pentland Firth, with the bold Dunnet Head on the right and the distant cliffs of the Orkneys beyond. The ladies sat down on a couple of benches which had been placed there some time before, and some of the men lay down on the grass at their feet, while others went on to inspect the old mausoleum of the Forsinard family, which stands at a short distance from the shores.

Sibyl, to whom the sea-breeze and the exercise of walking had given additional colour, while the beauty of the scenery and the freshness of the air had raised her vivacity and increased the brilliancy of her eyes, sat down beside the Countess Idalia, whose appearance had

hardly been improved by the walk, for she seemed fatigued, and, having risen very early that morning, felt too tired to be particularly bright or cheerful. It would seem as if this had been a pre-arranged plan of Sibyl's, for she knew but too well how greatly in her favour any comparison made between her and the Italian at that moment must needs be, and she also knew that Edwin would not be the last to notice and appreciate her advantages.

Thoughtful and quiet, he sat at their feet, his languid eyes, concealed by their long lashes, wandering from one to the other ; and I must confess that it was with a sense of deep emotion that he at last convinced himself of the fact that had for so long weighed upon his heart —that near Sibyl no other woman could ever hold her own.

The conversation was, of course, mostly about the place, as many of those present had never been there before. Idalia admired the view greatly, and asked Mr. Jobkin what was the name of the island opposite, and he readily afforded the information, that could not but draw a smile from all listeners, that it was the "Island of 'Oy."

Then they began to talk of the storms and gales that were so common to those northern shores, and Mr. Forsinard, Sir Ronald's eldest son, said that hardly a month passed without hearing of some dreadful wreck on the coast. This, of course, led them to speak of the accident they had themselves experienced two nights before; and Mr. Thomson described in full detail the risk they had all run, Mr. Jobkin's fall into the water, and Lord Edwin's gallant act, at the mention of which Sibyl's eyes filled with tears.

his large black eyes.

"Oh dear me, no, Countess," said the Doctor, who was standing near them, perhaps for the same reason. "He was not in the least afraid; why, would you believe it, when we struck against the rocks and were nearly upset into the water, he only said, calmly as any Athenian philosopher might have done, 'What will they say in the papers if we are drowned?'"

Of course, everybody laughed at this, and the Prince having been brought into notice, Mr. Jobkin insisted on his recounting the whole of his adventures with Miss Pendennis, to the great disgust of Mrs. Jobkin, who cast glances of supreme displeasure towards her husband. But the Russian once started, it was not so easy to stop him, and the disgusted Sibyl had to listen to the whole story over again, and also to a long discussion which followed upon it.

Lord Edwin, who had also had enough of it, for on board the yacht Mr. Jobkin and his friends scarcely talked of anything else, had begun a conversation, in the meantime, with Mr. Forsinard and Mr. Hopestone on different kinds of sport. When the Prince had at last ended his long tale of woes, Miss Forsinard, Sir Ronald's unmarried daughter, a pretty girl of nineteen, with a handsome figure, lovely flaxen hair, and blue eyes, who had been listening to them, asked her cousin to tell the story of the man who, the previous year, had gone, with his two sons, over the cliffs of Hoy in search of sea-gulls' eggs. Mr. Hope-

stone did not want much pressing, for this was a favourite story of his, and there was nothing he loved more than being listened to, so after begging the ladies to pay attention to this sad tale, he began :—

“A fisherman of Stromness went out to get sea-gulls’ eggs, which are esteemed a great delicacy in Orkney. The sea-gulls, however, build their nests in the rocks near the sea, and to get at them the fishermen are obliged to let themselves down from the cliffs above by means of ropes. On this occasion our man had taken his two sons with him, and, as the sea-gulls’ nests were very low down, he tied his youngest son to the end of the rope, attaching himself to the same rope about half way down, and the eldest son remained at the top to steady the rope, which they had fixed to a projecting rock, and they then let themselves down over the rocks. They had been down but a very short time, when the eldest boy called out to his father, ‘The rope is giving way!—cut away Jamie, or you will both be destroyed!’ Without hesitation the father followed his son’s advice and cut the rope below him, and in another instant poor Jamie lay a shapeless mass on the stones beneath.” Having said this much in a half-joking, half-melodramatic tone, he added, suddenly changing his voice, and addressing himself to his audience with extreme earnestness, “This is the story as it is recounted by the Stromness fishermen; but don’t you agree with me that the man was little less than a murderer ?”

