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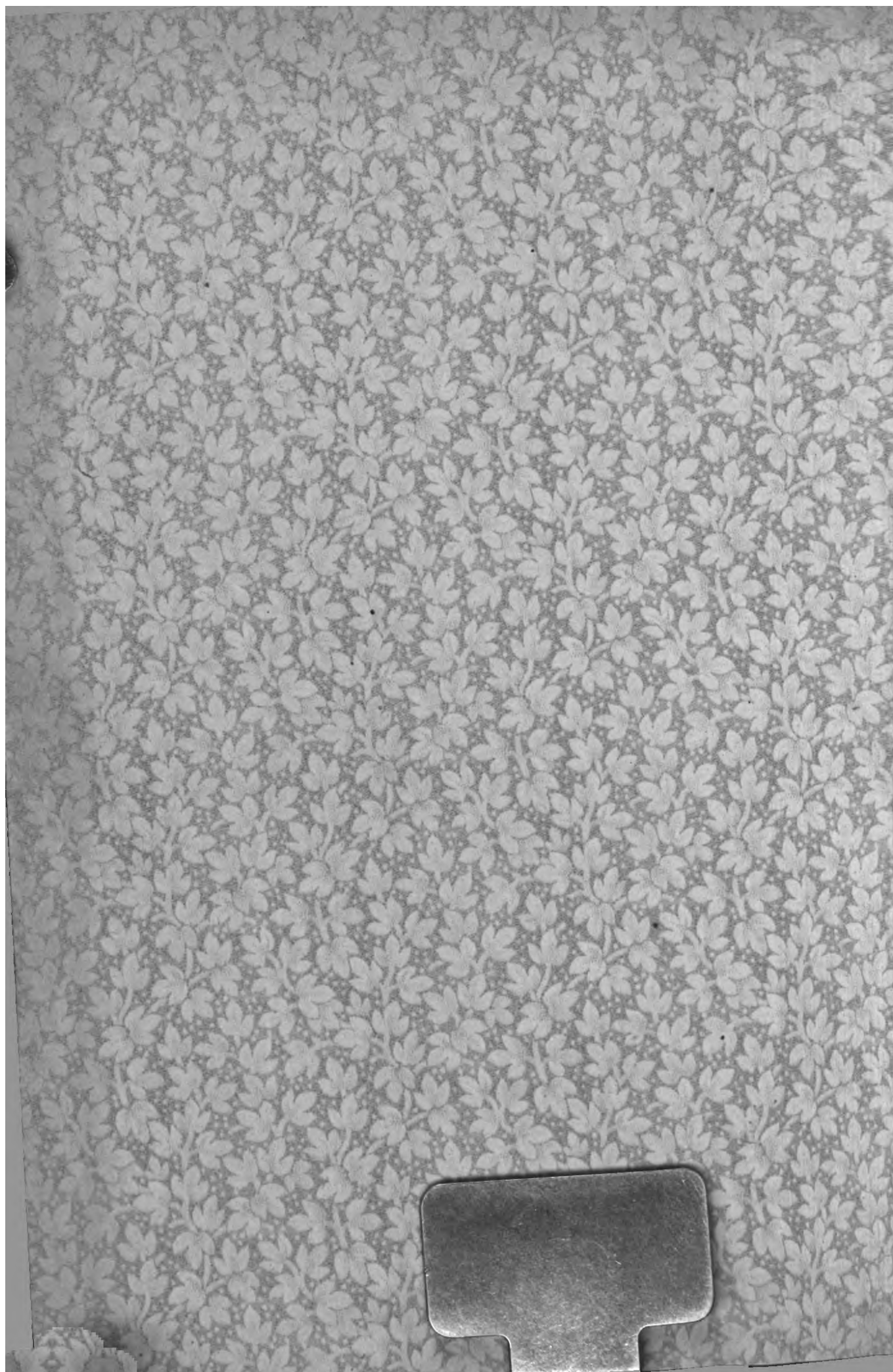
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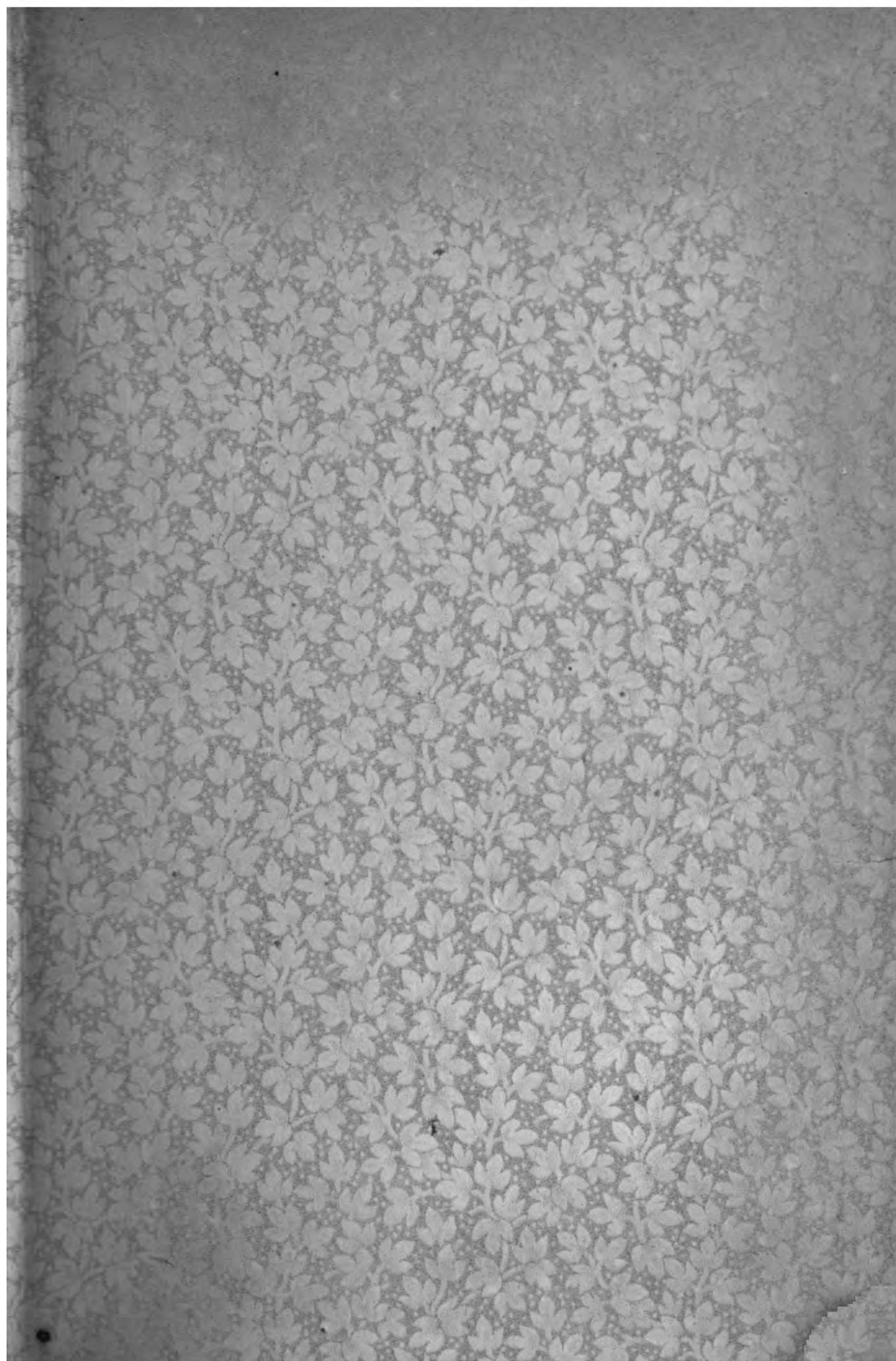


IN THE FLOWER  
OF HER YOUTH

MABEL COLLINS.











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IN THE FLOWER OF HER YOUTH.

# AN INNOCENT SINNER.

By MABEL COLLINS.

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# IN THE FLOWER OF HER YOUTH.

*A Novel.*

BY MABEL COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "TOO RED A DAWN," "AN INNOCENT SINNER," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

*VOL. I.*

LONDON :

F. V. WHITE & CO., 31, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.

1883.

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251. k. 417.



PRINTED BY  
KELLY AND CO., GATE STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, W.C.;  
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# IN THE FLOWER OF HER YOUTH.

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## CHAPTER I.

“**D**OESN'T it seem rather rash to take a vow at seventeen which one has to keep all one's life?”

So said Lil Warrington, poising her pretty figure airily at a window which opened wide upon the green lawn. Her father sat just within, at his writing table; she came out of the sunshine to ask this queer question. Indeed, the sun still caught her hair, lighting it up and revealing its sunny tendency, though her face was made dim by the shadow of over-hanging roses. The outline of her light form was clearly marked against the sunlit background.

Brough Warrington looked up at her and frowned. The frown meant a mental effort, the shutting out from his mind the subject he was writing about, in order to attend to his troublesome daughter. At another time Lil would have regarded it as an impossible wickedness to speak to her father when he

was writing ; but to-day she knew she might do as she would, for to-morrow she was to be married, and Lil Warrington would be Lil Warrington no longer.

Brough pushed back his chair with an impatient movement as he answered her.

"I verily believe," he said, "that it is a woman's ruin to be able to think !"

"Papa," replied Lil, soberly, "you are talking nonsense, and you know it !"

"Oh, yes, I know it," answered Brough, with a tug at his moustachios; "but, pray, what else can I talk when you ask me such a ridiculous question ?"

"Is it so ridiculous ?" asked Lil ; and, as she spoke, she quietly sank down upon the ground and sat at her father's feet in a favourite attitude of hers. She was very slender, this girl of seventeen, though tall and grandly formed ; and as she sat there, like a child, with her fair face upturned, she made a charming picture of a very bright, yet simple, girl.

"Why, of course it is ridiculous, and you are an absurd baby, and have been all through this affair. Haven't I told you all along that your course is plain as a pikestaff ? Either you want to marry Charlie Newman, or you don't ; and, if you don't, say so !"

"But I do !" said Lil.

"All right, then !" interrupted her father, "you will have your wish to-morrow."

"I was only thinking," went on Lil, with a



dreamy look in her eyes, "that it seems a long time from seventeen to seventy. I may live to be seventy, you know! and, perhaps, Charlie will have got tired of me, or I of him, before then!"

Brough Warrington groaned.

"Confound it all!" he said, dolefully; "all the miseries of your life will come of having brains! '*only thinking!*' Ye gods, why was I such a fool as to let a girl learn to think? Why didn't I have you taught to work samplers and mend stockings? then, perhaps, you would have gone through life blindfold like other women. I advise you to try it, Lil; pretend you're blindfold. Limit your thoughts to to-morrow, and the excitements thereof. You can't exactly throw Charlie over so late in the day."

"And I don't want to, either," said Lil.

"Then that settles the question; so don't be a little muff any more," remarked her father, who, though a master of pure English on paper, was not always elegant as a conversationalist. "Couldn't you go and make a pudding, or something, to divert your attention?"

Lil shook her head. Then she looked at the writing table. "*Must* that article go this afternoon?"

"It ought to," said Brough, irresolution written on his face.

"Let ought stand for nothing just for once in your life!" cried Lil. "Come down the river

with me and the dogs ; I am longing for a row. Do come, there's a dear old boy."

This sounds irreverent from a slender daughter to a broad-shouldered father ; yet Lil had not only reverence but love for this dearest friend of her life.

"But are there not mysterious things you ought to be doing to-day?" said Brough ; "sewing lace on to your dresses, or composing your mind for to-morrow? I know Gran will be horrified if I take you out."

"Never mind," cried Lil, gleefully ; "Gran won't see, for she is asleep upstairs, and my dresses will be all right. What is the good of dressmakers and milliners if I am to bother over the things as well? Come ; it is such a lovely afternoon, and you won't have me to tempt you to idleness again for ever so long !