“But why ?” was asked on all sides; “if the rope was giving way, the poor boy must necessarily have died, whether the father had cut it or not.”

“Yes, but perhaps the rope would not have given way so soon, and both might after all have had time to reach the top in safety.”

"That is nonsense," said Sibyl, who had listened in silence to the story, rising. "It would have been a double crime not to have cut the rope, for then he would have committed suicide as well as murder."

The rest of the party now also rose to return to the castle, but the discussion as to whether the fisherman should have cut the rope or not was continued all the way to Broila, for Mr. Hopestone—perhaps to show off the tender feelings of his heart, as his cousin, Mr. Forsinard, afterwards remarked to his sister—would insist that the man should have risked the probability of dying with his son, rather than cut the rope which held them both. Sibyl walked in silence by the side of the lovely Idalia, and seemed lost in deep thought; for, strange to say, the story of the Stromness fisherman had produced a deep impression upon her, and she only raised her eyes now and then to cast sinister looks at her husband, who, with a florid face, and awkward gestures, was describing to the Countess of Clopperton the pleasures of yachting, and the beauties and comforts of his own particular yacht, which at that moment lay just below them at anchor in the bay.

The Countess seemed interested, yet Sibyl could see plainly that in spite of her habitual self-control she was forced at times to put up her fan to hide her laughter; for Mr. Jobkin, when excited, said things which she would have preferred he should not say, and many and

frequent were the glances which Lady Clopperton cast towards her Lord, who, though walking at some distance, was listening attentively to his wondrous discourse, and bursting out at times into violent fits of laughter, which he took little pains to conceal. This could not but be exceedingly painful to Sibyl, and, although she pretended not to notice it, a cold shiver ran through her every time her husband said anything out of the common, which was pretty often, for he had made up his mind to win the good opinion of the Countess, whom he was dying to invite to his yacht.

It was almost martyrdom to a sensitive nature like that of Sibyl, who had been brought up with all the prejudices of Fashion, and accustomed from her earliest youth to the usages of good society, to have to live with such a man.

When alone they got on pretty well, though, as they had not one single idea in common, they seldom spoke; but when they were before people, especially before strangers, Sibyl was kept in a perpetual state of fever, if I may so express myself, for she felt that her husband might commit himself at any moment, and she knew but too well what people would afterwards say of them.

When she had decided to marry him, she had known beforehand what to expect; but she then only laughed at his unpolished manners and would-be polite speeches, as other people did, and could hardly imagine that his vulgarity would in time become the bane of her existence.

I need not say, therefore, that her life was not one of the happiest, for if there is anything painful in matrimony it is when the wife despises her husband: hatred, resentment, even indifference, may be overcome, but scorn

natural; and Sibyl, the spoilt child of fashion, could never forgive him this (in her eyes) most unpardonable fault. She did not hate him, she had never thought enough of him for that, but every day she grew to despise him more and more; while Mr. Jobkin, on his side, having married a woman of good family, the daughter of a Secretary of State, having become a Member of Parliament, and moving, as he now did, in the best society, thought himself quite a gentleman, and therefore incapable of doing or saying anything wrong.

He did not love his wife, and even his admiration for her beauty had long since vanished, for they had now been married more than a year; yet, as he gave her everything she asked for, and treated her with marked respect, he verily believed that she was the happiest of women, and often spoke of her as being so to his friends, for he was one of those men who boast of everything, even of the happiness they are able to impart to others.

After a short walk, which, however, seemed eternal to poor Sibyl, they reached the castle, where tea had been prepared for them, and where, soon afterwards, Sir Ronald joined them with the two Duchesses, whom he had taken to see everything in and about the castle, and who, bored to death, for neither of them understood or cared anything about architecture or art, and very tired and covered with dust, flung themselves down on sofas at opposite ends of the room, and refused to move another step.

The indefatigable Sir Ronald, who was very anxious that every one should admire the beauties of his castle, now asked Lady Clopperton and the Countess Idalia if, in their turn, they would accompany him to the top to see the view, which, after a little persuasion, they consented to do.

When they came down, it was time to go; and thanking Sir Ronald and Lady Forsinard again and again for their kind hospitality, the Duchess of Northland and her party took their departure.

Mr. and Mrs. Jobkin and their friends were invited to remain to dinner, to which Sibyl consented, "Provided," she said, "that I am permitted to dine as I am, for I really cannot go all the way back to the yacht to change my dress."

After dinner—which was a very merry one, for both Mr. Forsinard and his cousin, Willie Hopestone, were in high spirits, and did their very best to amuse the company, and even succeeded in drawing an occasional smile from the usually serious Sibyl—they began to talk of the different national costumes, at which the Russian Princee remarking that the national costume of his country was something like that of the Highlanders, the young men insisted on dressing him up in a kilt, in which guise he was afterwards brought down for the ladies to admire, to the great discomfiture of Mr. Jobkin, who pronounced the dress "ugly hideous," and who was, perhaps, even still more shocked at the way they treated a real live Princee, but to the immense delight of that gentleman himself, who, thinking he was quite irresistible in this costume, smiled and bowed to the ladies in a way which made even Sibyl laugh and forget for a time the absurd remarks her husband had made during dinner.

When they had gone, the party at Briona Castle remained for some time in the drawing-room—from the large plate-glass windows of which the bay could be seen—watching the progress of the little boat as it conveyed their friends to the *Romola*, which lay at a short distance from the shore, like a large sea-bird resting upon the moonlit waters, for it was a beautiful night, and the light of the moon, which was shining brightly, rendered every object clear and distinct.

“How nice it must be to cruise about in a yacht like that!” the fair Miss Forsinard remarked.

“I don’t believe, though, that they lead the pleasantest of lives on board the *Romola*, for, from what I heard, I should say they were not exactly the people best calculated to live together, much less to travel together.”

“What makes you say that, Willie?”

“What the Doctor and the Prince have told me respecting Mr. Jobkin.”

“Yes,” Miss Forsinard added; “it is easy enough to see how cordially they all dislike each other.”

“But don’t you think it is wrong,” Lady Forsinard said, “to partake of a man’s hospitality like that for so many months, and then to go and abuse him and make fun of him all the time?”

“Well, perhaps so, but you must agree, mamma, that he is an extraordinary man, to say the very least of it.”

“I don’t believe he and that proud handsome wife of his get on at all well together.”

"How could they," Miss Forsinard replied. "It must be horrible to be married to a man like *that*."

"He is a downright snob, in spite of all his money!"

"Did you see how coldly the Duchess of Northland received his advances when he tried to talk to her?"

"Yes, and how Lady Clopperton laughed with the other ladies at what he had told her as we came back from our walk."

"It was rude, though, to do so in his wife's presence," Sir Ronald said, now taking part in the conversation for the first time.

"Do you think, uncle, that ladies mind *that*?" Mr. Hopestone replied.

"I wonder at his making such a fool of himself," Sir Ronald went on, without taking any notice of his nephew's remark. "I believe he is a clever man, and very shrewd in business matters. I am sure he cannot be ignorant of what the world says of him, and it is folly on his part to force himself into Society, when he knows Society does not want him. If he had remained east of Temple Bar, he might have been an alderman by this time, perhaps a Lord Mayor, and eaten turtle, respected and looked up to by everybody for the rest of his life; while now he will never be anything but the self-made butt of Fashion's laughter!"

"What can you expect?" his son replied; "he would be a gentleman!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

TOO STRANGE NOT TO BE TRUE.

(Not by Lady G. Fullerton.)

THE sun was high in the heavens when the party left Broila Castle the following day for their picnic on the Clett Rock.

It seemed a day made purposely for an expedition of this kind ; for, although the sun shone brightly in the cloudless sky, a fresh breeze from the sea rendered the air cool and invigorating.

Mr. Jobkin and his party had arrived from the yacht early that morning at the castle, where they had breakfasted, and they now all started together in a couple of waggonettes.