This argument, of course, settled the matter.

"Come, dogs," said Brough, and immediately a blue skye terrier and a poodle, who had until now been fast asleep under the table, sprang out and fell into the wildest state of excitement. They barked and danced in and out of the window, until their insane transports of delight had attracted the attention of two big dogs, a St. Bernard and a Newfoundland, who had been rolling on the grass. These two rushed up and joined in the fray. By this time Brough and Lil had each put on a straw hat, and they now went out

on the lawn arm in arm, with the dogs tumbling and romping and barking around them.

"Oh, dogs, do be quiet," cried Lil, "you will wake Gran, and then she will look out of the window and be shocked at my levity."

But the heedless creatures continued to make the outrageous noise in which they always indulged when their master and mistress went for a walk; and in another moment Lil's prophecy proved but too true. A figure appeared at the open window, where, a little while since, Lil herself had been standing. How different a figure! It is a quaint study to observe the peculiarities of a family as exhibited in a young girl who has all the freshness of her youth still upon her, and then to compare her with her grandmother who is nodding into her grave. One may see how the stock wears, with such an illustration; and in this case there was Brough, hearty with the vigour of manhood, to add to the comparison. Charlie Newman had not been discouraged by the study of the three generations, for, after much acquaintance with papa and grandmamma, he was still desperately enamoured of brown-eyed Lil.

"Lil," cried grandmamma, from the doorway, "don't go out, child! your wedding dress has just come and the dressmaker is waiting for you to try it on."

Lil paused, hesitated, and turned round. Her father's arm was linked through hers,

and he turned with her, wearing a very rueful face. A couple of naughty truants they looked as they stood there a moment, knowing they must return, yet rebelling, as was the habit with both of them, against constraint. The dogs, amazed, confused, and downcast at this irresolution, stood beside them, silent, yet open-mouthed, and ready to bark again more gleefully than ever over a new start. But they were doomed to disappointment; and their tails all descended from the perpendicular to the horizontal as they forlornly followed their master back towards the house.

"I must try the dress on!" said Lil, with a sigh. She never loved dress with the absorbing passion which most women bestow on it.

"If you will have done with it in an hour, I shall have finished my article," said Brough; "we shall still have time for a brief row before dinner, and the dress will not only have been tried on but, practically, paid for."

"You dear old thing!" said Lil; she quickly put her arms round him and gave him a hug, under which caress he grunted, perhaps appreciatively. She could only just manage it, for, tall as she was, she was a little creature beside him. Then she ran away over the grass and disappeared in the house with her grandmother.

Brough followed her at a more leisurely pace. He had to bring himself back from



that holiday mood into which it was so fatally easy to fall. He had to brace himself up again into the state in which serious work can be accomplished. So he slowly returned to his writing table; and the dogs, looking downcast, as though they had lost all hope and joy in life, sat themselves down about him in various attitudes of despondency. Disappointment is a keen thing to the creatures who live in the present moment; but they have full compensation; their pleasure is perfect. These dogs, whose instinct of fidelity was so strong that they could not entertain the idea of an excursion, except at their master's heels, knew nothing of Lil's imminent departure; it darkened not their dimly-loving brains. How they would look for her and miss her when she was gone! yet none the less would they feel delight in their plunges into the cool river, and wild romps upon the green grass to-day.

It was different with their master. All the while he worked and held himself to his subject, he was conscious that, to-morrow, Lil, his Lil, a girl, as he thought, unlike all other girls, was to be married.

He was glad of it even while he rebelled against it. For he believed in early marriages, and preferred that his Lil should win her experience while in the heyday of her girlhood, rather than hesitate till she had grown an atom staid.



Brough Warrington was a Bohemian in the true, old, charming sense of the word. He lived to enjoy life; he loved all things bright and gay. He knew, that if he held Lil to himself, as he would have liked to do, until her girlish teens were out and he had caught the full sweetness of her fresh young life, the demureness of possible old maidenhood would descend upon her. Marrying in the very bloom of her early youth, she would have the chance of developing into the rich, warm, happy woman he hoped she would become.

But it was very hard; for Lil had been his right hand for so long. She had filled his life; she had been his secretary, his companion, his baby, his critic, and his worshipper ever since she grew out of childhood. Lil's mother had died when she was a mere baby, and left her as the sole legacy of an intense love, to be a keen responsibility and an incessant pleasure to her father. He had set himself one task with regard to her; he would make her love him, in spite of his being her father. It appeared to him that too often the idea of stern parental duty and some other confused notions separate the generations from one another. He wanted this girl to really regard him as her friend. He made her his companion and trained her mind after a fashion which, if more women had the chance of it, would produce a new type of mothers. Her brain was developed, instead of her

memory crammed; the restless activity of the growing creature was encouraged, and directed into wholesome channels instead of being crushed.

What a glorious girlhood was that of Lil Warrington's! a little princess in her own home, she grew, unchecked: yet her surroundings were of such an order that she grew safely. She never saw the inside of a school, nor had her mind poisoned and diluted by associating with imperfect specimens of girls. Her friends, so few she could count them on one hand, were her father's friends also. They were her father's contemporaries, men of his own sort, who came to visit him at long intervals in his isolated home, and who paid all homage to the quaint baby princess. When Brough had lived in London and made acquaintance with the mysteries of its many-sided life, he had been called by a certain set in which he moved, the king of Bohemia. His shoulders were so broad, his height so aggressive, his voice so noticeable, that he was always a marked man among his companions. Moreover he liked to have his own way, and made men do as he pleased after a fashion of his own, which was part of his personality; and thus he came to be called the king in a special circle of gay Bohemians. When he settled down in the country after his wife's death, and devoted himself to his little daughter, his old friends

who came to see him called her princess Lil; and Lil liked the pretty nick-name, without even wondering what it meant. It seemed to be part of her life, part of herself; she stared when she heard herself called Miss Warrington, as she came to be when she grew tall and slender.

And now this princess Lil would exist no longer. So soon! and her quaint, bright, lonely, happy life would be over. She would be Mrs. Newman, and have to keep house and behave with propriety.

Brough always laid down his pen and paused when this idea occurred to him. It was difficult for him to imagine this child of his a young wife in a suburban home, ordering dinners and returning calls. A certain dismay smote him when he thought how little her training had fitted her for such a life. But he had great faith in Lil's strength of character, which, as he believed, would carry her through the most unfamiliar difficulties. And then, too, Brough's conscience was a very spasmodic affair. He was a general optimist, a little too inclined, perhaps, to overlook other people's troubles, but still so childlike in character that his lighthearted selfishness was easily forgiven if only because of its infectiousness. Everybody loved Brough Warrington, save certain staid and Philistine reviewers.

For Brough, busy at his writing table,

trying to put the affairs of a little girl out of his head, was a literary lion of the day, idolised and hated as such men are. Writing was his profession, and he loved literature as the purest and noblest of the arts. Yet he had to do plenty of journeyman's work in it, like many other successful and well-known authors; and with all his incessant industry he could but keep this country cottage, and could give Lil no dowry but a few new dresses. And Lil, who all her life had learned to regard a tradesman's bill as meaning many hours' hard work at a writing table, was grateful enough for these. She regarded her wedding dress—mere white muslin, with a little old lace which Granny brought forth from mystic hoards—with a respect which few girls would have bestowed upon anything less than a new costume from Worth's. Lil's ambitions in the matter of dress were strangely simple. She loved to look well; she loved to wear flowers fresh out of the garden. But she had no idea of the charm of mere cost, which is so powerful, as a rule, with the civilised feminine mind. Indeed, had her dress been white satin, it would only have given her a heartache, for she would have regarded it as so much more work of her father's.

Lil is standing now, in her little muslin-draped bedroom, with the white dress upon



her, and a bright flush in her face which makes her bewitchingly lovely. The dressmaker is critically regarding her on one side; Granny on the other.

"It is beautiful," says the dressmaker, decidedly.

Gran's reply is an undecided sort of groan.

The old lady was in a dilemma. She did not know how to criticise the garment, yet it annoyed her. The dressmaker had really accomplished a success! Lil's figure was shown to perfection. This in itself puzzled old Mrs. Warrington. Women did not have figures like that in her young days; there were no perfect curves, no long, beautiful outlines. The shape of a woman was arbitrary then, and quite unlike the actual thing. This bewitching form, so carefully set off, distressed Mrs. Warrington. It seemed to her that there was something immoral and wrong in it. Yet she could say nothing about that, for she well knew that Lil's own rebellion would rise against a pointed waist and a full skirt; not to mention the dressmaker, who inspired Gran with some awe, as a person who had to be paid. She would have liked to complain of the frivolous flounces, and the superabundance of muslin in the train, destined only to lie on the floor and get dirty. She knew, however, that it was of no use; so she contented herself with saying:



"I suppose you will make your husband pay for it when that dress is got up? In my days we ironed our dresses ourselves, and then we thought twice about it before we had them covered with flounces that would take half a day to iron."

The dressmaker laughed a little to herself at this, and Lil's cheeks flushed more deeply. Gran's speeches of this sort always had the power of oppressing her with a general sense of her own incapacity; and now they cut more keenly than ever, for in this imminence of getting married, she took upon herself the various responsibilities of economising and managing. For Charlie Newman was decidedly not rich.

"Oh, but he will not blame me like Gran does, when I make mistakes," thought Lil, quick tears, born of a feeling half pride and half humility, rising in her eyes, "and, surely, if I use my brains I can find how to do things!"

She put her hands up to unfasten the dress hastily, for she was tired of standing to be looked at. But just then came a knock at the door.

"May I come in? May I see it? Let me see your dress, Lil."

"Please come in, Lady Lynne," said Lil, cordially enough, but with a faint look of annoyance in her eyes. She liked Lady Lynne, but she hated her to seem so at

home in that house. She harboured a dim, undefined jealousy of her.

"Mr. Warrington told me you were trying on your wedding dress, and I ventured to come up. It is charming, quite a success. What a sweet little figure you have, Lil."

Lady Lynne was some inches shorter than the girl; but she always treated her as a small baby. Why this worried her, Lil would have found it hard to tell. She liked other people to regard her as a child; but sometimes it was intolerable from Lady Lynne. Afterwards she could guess the reason. It was not because Lady Lynne really regarded her as very young and small that she used this manner, but because she wished so to regard her. It was artificial, like many other things about Lady Lynne; the colour of her lips and the brightness of her eyes, for instance.

She brought a quite new atmosphere into this little bedroom, which had already seemed full to overflowing with two such different people in it as Lil and her Gran. Now Lil found it to be stifling. Yet Lady Lynne had a sweet fragrance about her, and she was very pretty to look at. She sparkled and glittered and fluttered, as only a woman of a certain type can. Her white slender fingers flashed with jewels, her dress rustled with a delicate, soft sound; she was so

exactly the opposite of old Mrs. Warrington in every detail that it was difficult to regard them as belonging to the same planet.

Gran stood aside with the grim disapproval written on her face with which she always regarded Lady Lynne. Standing there in her black dress, made in the style of her own girlhood, her white hair smoothed away under a large white cap, with no smile to soften the sternness of her strongly marked face, she looked the picture of venerable austerity.

Mrs. Warrington belonged to the Plymouth Brethren. Their gloomy creed, which consigns half creation to eternal flames, had become part of her nature. She fully believed that of the four women who stood together in this room she alone had any chance of salvation. And she had the courage, uncommon in the present generation, to believe in an eternal torment of physical combustion.

Lady Lynne, undisturbed by Gran's disapproval, purred and fussed over Lil, while with an experienced eye she surveyed the whole effect of the costume, and pointed out one or two necessary re-adjustments to the dressmaker, who obeyed orders with alacrity, feeling that she now was in contact with a superior genius.