Sibyl looked handsome, as she always did ; but her brow was knit, and her eyes had lost some of that wondrous lustre that so much contributed to her attractions. She was serious and reserved, and not even the beauty of the scenery, nor the intense sunshine and buoyancy of the air, succeeded in restoring her depressed spirits. She was attired in a yachting costume of dark blue serge, which fitted closely, and set off to great advantage her perfect figure. On her head she wore the sailor-hat we have already mentioned.

Her husband had a hat exactly like hers, and was also dressed in a sailor costume, only that his was all white, which was certainly not the colour best calculated to set off his very portly figure and florid complexion.

Having arrived at the other side of the bay, they got out of the carriages and ascended the hill, at the top of which they deposited the provisions they had brought with them, and from which a magnificent view could be commanded on all sides.

Below them lay the sea, on the surface of which floated countless fishing boats, whose white sails reflected the sun and shone like so many opals.

On the right were the Orkney Islands, with their many cliffs and lofty peaks ; and the bold point of the Old Man of Hoy could be distinctly seen, rising high above the other cliffs against the clear blue sky. Further, on the same side, the great headland of Dunnet, which looked dark and frowning, rose between the Caithness shore and the lovely islands beyond, intercepting the view of the Skerries and the not very distant beach of John O'Groat, but yet adding beauty to the scene by reason of the great contrast its dark red sandstone rocks presented to the pale blue of the sea, and the still paler pink and grey of the distant islands.

The town of Broila lay at their feet, with the imposing castle of the Forsinards rising upon the opposite shore of the bay, with its many turrets and lofty towers ; while to their left, at a short distance, was the Clett Rock itself, which they were going to visit, and which stood out all by itself in the sea, whose blue waters, extending westward as far as the eye could reach, were lost in the still bluer sky.

It was indeed a beautiful panorama, and one which

frequently pass over these coasts.

However, the fair Miss Forsinard, her brother, and her cousin, tried their best to keep up the spirits of the party; and as the greater part of them had gone there to be amused, and with the intention of spending a happy day, I need not add how well they succeeded.

After luncheon, which was served upon the heather, they began talking, as was natural, of the peculiar beauties of the spot.

"There is a very curious cave just below these cliffs," said young Mr. Forsinard, "which, to my mind, is the most beautiful of all the sights about here."

"Is there, indeed!" exclaimed the Prince.

"Yes; and I think that no one should leave Caithness without seeing it."

"I should like to see it very much," Mr. Jobkin then said. "Is it very difficult to get down to it?"

"Oh dear me, no. I have often been—only, you know, you must be let down from the top by means of a rope."

"And then is it easy to get inside it?"

"Oh yes; Willie and I have often been, and in bad weather too, when the wind was blowing a perfect gale, and the sea running up high into the cave, breaking into froth and foam upon the rocks."

"What do you say to going down, Thomson?" Mr. Jobkin asked his friend.

"Nonsense, *mon ami*," his wife said with a laugh; "the idea of *your* going down these rocks!"

"And why not? I am as strong as anybody, and as brave, too, I hope."

"And you would be let down by a rope—*you*!"

"Of course, Mr. Forsinard says he has often been."

"I should like to see *you* do it though!"

Mr. Jobkin, whom Sibyl's words had greatly exasperated, now rose from the heather, where he had been reclining and said, with the tone of a man who had fully made up his mind, "By Jingo, I will do it, if it be only to prove to you that I can do more than you give me credit for!"

The young men, who evidently were only making fun of him, and who were but too anxious to have a laugh at his expense, also rose, and offered to go and get a rope from the lighthouse, which was quite close at hand.

"I think it is very dangerous, though," said Lady Forsinard; "do you think they will have a rope strong enough in the lighthouse?"

"Yes, they have the rope we used the last time we went down," Mr. Hopestone answered. "It is strong enough to hold the weight of three men, at least." And without waiting for more, they hurried off to fetch the rope, casting side glances at the young ladies as they went, and evidently in the highest state of glee, for they thought they would be able to have a good laugh at poor Mr. Jobkin and his friend.