Lady Lynne was a woman of fashion, heartily and entirely. These two women,

old Mrs. Warrington and Lady Lynne, had contributed all of feminine influence that had entered Lil's life. Each had the power to distress and disturb her, and had used it. Gran paid visits at her son's house, at long intervals; and sorely had these visits been dreaded by Lil, who knew that Gran considered it her duty to upbraid her for all unfulfilled feminine duties, such as mending stockings, or making her own dresses. Nothing could make Gran see that Lil's usefulness to her father was of another sort. Lady Lynne's disturbing influence had been much less manifest to Lil. It had merely consisted in confusing the child's clear mind by her atmosphere of assured worldly wisdom. She was the one neighbour with whom they had any intimacy; and she was proud that Brough, who would not take the trouble to enter into the local society, was glad of her friendship. The fact was he thoroughly understood this shallow, bright, butterfly creature, and he thought her intense femininity good for both himself and Lil.

The two women held before poor little Lil such different types of what she ought to be! And, try as hard as she would, she could please neither, but must remain what her father and her own nature had made her.

As a rule she saw but little of either of these ladies; now, when to-morrow's event made her of special interest to them they

seemed determined to be about her and make her feel her own deficiencies.

No one else ever saw that she had any. But Lil herself was so unable on the one hand to grasp the idea of life as Lady Lynne entertained it, or on the other hand to come up to Gran's standard of domestic virtue, that she always felt herself abashed and sad when they tried to improve her.

Standing there in her white dress, while the dressmaker pinned it and adjusted it here and there, she felt like a caged bird. She longed to throw it off and be out with her father and the dogs, away from these too critical eyes. While Gran looked at her, she was conscious that her hair was wild and loose; when Lady Lynne surveyed her, she knew that her hands were sunburnt and her style unfashionable.

"What do I care?" she said to herself. "Papa is satisfied with me, and Charlie loves me! Were women intended only to please other women?"

She stood still, as patiently as might be, and was greatly relieved when Gran went away; and when at last the sacred dress was taken off her and laid aside ready for to-morrow's wear, with what delight she put on again the serge dress she had worn all day!

"Are you putting on your boating costume again, so late in the afternoon?"



asked Lady Lynne. "Will you not dress yourself and come for a drive with me?"

"Thank you," said Lil; "but I am going to row Papa a little way down the river now. He will be ready soon, I hope."

"Ah, well," said Lady Lynne, with a little gentle sigh; "you will grow more feminine when you are married, I am sure."

Lil's heart beat quickly; she always longed to answer this sort of speech rebelliously, but she would not, especially to-day.

"What do you mean?" she asked, very gently. "Am I really unfeminine?"

Lady Lynne, looking at the sweet, girlish face bent so earnestly upon her, could not say "yes." How was it possible even for her, with her effeminate and butterfly standard, not to perceive the warm womanliness in Lil's face, the innocent spirit of gentleness in her big brown eyes.

"No, dear," she said, with an unusual kindness in her tone, "only unconventional. You will find out what that means, by-and-bye. Of course you must expect to be that, brought up as you have been, by a man, and never having been to school. It is a sad loss for you; and you must try to make up for it by observing other women, and learning to do as others do."

Lil came nearer to her. A mood of intense gentleness was on the girl. She

yearned to do right, to please, to understand what was expected of her.

“Dear Lady Lynne,” she said, “cannot you tell me—a little—where I am wrong?”



## CHAPTER II.

“H, Lil ! it is absurd to pretend you do not know ; you are not blind or foolish ?” exclaimed Lady Lynne, with a touch of quick impatience in her tone. She was constitutionally incapable of guessing that some other people might have a different sort of vision from her own. Still less was she capable of guessing that she herself was blind to some things quite visible to others ; for instance, the charm of a rich, glowing, unfettered girlhood such as Lil’s, was outside of her perceptions. She did not desire to worry the girl. She honestly felt that there was something outrageous in the straightforward simplicity which gave a certain masculine colour to Lil’s character. There is room enough for improvement in both sexes, but men are, as a rule, more just and clear sighted than women, partly because they see more of life. Lil had seen nothing of life ; but she had imbibed a just and generous tone of mind from contact with her father. And she was daring enough, at seventeen, to think sometimes for herself and even to question Lady Lynne’s wisdom. On occasions this annoyed that lady exceed-

ingly, for more reasons than appeared on the surface. She was well aware that Lil, in some respects, was stronger than herself. Now that Lil was in so soft a mood she saw her advantage and spoke sharply, knowing her word had a better chance than usual of being effective. Lil coloured and drew herself up a little. Pride,—not vanity, but pride, a hot and generous pride, was the dominant quality of Lil's character. She looked straight at Lady Lynne with her clear brown eyes.

"I can trust papa," she said, loftily, "and he has always told me that if I feel no shame I have done no wrong. I am not ashamed that my hands are sunburnt; papa likes me to row him and I enjoy doing it! I am not ashamed that I wear a blue serge dress instead of silk and lace; how could the dogs jump in and out of the boat if I had silk on? Besides, we are not rich, and I shall be no richer when I am married! I am sure blue serge will suit me then."

"Well," said Lady Lynne, provoked now by Lil's loftiness, "if your husband is satisfied it will be all right. Perhaps he is satisfied about that affair with young Swift? If so, he is more easily satisfied than most men are."

So saying she rose with a flutter and rustle, and a shrug of her slender shoulders; she had fired her shot and was ready to go. But Lil

was not so ready to part with her. She turned and faced her with eyes ablaze.

"What do you mean?" she said.

Lady Lynne returned her earnest gaze for a second, and then laughed airily.

"You are a born actress, child," she said, "but it is ridiculous to play with me. You know what I mean. Of course, if your father chose to take no notice of your unconventional adventure" (an emphasis on the "unconventional," of which italics can convey no idea) "and if you would not marry young Swift—who, I must say, behaved like a gentleman when he asked you! it was no concern of anyone else; and now it only concerns Mr. Newman, therefore I have no more to say. Goodbye, till to-morrow:"

"No, Lady Lynne," cried Lil, passionately, "you shall not go away like this without some explanation. You have never said such things to me before, why do you say them now?"

Lady Lynne raised her arched brows in deprecation.

"Mere accident, my dear child," she said; "I mean nothing."

"You do!" cried Lil; "you must tell me what you mean. I remember going out rowing with Dr. Swift, although papa wished me not to see any more of him. Very sorry I was that I had done so, when I found papa really annoyed; but he said, I remember, too,



that I was too young to know a scoundrel when I saw him, and that you were to blame for introducing Dr. Swift to me."

"Oh indeed"! said Lady Lynne, stiffening as if she had just been starched all over. She was getting angry. "A nice thing for Mr. Warrington to say, when it was I who pointed out to Dr. Swift that, as a gentleman, he must ask you to marry him. I was delighted with his good feeling in doing so; most young men would have called it Quixotic to do any such thing."

Lil looked perplexed, and a little inclined to be amused, in the midst of her anger.

"I don't understand at all," she said; "Dr. Swift implored me to marry him, over and over again. I suppose he meant what he said, but I don't see how it could be Quixotic."

"You little flirt," exclaimed Lady Lynne, with a well acted look of horror; "how can you talk like this, and look me in the face? Of course it was Quixotic on his part, after you had compromised yourself with him as you did."

"Compromised myself!" repeated Lil, growing suddenly quite pale. She did not really understand what this meant, for she had never been told anything about it; but she had read novels, and had some faint idea of the horribleness of the bugbear Lady Lynne was holding up before her.

"Why, of course!" cried Lady Lynne, "did you not go away with him one afternoon and

never came back till the next day? Most girls would have been turned out of doors after such an adventure, I can tell you."

Lil drew back a step, and put her hand on a chair to steady herself. She was trembling all over. Did this mean anything? It was all new to her, in this form. Her father had seemed terribly disturbed, when the thing happened a year ago; but he had said scarcely anything about it, and he had forbidden anyone else to speak to her on the subject. He cared little what people thought, so long as he saved Lil's mind from being poisoned; and he had saved it. She hardly understood Lady Lynne now; she only felt her words were very terrible.

"But I did no harm" she said; "we could not come home in that awful thunderstorm. How could we? It was impossible. Perhaps we never ought to have gone on the river on such a sultry day, but I suppose we were very thoughtless; I had no idea that we should be caught in such a storm. Papa was frightened when I didn't come back, but I knew he would think I had sheltered somewhere. What could I have done?"

"Why, you dined with him at an inn, and stayed the night there," exclaimed Lady Lynne, almost viciously; Lil's innocence or ignorance made her angry.

"Well?" said Lil, with a bewildered look; "we were very tired and hungry and Mrs. Man-

wood, at the White Horse, got us some dinner. I have many a time been there with papa, before and since; she was very kind to me, and dried my wet clothes and gave me hot drink when I was in bed."

"Oh!" said Lady Lynne, with a world of expression; "you know how to tell your story very nicely. I suppose you have told it like that to Charlie Newman?"

"Told it!" "exclaimed Lil, "why should I? I had forgotten all about it; forgotten Dr. Swift; until you reminded me."

"Naturally," said Lady Lynne, "you are engrossed now with your new lover. Well, my dear, all I can say is this, don't compromise yourself so openly in future. It is very unwise. A lady should live delicately. A vulgar woman lets everybody see her diamonds and her lovers; a lady is chary of letting the world see too much of either. Good taste is the law of life which is necessary to a woman; without it she is nothing. Take my advice, dear; it is meant in good part, indeed, though, while you are so young and quick tempered, you think I am unkind. All I say is, try and break yourself of being so unconventional; your father may put up with your going off in a serge dress and a straw hat, with a wild young doctor. and not coming back till the next day; but I don't think your husband will like such adventures!"

Lil's face was growing crimson again, and hot words were burning on her lips; but before she had time to speak they were both startled by a rattling sound upon the window-panes, as though there were a severe momentary hailstorm.

"Oh, papa is waiting for me!" said Lil, and snatched up her straw hat. It was a well-known signal. When Brough was out of doors, and wanted her, he pelted her window with handfuls of the dried peas with which he fed his beloved pigeons. The arrangement seemed to him perfect; it suited him, Lil, and the pigeons, who immediately came circling down from the house top to gather up the peas.

Lady Lynne quickly went out of the room, and rustled down stairs; the conversation had lasted quite long enough for her and she was glad of the interruption. She went out through the open windows of the pretty sitting room, and joined Brough on the gravel walk, where he stood amid a fluttering, restless circle of ever hungry pigeons.

A splendid specimen of a type now very rare, was Brough Warrington. A man with very little self-consciousness, but a vast amount of self-content; a man with no desire to arrange the affairs of the universe on a better plan, or make suggestions to the Creator; but with a very definite determination to make the utmost out of his own life, to see all discoverable beauty about him, to taste the in-



most sweetness of the present moment ; wholesome, natural, broad of shoulder, and broad in character, without an atom of morbidness or mischief in him.

Lady Lynne appreciated him thoroughly, just so far as she could understand him. Simply as a man, she had long ago decided that he obliterated all the other men of her acquaintance ; as a man of letters she admired him, too ; as a scholar she thought him very wonderful. But there was more of Brough Warrington yet, and of this something more she could as little form an idea as the plough boy can of the existence of a social science. She had not the faculty with which to apprehend it.

Brough liked to talk to her. Her society was a rest to him because she never made any demand, but was always gay and agreeable. It was part of her creed that a woman's power lies in never boring her admirers with anything serious, but always making of herself the most charming object within his range of vision. To look pretty, to be always gay and good-tempered in the society of men, were, with Lady Lynne, the whole duties of woman. It is a creed which has its merits. Brough felt the fascination of it, though very well aware of the shallowness of the nature which could be satisfied with it. But we like slight and fragile things about us for ornament and pleasure, if not for solid use.



Brough walked with Lady Lynne to the garden gate. A wide gravel walk led from the house, ending with a little bridge to cross over the stream that circled Brough's garden. The house, a low, quaintly constructed cottage, was built upon an island, which lay very near the land at one side; here was the bridge, and the principal entrance to Brough's secluded demesne.