All the party now rose and started off to admire the view from every point. Edwin, who had been unusually silent during the pic-nic, and who had done nothing but look at Sibyl, now approached her and offered her his arm, which she reluctantly took, for she was every day more and more afraid of being left alone with him.

thing.

“What, that silly affair of his with Miss Pendennis?”

“Yes.”

“Surely you are not going to begin about that, too. Ah, if you knew how tired I am of the subject! I really cannot understand what pleasure my husband and his friends can find in it, that they are always talking about it.”

“But it seems to me a very serious thing.”

“Serious! Why, have you not guessed by this time that the whole thing is a story, a practical joke!”

“A practical joke! Why, do you mean to say that this precious Miss Pendennis does not exist at all—is a sort of myth! By Jove, that’s the funniest thing I have ever heard.”

“No, I do not mean that exactly. I believe there is a Miss Pendennis somewhere, and I also believe that there has been something between her and Prince Dacaraca, though if the story he tells be true or not is a point very much to be doubted; but what I mean is, that this lawyer’s letter which he has received, and this case of breach of promise which he believes he is threatened with, and of which he hears so much, is merely a practical joke which my husband has thought proper to play upon his guest. He got a friend of his in London to write to the Prince in the name of a lawyer, and to forward his official-looking letter to him on board the *Romola*.”

"How awfully silly!"

"You may well say so: I do wonder that any one should take a pleasure in doing such silly, nonsensical things—one must have very little to think about. . . ."

"Or a very commonplace mind."

"Perhaps both; but look, look, I do believe that fool of a man is going down to see this horrible cave! Look, he is actually tying himself to the rope!"

She put her hand, which felt like ice, upon his, and directed his attention to a spot not very far from where they stood, where, as she had remarked, Mr. Jobkin was fastening the rope round his waist, evidently preparing to go down the face of the cliffs to explore the rocks below.

Edwin turned round to look at Sibyl. She stood beside him, cold and erect as a marble statue, but her large eyes were fixed upon the group of which her husband was the most conspicuous figure, and there was a smile horrible to behold on her full red lips. Edwin grew cold as he watched the expression of her face, and, turning round, walked slowly towards the rest of the party, Sibyl following him in silence.

"I think I shall be able to go down much better if I am not fastened to the rope," Mr. Jobkin was saying when they came up to him.

"Certainly, if you are accustomed to go down a rope," Mr. Hopestone replied.

"I have not been down one for some time, but I used to be famous for that once," Mr. Jobkin said, divesting himself of his loose sailor's jacket, and preparing to go down.

One end of the rope was fastened to a projecting rock at the edge of the cliff, and the other was thrown over

could well be.

Mr. Jobkin, after seeing for himself that it was properly fastened, stepped over the edge of the cliff, and very soon was out of sight, displaying in his gradual descent a great deal more agility and dexterity than one might have given such a heavy man credit to possess, and not a little astonishing the young men, who had thought to have had a good laugh at his expense.

Mr. Thomson, who had agreed to accompany him—though the expedition was not very much to his taste, now prepared to follow, and also took off his coat; just as he was stepping over the edge, Mr. Hopestone came forward and handed him a knife.

"I forgot," he said, "to give one to Mr. Jobkin; but you had better take this—you may find it useful when you get to the bottom, to make your way through the reeds—we never go without good knives."

Mr. Thomson made some remonstrance, but as the young man assured him he would be glad of it, he placed the knife between his teeth, and began descending the rope, but in a slower and less sailor-like way than Mr. Jobkin had done.

The rest of the party remained for some time watching him, but after a while he, too, was out of sight, the cliff just there being perpendicular. They then went off, Lady Forsinard saying, as she did so, "I do trust they will be able to get back safe. It is a perilous undertaking, and I do not like it much, but I suppose men will be men."

They again dispersed in various groups, and Sibyl was left alone on the top of the cliff, close by that rock from which her husband hung. Then the words uttered by Edwin the night they had watched the storm from the windows of the Northlands' castle came back to her mind—“*We hang over our graves by a single thread—by a thin thread that the weakest hand might cut.*” And their horrible application in the present instance seemed to stun her. She grew gradually colder and colder, and was obliged to step back a few paces not to fall down the precipice which opened before her, and which seemed to have such a painful attraction for her.