All the birds of the county knew and loved that greenest of lawns, hidden from river wanderers by a thick belt of trees; here they were never shot at or frightened, and they found, in addition to the many worms of the early morning, plenty of peas and bread crumbs all day. And they found also a man who loved them, valued their friendship, and watched their ways with real interest. They surely knew something of this, for no thrushes ever sang more gloriously than those which haunted Brough's limes.

Lady Lynne's little carriage stood waiting for her in the road; Brough handed her into it, and then watched it drive away. Quickly then he turned and went, with his long, rapid strides towards the house, to join Lil, who stood waiting him on the pathway, with a cluster of pigeons close at her very feet. Her eyes looked very large, Brough thought, as he approached her. Perhaps they were very wide open, for she had just seen something to which she had been blind

before. Did that woman, that flighty butterfly of a woman, want to come into her place in this house, her place and more? If not, thought Lil, with the wonderful wisdom of just-about-to-be-married seventeen, why did she smile like that at Brough, when she fancied they were unobserved? Well, thought Lil to herself, I am leaving my home, I have no right to be jealous of any one who may come into it! But she was jealous, none the less. She hated Lady Lynne at that moment. For Lil was too loving not to be very passionate. But she was very proud too; and she quickly determined not to tell her father of her conversation with Lady Lynne, which a moment ago, she had meant to do; for she felt that Lady Lynne had been very unjust to her; she was bitterly confused and hurt by what she had said. But Brough had turned away from Lady Lynne, with a pleasant smile on his face. Should she trouble him by her foolish grievance? No, especially on this her last day, when she wanted to be perfectly happy with him. So she stopped her tongue, and tried to smile; but the smile was a very nervous one, and when the dogs came with a rush to bark their delight, frightening the pigeons into sudden flight, she shrank back.

"Papa," she said, "I believe I am too tired to go now!"

"Too tired!" he said, in staccato tones of amazement. He objected on principle, to

anybody ever being tired. "Here's a nice state of things! This comes of getting married, and being in love. By Jove, I wish that fellow Charlie were here; you wouldn't be too tired then to go out, I'll bet."

"I am really tired, papa," said Lil, pitifully. "I've been standing for ages with that horrid dress on, and Granny and Lady Lynne, and the dressmaker all criticising it."

"Poor little baby," said Brough, with sudden sympathy, "that is enough to make any fellow ill, I'll allow. What infernal nuisances milliners and marriages are! Let's have a bottle of fizz, to raise our spirits; I feel as cross as an owl. Sit down here, and do as I tell you, and in five minntes you'll feel better."

This cottage, where Brough was master of the ceremonies, was a very bright and pleasant bit of Bohemia. It was a very innocent one, with Lil as its princess; but still it had the unconventionality which, to some Philistines, seems as wicked as vice itself. Lil sat down in a garden chair; in a few minutes Brough appeared again, carrying affectionately a small bottle of champagne and some glasses. Soon the bottle was tossed away upon the grass (Brough liked getting things for himself, but never put any thing back into its proper place) with all the dogs racing after it, tumbling over each other in wild play.

“Ha!” exclaimed Brough, after a drink from his tall glass, “that’s good. Now look here, baby, take my advice; when you’re married, don’t go and let yourself get miserable about things. If you feel bad, drink some champagne, or go and have a lark, and then you’ll keep jolly. Never mind what people say, or think it necessary to do what other people do. The old women will expect you to cry and be miserable when your affairs get in a mess, as do everybody’s now and then: I say *Don’t!* Remember, you were born princess of Bohemia, however much you may go and Mrs. Newmanise yourself; and the right thing for a young women of your bringing up, is to do exactly as you like, and be jolly under all circumstances.”

Lil sat still and silent for a moment, while Brough took another pull. She was thinking, “it is quite clear that I must judge for myself; it is impossible to reconcile these different teachings.”

“But, papa,” she said, aloud, “that is delightful, I know, but I can’t carry it out now; you see I am going to be a housekeeper, and I shall have to know the price of coals, and learn to darn stockings; and, oh, I am so ignorant of all a girl ought to know.”

“I call that remark cool, to say the least of it, considering that I have been educating you for the last seventeen years,” said Brough, with a twinkle of fun in his eyes; “this is the



result of an overdose of Granny. You are never such an ungrateful young woman on your own account."

"Oh papa!" cried Lil. Her impetuous remark, springing from a consciousness of incapacity, had not struck her in this light.

But Brough drowned her attempt to speak with his big voice; he had a habit of not listening to other people, when he wanted to talk himself.

"I'll back you, against any girl you like, for finding a quotation in Shakespeare or any of his contemporary playwrights, within ten minutes, and in any of the modern poets, within a quarter of an hour. I'll back you against any, except the best critics of the day, to give a decent criticism of a new book. I'll back you to translate an ode of Horace against any young college prig, Charlie Newman himself included. I'll back you to write a page of good English prose against the whole tribe of illiterate journalists. I'll back you to point out the flaws in your father's works against any Saturday Reviewer."

"But papa," cried Lil, resolutely, making herself heard at last, "none of these accomplishments are of any use in keeping house or ordering dinners."

Brough sat himself down deliberately in a wicker chair, which creaked ominously beneath his heavy weight, and, taking his hat off, threw it on to the grass. A shy, yet



confiding young robin, who had given its whole affections to this large, but gentle man, immediately perched on the brim of the straw hat, and looked into it. The inside of that hat, was a place it loved to get into, but it took some time and a great deal of courage to fly from the edge to the inside. Brough was accustomed to the companionship of this little creature, and its pretty movements did not arrest his attention. He was set upon solemn speech.

"Now, observe this, baby," he proceeded to say, with much emphasis, "I did not bring you up to the profession of getting married; I did not do so, partly because I consider the habit of bringing up all young women to the same profession is at the bottom of half the evils of social life; and partly because I thought you shewed capacity for something better. Not that I did not want you to marry! I believe in early marriages; I'm confoundedly glad you are going to be somebody's 'missis,' and that you have had the good sense to choose a fellow who is a gentleman and a scholar. Now, the vocation of a married woman is one of the easiest in the world, and that is why the little scamps like it so well; you have only to use the brains which you possess, and which I have done my best to cultivate, and you will find the whole matter simple enough. But just remember that your domestic life is only a part of your life,

as it is part of your husband's ; that your relations with him are the bright spots in your existence, as in his, and not the one object of your career. You have your own individual life still to live, and your own brain power to use. At any time, circumstances may throw you on your own resources, and you will want to return to the profession of literature for which I have educated you."

"Yes, I think I understand," said Lil, "but how am I to keep up my work? Lady Lynne says a married woman should never work for money, it annoys her husband, and degrades his idea of her."

Brough threw himself back in his chair, and laughed. The robin, scared at the sudden uproar, flew out of the hat, and, perching in the lime tree overhead, looked down curiously at this queer human spasm of which he was a witness. Brough, seeing his hat was now at his own disposal, picked it up and put it on before replying.

"If you'll take my advice, baby," he said, with a sudden return to seriousness, "you'll look after your own opinion of yourself, instead of attending always to what other people think of you, which is the kernel of the Lady Lynne sort of creed."

"Delightful," thought Lil, to herself, wise Lil! "he never can think of marrying her, when he speaks of her like that."

"If you stick to your own feelings of

what is right, and follow the light of your own pure instincts, without allowing your mind to become perverted by the thousand and one false arguments which ordinary people regard as genuine, you will find yourself all right in the end. At all events, you will keep your own self-respect by following that plan, and that is worth the golden opinion of the rest of the universe. And, now, I propose we go and send these disconsolate dogs into the water, for there is no time to go in the boat; come, baby!" One of Brough's most constant personal charms was that he utterly refused to grow up or grow old; he was a big boy half his time. He hated having to be in earnest for long; in fact, he considered it injurious and immoral to waste too much time in being serious.

"Come, baby," he cried, boisterously, "you'll be an old woman before your wedding day arrives if you go on thinking over the difficulties of your career so desperately hard. Make up your mind to follow out my old recipe for darning stockings, 'patch'em with sticking plaster.' And, as to dinners, that fellow, Charlie, is much too intensely in love to think about what he puts inside him, for at least three months; and, by that time, you'll have found out all about it, for you're a clever little chap, you know. Only don't poison the poor boy in the meantime. I really do pity that young man, he is so ridiculously in love;

and fancy it's all being about this little minx!"

Lil crimsoned and laughed. This view of the question changed her mood. She knew very well that she could not easily make Charlie see her shortcomings, and if she had been like most girls, altogether thoughtless, she would probably never have been made aware of their existence. But, if Lil's mind had a tendency to over-balance itself in any direction, it was in that of doing right, as she called it. This was not a religious idea, but an ethical one. She had always maintained that she could not be content to live with herself, unless she was properly acting her part in life. Brough was in the habit of calling her "abnormally conscientious," and a "regular little casuist." But characters, though they can be moulded, cannot be changed; and in Lil, this tendency, which was much stronger than in her father, grew with her growth.

But the mere mention of Charlie Newman, and his passion for her, converted the grave little casuist, into a lovely, laughing girl again. She preferred not to go on discussing this new subject, upon which her father delighted in teasing her, so she rose and danced away over the lawn towards the water. The dogs started simultaneously, and rushed after her in a wild and sudden excitement. One big hound, her special favourite, caught



her dress in his mouth, and looked up at her with that laugh in his eyes, which is seen sometimes in dogs who are much with men and women. Lil flung her arms about his neck, and struggled with him for the possession of her blue serge gown. It certainly would not have done for Lil to wear silks and laces. In another moment, she was on her knees on the grass, laughing and flushed, holding the big dog down on his back, while he still clung to her skirt, and with all the other dogs jumping over her, licking her hands and barking with delight. The noise called Gran to the window, where she stood, a picture of stern amazement, with up-lifted hands of horror.

"Poor child," sighed Gran to herself, "a child of wrath, totally unregenerate. Oh, that I could bring her to the Lord! Oh, that I could convince her of her state of sin, and show her the awful doom of eternal flame which lies before her. Poor, ignorant, sinful child! If I could only teach her to sew a little, it would be something. I asked her what they gave for coals, to-day, and she had no idea. I believe that housekeeper cheats them out of pounds and pounds."

This was a favourite sorrow with Granny, and she returned to her arm-chair to nurse it. Very religious persons, especially if they belong to one of the gloomy faiths, are often very suspicious. A rooted belief in original



sin is not readily compatible with a belief in human nature.

Brough and Lil caught sight of Gran's figure at the window, and hurried away beyond the trees, like two naughty children. The irrepressible boyishness of Brough's nature made him an absolute enigma to his mother. There was something to her, strange and almost wicked, in the happy fashion in which Brough and Lil went about together; it shocked her, as the unintelligible often does shock narrow minds. She regarded a certain gloomy dignity as necessary to a parent; without it surely he could gain no respect. She was greatly puzzled sometimes to find that she might talk for hours to Lil, without producing any effect, while two words from Brough were instantly attended to. She put this down to unregenerateness. It had never occurred to her, in the long course of a devout and industrious life, that love is the strongest power in the world. She was so accustomed to bow before the cruel Jehovah of the Hebrews, and to credit him with all the bloodthirsty and barbarian propensities which the Hebrew prophets and Plymouth Brethren preachers have been able to imagine, that any other type of government was beyond her mental grasp.

A whole world of love and delight belonged to Brough and Lil, the very existence of which was unknown to Granny. She re-

garded them as two wild, untamed creatures, when they went off to the water with their riotous dogs.

But Brough never cared what other people thought of him, and Lil had learned to take the same independent position. When Granny or Lady Lynne harassed her into a sense of her own inefficiency, in various matters which they thought all important, they did so, not by the weight of their opinions, but by making Lil's quick imagination turn upon herself, and then she would wonder whether she really was not very much wanting.

In her love of out-door life, of the dogs, of the garden, and of the water, she could not be made to see any wrong. However she were lectured and called a young hoyden, she danced off by Brough's side with the greatest joy and contentment. What days and weeks and months had they not passed on this island, in their happy life of mixed work and play, undisturbed by Gran's criticisms! Lil was so content when helping Brough among his books and papers, or rowing him about on the river, that she was firmly convinced these occupations were righteous for her. All Gran could do, when she came on her annual and much dreaded visit, was to make Lil wonder whether, in addition, she ought not to have attended a little to what seemed to be considered the true feminine sphere of small account books, pudding recipes, and

sewing. But the old housekeeper, who loved Lil and her father, had one weakness. She would not be interfered with; and Brough wanted Lil all the day round, so she very soon gave up these dreams of woman's work. Thus it was that her mind was a little troubled, as to whether she might not make sad havoc with Charlie Newman's income, which was too small to admit of keeping a housekeeper. But Brough talked her into his belief that anyone with brains can accomplish any task by using them, and so, helped by the glorious, ignorant confidence of youth, Lil was prepared to plunge into her new life.

Brough set himself to-day to be a child of nature, like the hounds who loved Lil so well, and not to know that to-morrow she was going away.

She had been his companion in his long walks, and on the river; he did not care for his dinner unless she sat opposite him at table; in his work she was his right hand, and accustomed so silently and easily to find books or quotations or papers he wanted, that he hardly knew he did not get them himself; when he was so busy writing that he must be alone, he was not content, unless he could see her in the garden, or at her own little table in the next room, which was placed just within sight of his. He had revelled in the growth of her bright, active intellect, and had watched with intense interest, the action

of her pure and unperverted instincts. He had a vivid faith in an ideal of his own of the womanly nature, and he believed, that Lil, untouched by base influences, unhampered by small tasks, unperverted by the ugly teaching that she must sell herself to the highest bidder in the marriage market, might, in her prime, realise this ideal. He called her his "Miranda," for he saw that she was as innocent as that lovely heroine. But now that her Ferdinand was about to carry her away from the island, was she strong enough to keep her originality of character and purity of mind? He thought so, and he knew her better than anyone else.

The dogs were all in the water, swimming after various pieces of stick, which it was their bounden duty to bring back safe to land.

Lil stood at the water's edge, with Brough at her side, his arm through her's. When the dogs came, panting and joyous to shore again, the whole party went back upon the lawn, that the wet creatures might rush about and shake themselves to their heart's content. They knew well that they had to get to some extent dry before they were admitted into the house, and that they must make the best use of this time, in which Lil and Brough walked up and down the lawn. In the midst of the scampering, tumbling dogs, Lil moved, in a sudden serious silence. Suddenly she spoke.



"Papa," she said, "I begin to wish it might be to-day, always!"

"You little humbug!" cried Brough, with amiable incredulity. "When you know you'd break that small heart of yours and cry your two eyes into jellies, if that fellow Charlie didn't put in an appearance to-morrow. Come, we are getting too sentimental. It is just dinner time, and you must go and 'fix your hair,' as the Americans say, else Gran will be shocked at your dishevelled style. Now, dogs, you are too damp to come in yet, so you must sit outside and drip a little."

He took Lil in, and dexterously shut the window on the dogs, who stood outside in a damp and disconsolate state. This proceeding was always gone through, and the dogs always regarded it as unjust; however, there was nothing to be done but make the best of it, so they soon sat down on their haunches, and began that extraordinary canine process of licking themselves dry.

Brough and Lil were also engaged in their toilette. Brough's dinner-dress, consisted of a loose velvet coat; Lil's was white cashmere, with roses in her hair. The two looked very pictorial, as they came into the dining room together, Lil clinging to her father. Gran was awaiting them, stern and uncompromising, in her black stuff gown, and stiff white cap. It is a strange thing that anything charming or artistic is supposed not to agree with a



state of grace. Gran might have been a handsome old lady, but there was something so stern, unbending, and gloomy in her whole aspect, that it was no wonder Lil in her babyhood had distinctly objected to kissing her. Gran forgave, on principle, but like all people who forgive on principle, and not from impulse, she never forgot. She still remembered Lil's infantine sins of this sort. They fully confirmed her in her opinion that Lil was a child of wrath.

This was Lil's last dinner at home, and much she wished Gran need not have been there. But it seemed accepted as a matter of course by all parties, that Lil must have a sort of maternal guardianship on this great occasion, so she submitted, with as good a grace as she could, to the invasion of the last cherished moments of her dear home life with her father.

Brough, for his part, did not want any dinner. This was alarming. It was an event almost unprecedented in his career, but then it was also something novel to have a daughter married. He began to wish, with the philosophic temper of middle age, that it was the day after to-morrow. The worst would be over then. So do people who have arrived at years of discretion face some painful operation. But Lil, with the tender-heartedness of early youth, longed to linger over these hours which seemed to hurry away so quickly, and to bring

her to the time when she would have to say good-bye to her girlhood.

Restlessly, all the evening, she wandered from one corner of the quaint cottage to another. She hugged the dogs, and kissed the very books and pictures on the walls, indeed the walls themselves. For Lil had not one painful association with her childhood or her youth; she had grown like a flower, happy in her life.



### CHAPTER III.

**L**IL'S wedding was to take place at the little village church, which was only a few yards distant over the common ; and there was no crowd to come and gaze, so everyone was to walk across, even Lil in her white dress. The near neighbourhood of this church had been a sorrow to Brough for years, for it possessed a most atrocious bell, which always made him cross on Sunday; to-day was the first occasion on which he could rejoice that the distance was so slight.

This quiet corner of the world, where things could be done with so little fuss, was but a brief journey from London ; so Charlie Newman was coming down by a morning train, with the only relation who showed any interest in his marriage. This was a cousin of his, a young barrister. His next nearest connections were a very rich old uncle, and another cousin, the old uncle's son ; of them he knew little, for the old man always imagined Charlie wanted money if he came to see them, or was making himself agreeable with the idea of a legacy. The result was

that Charlie, who was very independent, never went near the old man. His own father and mother had long been dead ; and so it came about that Alfred Davies, a showy-looking young barrister, not over-burdened with briefs, was the sole member of his family who appeared on this eventful day. He could not call Davies his "best man," or give him any official position, because Lil had announced her intention of doing altogether without bridesmaids. She had neither sisters, nor school friends ; the dogs, birds, and her father, were all her early playfellows. Lady Lynne and old Mrs. Warrington would be there to see the wedding, and that was all the feminine support which Lil could command, or thought at all necessary. So young Davies came down merely as an amiable relation ; he had no particular duties. Nevertheless, his position was by no means an enviable or easy one. Charlie Newman was in such an irrational frame of mind that morning that he insisted on going breakfastless, and much too early to catch the train. Alfred was allowed to swallow a few, hasty mouthfuls of food and drink a cup of coffee, with Charlie standing over him, watch in hand. But Charlie, himself, declared he could not swallow ; and Davies saw, from the moment that declaration was made, that trials were in store for him. He would have eaten his own breakfast were

he going to be married or to be hanged ; but Charlie was made of very different stuff.

Having began the morning in this fashion, naturally, Charlie was in a state of exhaustion by the time they arrived at the little village station. Davies had stolidly assumed the conduct of the expedition ; he evidently thought Charlie quite unfit to take charge of money, tickets, or himself.

It was a glorious morning, fresh and fair as if it were the first that Nature had ever produced. They walked down from the station on to the common and looked about them. It was not yet time to go to the church. Charlie felt nervously for the wedding ring, and then relapsed into silent endurance of the passing moments. The two well-dressed young men, standing in the sunshine on the common, were conspicuous and remarkable figures in this rustic neighbourhood. Several very small children gathered to gaze at the show. Davies looked at his cousin with a glance half of pity, half of contempt.

"Don't you wish you'd had some breakfast ? " he enquired, with the straightforward cruelty of the practical man.

"Well," said Charlie, "I believe I do feel rather faint."

"I wonder whether anything could be got at that small inn," remarked Davies ; "I shall feel responsible for it, if you faint



during the ceremony." Charlie groaned at the mere thought of it; and they began to move over the common towards a hostelry of very uninviting appearance. But their steps were arrested by a sudden shout, which startled them both; for a moment ago, the place seemed empty of human life, save that of the very small children.

It was Brough Warrington, leaning over his garden gate. "Halloa, you fellows!" he shouted with all the force of a formidable pair of lungs, "where are you off to?"

They turned and looked across at the figure at the gate. There was something about Brough Warrington which was quite inimitable; he was himself, and no one was at all like him. He stood there, his arms on the gate, leaning upon it in an attitude habitual to him; the villagers were accustomed to see him here, and no more observed the fine picturesqueness of the figure, than they noticed the sunset, which he came here every evening to watch. He was dressed with great care this morning; he wore a much newer black velvet coat than usual, and there was a fresh blue ribbon round his straw hat. A small man could scarcely have faced even this small society in such attire on his daughter's wedding morning; but Brough was so big, there was something so remarkable in all his attitudes and movements, his personality was so vivid and independent,

that no one would even have thought of suggesting any other dress than that he might choose to wear. But the whole effect of the man puzzled Alfred Davies considerably. He had dwelled all his days in the camp of the Philistines; he knew nothing of life outside the respectable commonplace and the disreputable commonplace. He put up his eye-glass to stare at Brough.

"Who on earth is that?" he asked of Charlie, in amazement.

"That," said Charlie, "is Brough Warrington, the author, 'King of Bohemia,' and my future father-in-law; I'm uncommonly glad to see him."

So saying, he walked rapidly towards the garden gate where Brough stood. The dogs, who had grown familiar with Charlie, during many river expeditions, now recognised him; the two big hounds jumped the narrow arm of water which divided the common from the garden, and bounded over the grass to greet him. Brough had a pet theory that a sensible dog knows a gentleman the moment he snuffs at him, and will hold no converse with a cad; so that he always viewed the dogs' advances to Charlie with satisfaction. Watching the meeting now taking place, he burst into a shout of laughter, for it was very evident that Charlie was particularly anxious to be amicable with the hounds at a distance and to preserve his spotless trousers from their caresses.

"You look extremely unhappy, old fellow," he observed, as Charlie drew near; "it's a good thing you don't get married every day, if this forlorn aspect is a necessary part of the proceedings. Come in and have some brandy and soda."

"That's exactly what I want," exclaimed Charlie, "only I should never have thought of it; this is my cousin, Mr. Alfred Davies."

"Come in," said Brough, opening the gate wide.

"But it's not the correct thing to come in till the ceremony is over," remarked Alfred, pausing in the gateway.

"Oh, hang the correct thing," said Brough, impatiently, "we don't do the correct thing down here, do we, Charlie, old fellow?" He put his arm through Charlie's, and led him off towards the house, leaving Davies to follow. A key-note of antagonism was struck between these two. Brough had classified Davies immediately as "one of the barber's block type," while Davies was intensely disgusted at being unable to classify Brough at all.

"Ye Gods and little fishes!" he heard Brough say, in his resounding voice, "no breakfast! well, I don't advise you to come in contact with any of the women in the establishment; the housekeeper turned me out of the kitchen just now, when I tried to find out if Lil had had anything to eat.

But if you'll wait here, I'll go and forage for you."

Charlie accepted this offer with great thankfulness, and remained, with much humility, just where he was left. Here he was joined by Davies, who was gazing through his eyeglass at everything around him. The whole place had a quaint, unconventional air which really puzzled him. He belonged to the numerous class that depends entirely on tradespeople for their surroundings; anything original, even in the management of a flower bed, surprised him.

Brough soon re-appeared, bearing his spoils—brandy and soda and biscuits. He looked in a much worse temper than when he went in.

"You and Lil are a couple of fools," he remarked, fiercely; "I can't think how in creation you come to be so much alike. She hasn't eaten any breakfast either, and those silly women do nothing but fuss over her dress. I'm going to look after her, so you must entertain yourselves."