She recollect ed the story which Mr. Hopestone had recounted the previous day, of the man who had gone down the rocks to get sea-gulls' eggs, and she thought how very like that cliff must have been to this one, and she could not help wondering whether this rope was very much stronger than the one that the fisherman had used.

A cold perspiration came over her—her lips trembled, and her bosom rose and fell with a sensation she had never before experienced ; everything about her seemed to turn round and round, she closed her eyes and seemed to lose consciousness.

Then, suddenly rousing herself, she saw the heather-covered slippery sward that edged the cliff—the rock to which the rope was fastened—which rope she saw suddenly disappear over the verge. A horrible idea then took possession of her : she sank upon her knees, and leaning over the cliff, in a voice which trembled with emotion, but which the stillness of the air made horribly distinct, she cried—

“For God's sake come back, come back !—the rope is

in the water, and everything was again silent.

Sibyl—reeling backwards from the edge of the cliff, backwards and backwards, with her large eyes almost starting from their sockets, and her hands clenched—fell senseless on the ground.

When she recovered from her brief fainting fit, strange confused cries reached her ears. She opened her eyes, and saw that the whole party were assembled round her. At a short distance she saw a man examining the rope, which still hung over the verge of the cliff—it was Thomson. With a slow step and downcast face he approached her; then, in tones which she was never destined to forget, he said—

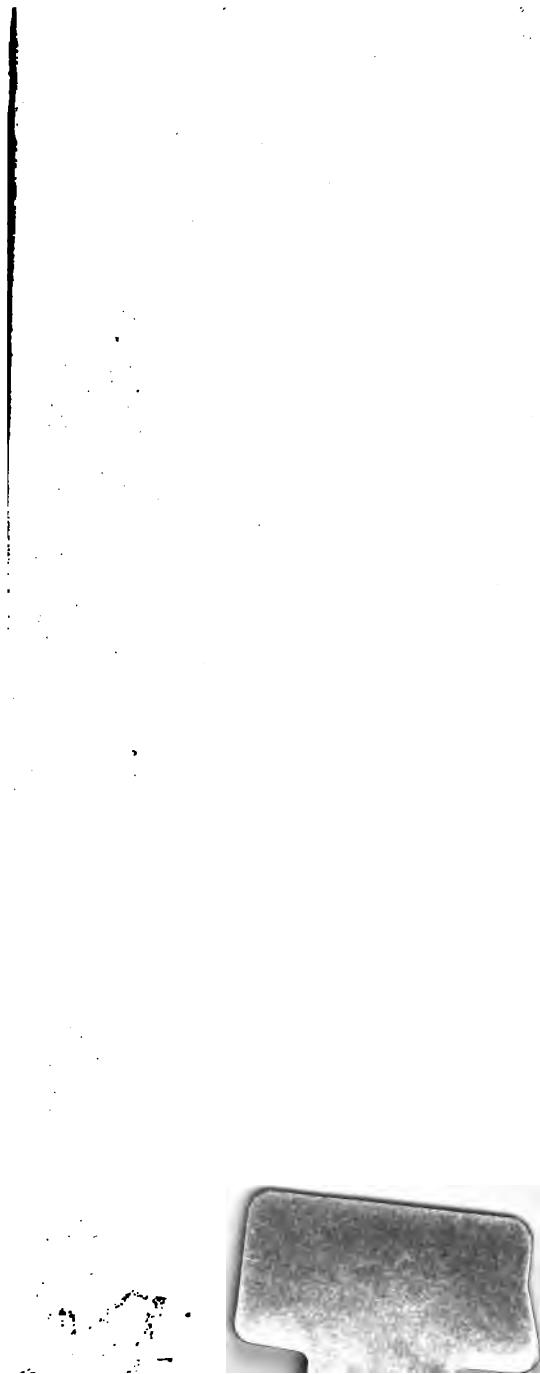
“The rope was not breaking at all. You have been the wilful cause of your husband’s death!”

END OF VOL. II.

Caxton Printing Works, Beccles.







FASHION

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