Charlie was quite ready to do this. He wanted some Dutch courage so badly, that anything intoxicating appeared a boon from Heaven, to this usually abstemious young man.

So Brough started off again on further philanthropic missions. He went on tip-toe into the pantry; all the women were

upstairs looking at Lil. He grinned with delight as he surveyed the various dainties which were standing all ready for the wedding breakfast, and selected the most delicious morsel for his felonious purpose. Putting what he thought Lil would eat on a plate, and taking a bottle of Nierstiener under his arm, he marched boldly upstairs and invaded the sacred retreat, where the finishing touches were being put to the bride's costume. Lil was busy pinning white roses from the garden upon her white bonnet and on the bosom of her dress; this she would do for herself. The housekeeper, seeing Brough's unexpected figure, his resolute countenance, and the plate in his hand, rushed downstairs to see what havoc might not have been committed. For Brough was an entirely unreliable person to allow loose about a house; he would never consider that things were wanted for certain meals, but would demolish them when he felt inclined, or get up a picnic party in the garden at a moment's notice, with any material which he could find. The maids ran down, too; and only Gran was left. In some respects Mrs. Warrington had natural common sense, and though she felt shocked at Brough's cool and unapologetic entrance, she was glad to see that he intended to make Lil eat. So she went away, Lil being so nearly dressed, to complete her own stern attire.



"Now then, baby," remarked Brough, with that severe frown on his forehead, which had always made Lil laugh even in her early infancy, when she really ought to have been afraid of him, "you've got to stop fussing with your fripperies, and just attend to yourself. Starvation doesn't become a young woman, and certainly doesn't improve her complexion."

Lil was as white as her dress, and knew it. So she humbly sat down and submitted to be fed.

"You two are as mad as March hares," went on Brough, while he plied her with very small doses of wine, and jelly, and chicken. "He's come down in a state of exhaustion."

"Oh!" interrupted Lil.

"Oh, yes, he has come. And I should say, having inspected you both, that you will probably both live over the ceremony. But you're, each of you, as nervous and excitable as if you were going to marry a boa constrictor. It's quite clear that you were created for each other."

"That's one comfort, under the circumstances," remarked Lil; notwithstanding her nervous temperament, she had inherited her father's inability to be serious for very long together. This did not mean, with these two, that they were really less in earnest than other people; rather the reverse. But they

both did their thinking quickly, and there was not an atom of gloom about either of them. Lil loved to live cheerfully, like her father ; only she was not always so confident of being successful in doing it. She was intensely receptive, and was instantaneously affected by the condition of those around her. Brough's invasion enabling her to forget her dress and think about Charlie instead, had already raised her spirits.

A noise outside attracted Brough's attention ; he looked out of the window. "They are off to the church ;" he exclaimed, "by Jove, it is time, too. Put on your bonnet, baby, and I'll go and shut up the dogs."

So saying, he started off on an enterprise, the difficulty of which had never occurred to him till the moment arrived. Dogs who have never been chained or shut up during some six or seven years of a free and easy existence, are not easily disposed of. The history of Brough's efforts to get them all into any safe place was one which he would himself have shuddered to relate. His brow was wet with his exertions, and yet he had done nothing. At last, he got the two hounds into a sort of outhouse, and closed the door on them ; the little dogs, much too clever to be caught, standing at a safe distance and surveying the proceedings with loud tongued amazement. "Brough ! Brough !" cried his mother's voice. "Lil and I are going on, we

are late." Brough turned to go, but, at the sound of his departing footsteps, the big dogs put their noses in the air and howled dismally, with the evident intention of going on with the hideous sounds indefinitely. Brough rushed back, opened the door an inch to threaten them into silence—in an instant, they had slipped through and bounded away. Brough gave chase, and when he reached the front of the house, he beheld Lil's white figure afar, just approaching the church door, with Gran at her side, and the whole collection of dogs, large and small, walking demurely behind her, as if they had been expressly hired to do duty as bridesmaids on the occasion. Brough resigned himself to circumstances. There was nothing to be done now, at so late a moment, except shut them out of the church. Lady Lynne's carriage was standing in the road, so she must be already in the church; there was no one else to come, so Brough saw some hopes of keeping these too-faithful hounds from actually assisting at the ceremony. He came quickly to the door, just as Lil entered, and in time to silence Gran's exclamation of horror as she looked behind and saw the dogs. "Don't let Lil know," whispered Brough, "and I'll keep them out." Brough felt terribly responsible, for he had undertaken this part of the proceedings voluntarily. He had taken it for granted that no one else

could manage the dogs but himself, and he felt rather ashamed now of his own incapacity. Gran went on, leaving him to struggle with "those dreadful brutes," as she always called them. He shut them all out successfully, save one pertinacious little skye terrier, who slipped in and trotted up the aisle to where Lil stood on the altar steps.

The small wedding party was all assembled now; the clergyman and clerk were ready; the ceremony begun, and Lil, trembling like an aspen leaf, tried to listen. They stood there, these two young people, one twenty-three years old, and the other just seventeen, to take vows upon them, which death or disgrace alone hath power to annul. The courage of young creatures is a thing for their elders to admire; it is one of the powers of the world. Springing from mere ignorance and inexperience, it takes the form of a giant confidence, and leads every fresh generation to enter bravely upon the most perilous undertakings; just as the puppies in the kennel will play with the whip without fear, so young people take the crosses of life into their embrace with enthusiasm.

Just when Lil bravely uttered her "I will," there was a sound at the church door, and immediately all the dogs trotted up the aisle and mixed with the group in front of the altar. Lil's favourite hound planted himself solidly at her side and stared aggressively at the



clergyman, who, though a familiar acquaintance, looked to the canine intelligence, a strange and doubtful character in his surplice. The situation was awful, and Brough returned the piteous look which Lil gave him, by one of deep contrition. Then he looked behind to see what troublesome person had produced this state of affairs. He could see a man's figure standing near the door; and he fancied it seemed familiar.

Soon, to Lil's great relief, it was all over; the signing in the vestry and all of it. In a group they came down the church, Charlie and Lil in front, Brough and Lady Lynne behind; the clergyman had given his arm to Gran, and Alfred Davies brought up the procession, looking through his eye-glass at Brough, Lil, Gran, and the dogs. The whole thing puzzled him. He began to think these people must be gipsies. But Lil, he had to confess, was undeniably delicious, and Lady Lynne struck him as decidedly civilized.

At the church door there was a great pause. It arose from a man stepping forward, and holding out his hand to Lil.

"Let me be the first to congratulate you," he said, with a smile, and a sparkle in his eyes. He was a tall young man, effective looking, high coloured and with a tendency to stoutness. The smile, the sparkling eyes, which looked so agreeable to the others, seemed to affect Lil very differently. She dropped her



own eyes to the ground, the moment after she had raised them to his face. "I thank you," she said, gravely, and moved on without taking his offered hand.

"Let us go home quickly, Charlie," she whispered; "I hate that man; why is he here?"

"I'm sure I don't know, if you hate him," said Charlie, whose spirits were rising with incredible rapidity now the deed was done; "shall I shoot him, or duck him in the river? No, that would spoil my trousers. Who is he, by the way? Does he matter?"

"Oh, no," said Lil, the pride returning which surprise had startled away, "he does not matter at all."

They were half across the common by this time, and Brough was close behind them, with Granny.

"Ah, Dr. Swift," Lady Lynne was saying to the tall young man, whose presence Brough had only acknowledged by a nod, "you have been to my house, I suppose?"

"Yes, and they told me what was going on, and that I should find you here; so I came over to see the fun."

"I have promised to go to the breakfast," said Lady Lynne, "but I shall be back early in the afternoon. Take my carriage, and tell them to give you some lunch. Send the carriage back for me. I can't ask you to stay, except to dinner, for I've no other visitors."

Isn't it absurd for me to want chaperoning ; but this is a wicked world, you know ! Good-bye for an hour or two."

"So she's married, is she?" remarked Dr. Swift, as the lady picked up her silk train, preparatory to crossing the common.

"Yes, and over head and ears in love, this time. No chance for you now, sir."

"It seems not," said Dr. Swift, with a laugh, as she went away.

Alfred Davies, who had lingered a little, overheard these parting words, spoken rather louder than the rest.

"An old lover of the bride's," he said to himself, as he walked on. He had not yet been introduced to Lady Lynne, so, being a most conventional person, he did not dare to speak to her, though he would much have liked to offer her his arm.

Soon they were all gathered in the pretty dining room of Brough's cottage. Lil felt miserable and wanted to run away ; she hated this sort of thing. Her pet hound came and put his nose on her knee, as if he thought she was being ill-used in some way or other. Lil could have cried at his sympathy ; but, looking up, she caught sight of Brough's countenance wearing so abject an expression, that it roused her out of her own forlornness.

"Oh, papa, don't look like that!" she said, "or I shall not go away, after all."

"No use saying that, Mrs. Newman," said

Alfred Davies ; “ you are bound by the law.”

The corners of Lil’s mouth fell suddenly ; it sounded so terrible, that she felt altogether crushed by this legal view of having got married. But soon some champagne and the persistent merriment of the others, made both Brough and Lil grow more cheerful. The breakfast lasted a long time, for all present were intimate friends except Alfred Davies, and he found the breakfast itself a sufficiently interesting occupation.

But at last Lil disappeared to change her dress ; and then the party soon broke up. The clergyman and Lady Lynne left first ; then Alfred Davies walked across to the station and took a train to London ; and, eventually, Charlie and Lil started off to catch an express for Scotland.

When the shadows of the limes began to lengthen on the lawn, the island and the cottage seemed utterly deserted. Old Mrs. Warrington had announced her intention of staying a few days longer to cheer Brough, and prevent his feeling lonely at first. Brough to escape this process of cheering up, started off for a long walk with the dogs.

A phase of his life had come to an end. He had lost his Miranda ; what would the island be like without her ? “ Infernally dull ! ” Brough said to himself, and bit his moustachios. He loved the country, he liked the

simplicity of life possible there. It pleased him to walk about among the rustics, and, though he lived in their midst, be unknown to them, practically; whereas in London he was too well known, and his striking figure constantly arrested attention. But though he found existence more delightful on his island than anywhere else, he was by no means adapted for a hermit, and he knew it.

"I'll go to town for a week or two," he said to himself, as he strode away over the fields; "I've been down here too long."

So he resolved; but he could not go at once. It grew dark, and was near dinner time; he must go home.

The house was lit up when he got back, and Gran sat in an arm chair reading. But how empty it was! He just checked himself from calling out "Baby, where are you?" No use; Lil was gone; and, though she might come back again, she would never again be his Lil.

This was intolerable. Brough announced his intention of going to town the next day, and ordered his portmanteau to be packed for a week's stay.

"Then I'll go home to-morrow," said Gran, with an angry consciousness that her presence could not compensate for the absence of that child of wrath, that brand unsnatched from the burning, that "little scamp Lil," as Brough was wont to call her.

## CHAPTER IV.

**Y**OUTH, health, and happiness are three of the most glorious possessions man or woman can have in this world of ours. Preferable by far to the Koh-i-noor, or the autocracy of All the Russias. And these three things had Charlie and Lil, his wife, when they came home to their suburban cottage. That little castle of theirs seemed to them a perfect palace; for were they not together, and alone in it, absolute monarchs, to do as they might choose.

The cottage was one among many, all just alike; a collection of nests where lived innumerable city clerks and their wives and babies. But the cottages were semi-detached; there was a square yard of ground in which seeds might be sown with some hope of their developing into plants, and there were small lilac and laburnum trees here and there. To Charlie who had been living in London itself for some years, occupying solitary lodgings in a gloomy square, the place seemed a rural paradise. Lil wondered at first whether she would be able to breathe in it; but love glorifies its surroundings. It seemed so



adventurous to these two to be dining in their own house together, that they forgot how very small the dining room was.

This new young couple were quite an innovation in the neighbourhood and were much stared at when they went out in the evenings for their long walks, arm-in-arm, and accompanied by Lil's notable puppy, a young dog with a surprising facility for getting into trouble. These three together explored the whole neighbourhood before they had been at home a month, for Lil felt as though she were imprisoned in the little garden. And it was so natural to her to be out of doors that unless it were very wet, or she had some task to accomplish, it never occurred to her that the house was a place to stop in. She had learned from her father to read while she walked, and, whenever she had no immediate reason for staying in, she was out in the air, a book in her hand and her dog following her. The other ladies of the neighbourhood regarded her with some curiosity as she walked about in her dark serge dress and her straw hat, and if Charlie was with her they were still more interested. For the two were so evidently absorbed in each other; Charlie seemed to see nothing but the face under that straw hat of Lil's. And they always appeared to be so gay and light-hearted that these other ladies, whose souls were burdened and weighed down by wash-

ing days and mending baskets, sighed and wondered how it was, ending invariably with the reflection that "things would be different when there were half a dozen children."

But there was more differences than arose from the absence or presence of half a dozen children between this little household and the others. Lil, with all her earnestness of nature, had learned one grand secret which belongs to Bohemia; not to be easily made anxious about everyday trifles. This has very much to do with the fact that Bohemia is a gay country, and Philistia a gloomy one. In the house of the Philistine if there is anything wrong with the servants, or if the dinner comes to grief in any way, it is a solemn and awful fact making everybody seriously uncomfortable and altering the whole atmosphere of the day. But in that other light-hearted society, if there are no servants, the master of the house will open the door without shame or apology; he has just painted a picture or composed a poem, and little cares he for standing on his dignity. If the dinner is a failure, he brews a bowl of punch to raise his spirits, hoping fervently that to-morrow may see happier events, but refusing to yield his inner brightness because the mutton was raw or the partridges burned. In this school Lil had been trained, and though she set about her housekeeping tasks with much spirit and determination, it never occurred to

her that to play the character correctly she ought to think of nothing else from morning to night and worry incessantly over the small details which would not always come right. On the contrary, she laughed when she failed, and if the eatables were doubtful, suggested picnicing on a pot of strawberry jam or something equally absurd and unsubstantial. Charlie had not yet reached the stage of life when the smaller comforts of existence become absolutely necessary; he liked to see Lil laugh, and he looked forward to coming home in the evening as to an adventure. There was never any knowing what Lil might have done; there was no monotony in the life in this cottage. Indeed, how could there be? Children do not find play monotonous, if they are allowed to play in their own fashion. And life was all playtime to these lovers as yet. It was not work, it was pleasure to Charlie to go to the office which he hated; for now he went there not merely for the seemingly selfish purpose of getting his own bread and butter, but to buy dinners and breakfasts, gloves and bonnets for a slender, brown-eyed, laughter-loving princess. And the coming home in the evening, instead of being dull work, as of old, was now a daily delight. For there was Lil, always at the gate looking for him, her loose hair blowing off her forehead, and her big-pawed puppy sitting up gravely at her feet. The dog was grave;

Lil seldom was. "Can you guess what has happened to day?" were generally her first words. And then they go arm-in-arm into the house, laughing over the details of some extraordinary encounter of Lil's with the butcher or the kitchen boiler. It was like children playing with a doll's house. Everything seemed funny and delightful because the two were so absurdly happy.

The furniture of this small cottage was gathered by degrees, and it assumed, week by week, a prettier and brighter appearance. Lil loved every inch of the little place and was perfectly happy arranging and decorating it. Indeed she began to marvel at her own domesticity. The truth was that the four walls of this house were not, to her, those of an ordinary dwelling; they were the visible encasement of her love. Any place in which we are perfectly happy is a place we glorify and transform. Lil wondered sometimes whether there were such another charming nest in all the world as this miniature home of hers.

"I can't imagine," said Charlie, one evening, when they came home from a long walk and entered their sitting-room, "why men have such an idea of waiting till they are well off before they marry. It seems to me the greatest mistake in the world. It is twice as delightful to pull through the breakers together. Don't you think so, Lil?"



"Of course I do," said Lil, with her light laugh, which came from an internal and seldom failing spring of cheerfulness. "But then" she added, with her quaint little air of gravity, "men are different; they are not all so easily satisfied as you are!"

She was standing in the bow window of the room, with the last rays of light falling upon her. The same Lil, slender, graceful, a peculiar air about her form as if there were strength enough there to make life a holiday; the readily smiling mouth and grave brown eyes; the same Lil that looked into her father's writing room the day before her marriage. Yet changed, for then she held the shadow of a doubt in her heart, now she had none. She had not been quite sure all through her engagement whether she really wished to be married; now she had given herself and her love so entirely to Charlie Newman, that already she was incapable of imagining existence without him. Her smile was always bright and sweet; but when it was for him it had that mysterious meaning in it which is only seen in the smile of a woman for the man she loves.

Charlie looked up as Lil spoke and was startled, as he had been more than once of late, by her growing beauty of expression.

"I am not easily satisfied," he answered, crossing the room to where she stood. "I asked for the thing I most desired in the world, and I got it."



“Oh!” said Lil, inclined to ask “Does that mean me?” but refraining, as she met Charlie’s eyes, from so evidently unnecessary a question. He stood at her side, holding a stray lock of her brown hair in his hand and pressing it against his own brown moustache, gazing at her the while as if she were the one being in the world. And so she was to him. He desired to see no one else. She filled his life and made it new. Until now he had never dreamed that existence could be so joyous a fact. It seemed to him as if he had been born again since this light-hearted girl had declared herself to be his property.

His property!—he was thinking of that as he stood looking at her; was it possible that she belonged to him, this woman whose individuality was so bright, so separate, so real? Yes, she was his; united with him indissolubly.

Lil was thinking of it too. A peculiar sympathy existed between them which they had been dimly aware of ever since their first meeting. It was not always necessary for them to speak in order to convey a thought or an idea. It seemed as if a mysterious link existed between the two minds; communication was possible without words. The sympathy, so intense as to produce this peculiar consciousness of each other’s thought—was vividly realised by them and added a certain sacredness to the love which united

them. Perhaps it might be accounted for by a certain similarity between the two. Both were of excitable, gay, nervous temperament, of bright, sunshine-loving disposition, quickly cast down by clouds in the natural or mental sky. Charlie's eyes were gray-blue, but his hair was brown, like Lil's, with almost the same touch of sunshine colour in it. Standing together, as they were now, they looked as though a blood-relationship united them instead of the relationship of love. Only their eyes contradicted this; no observer could have mistaken them for brother and sister.

Charlie was about half a head taller than Lil; he looked down into her eyes and saw her thoughts there. Lil's eyes were perhaps her most peculiar charm. They were of a clear brown, not very dark, they had in them a certain luminous expression, a straightforwardness, a perfect honesty; their quiet gaze imparted a sense of rest, it was so pure and steady. Charlie felt when he let that regard penetrate his own, as if his soul leaned upon hers and found an exquisite repose in the sweet contact.

"Is it true," he said, answering her glance of love, "that you belong to me? Is it not very strange that it should be true?"

"Is it true?" repeated Lil. "Can it be true? Is it possible for one human being to belong to another? I am myself, you know, after all. What has a man got who owns a slave?"

The power to beat him and make him work. He cannot command the man's passions or emotions. Neither can you command mine, or I yours."

"But you can charm them!" answered Charlie. "And in that you have a power greater than any given by law. But still you know we have each a hold upon the other—a legal one. We are no pagan lovers! No votaries of a passion known only to our two selves. We have taken on us the legal bonds, entered the holy sacrament. We have been married in church! The law holds you now as my chattel; I can do what I will with you, provided I do not desert you, or starve you, or make visible black and blue marks on your pretty skin. How do you like the sound of it?"

"Not much," said Lil; "I never did like the sound of it. I think it is horrid."

"But you can't help it now," cried Charlie. He caught her hands and kissed them. "These hands are mine to kiss. You have done it, and it is no use thinking it horrid now. You are mine."

"I don't think it as horrid as I did before I was married," admitted Lil, with a smile. "And yet," she went on, "it seems very terrible, the idea that a woman should make herself somebody's property. I wonder girls ever have the courage to marry ordinary young men."

"Oh, then, I am not an ordinary young man?"

"I don't think you are," replied Lil, seriously. "I am sure I should be very much afraid at the idea of belonging to any of the other young men I have ever met. Fancy Alfred Davies, or Dr. Swift! Oh, it would be horrible, indeed. I should expect them to scold me and treat me as a sort of white slave. Why, it is unbearable even to think of."

"It is not so unbearable in the present case?" inquired Charlie, mildly, observing two bright spots of indignant and rebellious colour appearing in Lil's cheeks.

"Don't be absurd!" was her reply; "you know it isn't; if it was I should run away. I never was intended for a saint or a martyr, or to be a patient suffering creature."

"No," said Charlie, "I think you have the blood of a little rebel in you. I know you don't like being bound to anything, even to me."

"Oh, I am resigned to that," answered Lil, a gleam of fun in her eyes. "At least for the present, indeed," she added, more gravely, and with a sudden smile full of sweetness, "I think my rebellious spirit rather rejoices in its chains. I like the sense of having given up some part of my individuality, of having merged my career and my life in yours. It is an easy vocation, mine, merely to take care of someone I like very much. I think

it is charming. I used to harass myself with wondering what I should be or do, when I was older. Now I need not think of that any more, it is all settled for me. I have only to look after you."

"But I don't quite agree to that," said Charlie, "you are rather too good to be given up to the sole task of taking care of me. I should like you to do some writing now and then "

"Should you?" said Lil. "Then I will. That is so delightful, to be told what to do and to do it, instead of having to decide for oneself. It is so easy to obey; I suppose it must be natural to a woman?"

"Yes, to most women, because they have no brains, and it saves them the trouble of trying to think."

"That is why I like it, I suppose."

"I don't think so. I fancy you like the idea of obedience, but would object to the reality. Supposing I told you to do something you disapproved of?"

"I shouldn't do it," replied Lil, with considerable decision. Charlie burst out laughing.

"A moment ago you were rejoicing in your chains!" he exclaimed.

Lil coloured a little. "You see I have been taught independence," she said, rather timidly; "you must teach me better. But I dare say it is all nonsense, my saying I shouldn't do it; I expect when it came to



the struggle between doing what I liked or pleasing you, I should give in very quickly."

"You think so now," he said; "let us wait till these pretty new chains are a little rusty, and then see."

Lil cast a look of reproach on him, an eloquent look which made him thrill.

"How can you talk like that," she said; "the chains which unite us can never grow rusty. Surely it is not the legal bond which holds us together? Are you conscious of that? I am not, indeed. I don't know whether I understand it. It seems to me so funny that if people found they didn't like each other, still they would be married. But with us is it not something else—a real bond, I mean—which exists between us?"

"Oh!" said Charlie, "you consider the legal bond an unreal one, do you? But it isn't, as you would quickly find out if you tested it. We are bound together as though by links of iron."

"Ah!" cried Lil, putting up her hands, "don't say that. It sounds so terrible."

"Why? I would not mind literal links of iron which bound me to the one being I cared for, to the prettiest, sweetest girl on earth! Realise it, Lil, it is delicious. We cannot be separated. No one can come between us. Oh, I like it. Do not you?"

He stooped down to look into her face which now was downcast. She raised it and smiled.

"Of course, I like it under the circumstances," she said. "How determined you are to make me confess it."

"It is pleasant to hear you," answered Charlie. "It is fun to make my little white slave vow she loves her slavery."

"Well, I do. Now you have it," she said. "Do you know it has grown dark while we have been talking this nonsense. I don't believe you can see my face. Come, I must light the lamp. I wonder whether it will smoke to-night?"

"Probably," said Charlie, who had discovered by this time that accidents *will* happen, "but, if it does, I can smoke too; I will have a pipe and try to be philosophical, while you are investigating the subject."

The lamp did smoke and was taken out again in disgust.

"I believe I spent an hour over that thing this morning," remarked Lil, sorrowfully; "I begin to think I am very stupid."

"At cleaning lamps, perhaps," said Charlie; "but then a woman who could do everything would be unbearable. And no one ever supposed your talents to lie especially in that direction. Let me come and assist you with my masculine intellect."

The result of which proposal was that they went into the kitchen together, and Lil took the lamp to pieces, while Charlie smoked his pipe and looked at her. The minor trials

which upset people's tempers when they grow older, could not disturb these young creatures, rich in their love and happiness. Lil did not care what she did or where she was so long as Charlie loved her. This is an ideal state, yet one which was very real to Lil. It was familiar to her; for with her it was a sort of second nature to live for someone else. Until she met Charlie, her whole life had been absorbed in her father's; she had never imagined living apart from him or having any interests other than his. If she pleased him she was content. Now all this was transferred to Charlie. And her career, at present, was easy enough; it was not difficult to please Charlie. Smoky lamps, stupid maidservants, doubtful dinners, were nothing to him while Lil presided. She was the brightest, most charming creature he had ever come in contact with, and her presence made the little kitchen appear to him as delightful as an æsthetic drawing room.

The cottage was an old-fashioned one of two stories; the kitchen opened out from the dining-room. Lil couldn't get used to the London habit of shutting the front door; anybody might walk in at almost any hour and investigate the whole of the small establishment. Thus it was that while Lil was peering into the mysteries of the lamp, and Charlie was exercising his masculine intellect by smoking his pipe and thinking

how pretty her bright head looked in the Rembrandtesque illumination of a solitary dip, somebody came through the dining room and stood at the door of the kitchen.

"By Jove! domesticity with a vengeance," said a voice, unmistakeable in its strength and volume.

"Papa!" cried Lil, and in an instant had disappeared into Brough's capacious embrace, while Charlie, rising to the emergency, lit the lamp.

Soon they were established in the sitting-room, Brough in the biggest armchair—one which Lil informed him she had bought on purpose that he might have something substantial enough to sit on when he came to see her. Lil dropped on the ground, in her old attitude between his knees. Charlie, pipe in mouth, stood on the hearthrug and observed the group. How often he had done this, in Brough's cottage, when he was falling wildly in love! There had been times, in those delightful Bohemian evenings, when he had imagined Lil to be something of a panther-woman, ready to play him fair or play him false as she might fancy. He had come out of surroundings so ordinary and commonplace that she and her father appeared to him creatures of another kind from those he was accustomed to; and sometimes, when it seemed too good to be true that this gay Lil could learn to love him, he had thought the

two might together be laughing at him in their sleeves, playing with him. Now he knew that Lil with all her brightness of mind and originality of character was as innocent, as simple, as honest as a piece of pure nature can be. And so he looked at these two, father and daughter, with new eyes. He admired them both, infinitely more than when they were still something of a mystery to him. Then their unconventional character had charmed him from its novelty, now it interested him far more, because he knew it sprang from real originality of mind.

But while he looked at the group, so like what it used to be, yet so unlike, he saw something which startled him. Lil saw it at the same moment.

"Papa," she exclaimed, "you are tired, ill, I believe. I never saw you look so before!"

"Only rather done up," he answered. "I've been knocking about. The fact is I've been going a little too fast. I came away from home the day after you got married and haven't been back yet, and this infernal city doesn't suit me at all."

"Mercy on us!" said Lil, sitting down in a heap and surveying her father with amazement. She had never known him stay in town for more than a few days together.

"I've met with a lot of friends, of course," went on Brough, who evidently felt his



haggard looks required explanation, "and have been dining out, and supping out, and breakfasting out rather too often. It's no end of a nuisance to know such a host of people."

"It wouldn't matter," remarked Lil, "if they weren't all so fond of you. You should be disagreeable and then they wouldn't ask you to dinner."

"Impossible," remarked Charlie. "When a man is one of the best talkers and best tempered men in the world, people naturally like him."

"Hulloa," said Brough, "you used not to have such a specially high opinion of me, that I remember!"

"I have been learning to appreciate the family constitution," answered Charlie.

"But you do not mean to tell me, papa," said Lil, with great severity, "that you have been dissipating all this time, just because you had not me to keep you in order."

"I do," answered Brough. "What's a fellow to do in that cottage with nobody to talk to but the dogs? Besides, my mother insisted upon staying to cheer me up, and I really could not face that; I don't know what would have become of me without you to protect me; why, she might have converted me. Oh, it's all very well to laugh, my dear boy, but the strongest intellect gives in before successive days of being talked at by an old lady who is impervious to reason. There

was no way of uprooting her except by coming away myself, so I adopted Falstaff's policy and fled from the enemy."

"She is coming to see me soon, now," said Lil, very seriously, "and I am trying to learn the price of things by heart. But I know I shall forget at the critical moment; I never could learn things by heart."

"People with brains never can," remarked Brough; this was a favourite theory of his. He had no memory himself, and found this a convenient way of accounting for the fact.

"But Gran isn't there now," observed Lil.

"I know that," replied Brough. "I am aware that for some time past I have had no excuse, so you need not awe me by that stern countenance, baby. I shall have to go back and do a tremendous spell of work, for I am all behind-hand, and I have agreed to produce a new book in the course of next year on the English drama. I should like to have you to help me in that, baby; I wonder whether you would have time?"

Lil looked from her father to Charlie. If their wills did not agree, would she be able to have one of her own, or to decide between them?

"Of course she would," said Charlie, "I object to her absorbing her whole time in the cultivation of the domestic virtues. You intended her for something better, and by-and-bye I hope she will not have to give so much attention to details."

"Well said, old fellow," exclaimed Brough. "I approve. Don't let the child become head-cock-and-bottle-washer and nothing else. So far I must say she does you credit. I never saw her look better. And now I must be off. Don't look so amazed, Lil. It is a supper party to celebrate the first night of a play, by my friend Edmund Laurence. I went to the theatre with him, but it was too hot or I was bored ; at all events I thought I would come over and look at you in this unceremonious fashion. I did not mean to come so soon, you know, baby. I'll come again in a month or two and stay longer, perhaps."

"Oh, papa," cried Lil, with her arms round his neck so tight that suffocation seemed imminent, "don't go so soon, or do come back to-morrow !"

"No ; I am going home to-morrow ; I am over head and ears in unfulfilled engagements. Don't tempt me, you little scamp."

"But you will be so dull at home alone," whispered Lil, her conscience pricking her terribly. Why had she ever got married and broken up the dear old happy life ? She felt herself to be desperately wicked and selfish.

"Ah, well," said Brough, "I don't know what to do about that. I suppose I shall have to follow your bad example and get married."

"Oh !" said Lil ; she fell back and her arms dropped at her side.

“Now, I must find a cab and be off or Laurence will never forgive me. I promised to be there by twelve. What’s that? it looks like brandy and seltzer!”

Charlie, who had disappeared a little while since, had just presented himself, carrying a large glass.

“How many brandies and sodas do I not owe you,” he observed, “not the common B. and S. of hospitality, but timely drinks which enabled me to pass critical moments of my life. I should never have had the courage to propose, and should certainly have expired before the marriage service was over, had you not come to my rescue.”

Brough put down his glass, emptied by one of those vast drinks to which he was addicted, and burst into a roar of laughter. It sounded more like himself, and cheered Lil a little. Then the two men went out to look for a cab, and Lil leaned over the gate of her small garden and listened for the last sounds of her father’s boisterous voice. It sounded cheery enough now, as it came to Lil across the road. But she had a heart ache, the first one of her life. She cried herself to sleep that night.

## CHAPTER V.

**L**IL wanted to go home, as she called it! and stay with her father. This idea was speedily nipped in the bud.

“You got married with your eyes open,” remarked Charlie. “You knew you would not live with him when you were married. You had much better let him get used to it! I have no doubt it is very dull down there alone; but he must find some fresh alleviation, for you are Lil Warrington no longer; you are my wife.”

Lil received this last piece of information without making any reply. Charlie was rather fond of telling her of this fact, of which she was perfectly aware; and when she had been wanting her own way in anything it always reduced her to silence. She did not know whether she admired it or not, this consciousness of power which Charlie sometimes displayed. It is a feeling not uncommon among young husbands; they only see, with human shortsightedness, the immediate appearance of their life-long bargain; they have got their pretty white slave, and the feeding and keeping her is as yet a novel pleasure.



made a shade more charming by the sense of power and possession.

So it was with Charlie. He viewed Lil across the breakfast table, where this discussion had been held, with delight. She was his. She could not fly away from him like the wild bird she used to be ; she was tamed, domesticated. She was all his own ; and he said this to her, coming round to where she sat by the fireside, and said it in such sweet words and with such a tender look in his eyes, that Lil smiled her answer.

“Well,” she said, “I know I must not go, but I wish there was anyone there who cared for him. The old housekeeper is very good, but she would not understand what I meant if I asked her how he is. If he eats his dinner and does his work she will think he is quite well and happy. I don’t like to think of him, all alone there ; yet what can I do ? ”

“I expect he has got over it by this time ! ” said Charlie, mischievously. “He won’t go on pining for a little girl like you.”

“That may be,” said Lil, sedately, “but I want to know whether he frets over it or not ; and how can I, unless I go down ? ”

“Going down, yet, would only make matters worse,” answered Charlie. “Let him get used to being without you. If you are anxious about him, write to someone—write to Lady Lynne.”

“Oh, no ! ” cried Lil.

“Why not?” asked Charlie. He was busy lighting a cigar, before he started out, so he did not pay much attention to her words. Lil said no more. She would not complain. She was ashamed of being jealous of Lady Lynne; yet she was desperately jealous. She could not easily reconcile herself to thus making an advance to her and appealing to her kindness. She had not forgiven her for what she had made her feel about Dr. Swift. The sense of shame which Lady Lynne had roused in her she connected with that lady, and not with him. But the thought of Lady Lynne made her think of this old admirer; and any association which suggested him was disagreeable to her. She had never said anything further to Charlie about him than those words, uttered at the church door, “I hate that man.” She had thought then, “I will explain; I will tell him about it.” But happiness makes short memories, and who can be expected to think of old follies amid the wonder of new happiness? Lil was married now, and to the only man whom she thought worth notice in all the world, save her father. Every day that she lived with him she admired Charlie Newman more and more. Her only shame with regard to Dr. Swift was that she should ever have tolerated his society, for by comparison with Charlie she could see that in reality he was not a gentleman; and she was glad to think of her old flirtation as trivial and

ridiculous, and a thing which it was beneath her to remember. It was just a trifling sore place in her memory, and she disliked Lady Lynne for having made it more sore than it need have been. For she was still unable to see that she had done any real wrong, or compromised herself at all. Strange though it may seem, it is indeed possible for a really innocent girl to keep her innocence even after she is a woman, and is supposed to know good and evil. Lady Lynne had succeeded in producing in her, on that day before her marriage, an uncomfortable and unfamiliar sense of shame; and she dreaded being brought in contact with her again. But she disliked, more than all, appealing to Lady Lynne about her father. She had no right to be jealous of her; yet how jealous a woman can be, without right, and sometimes without reason!

All this passed through Lil's mind as she sat there, leaning her head on her hand and looking seriously into the fire, while Charlie lit his cigar. But, that done, he interrupted her thoughts effectually.

"I am going to see Alfred Davies, to-day," he said, "and should like to bring him home to dinner."

Lil looked up, horror-stricken. So far, she had only been obliged to set forth her culinary triumphs before Charlie, who was still too much in love to care particularly about his

dinner ; a visitor was something much more terrible. But her common-sense told her that she had been spared this trial a long time ; so she only said, "all right," as Charlie hurried away, and then set herself to consider the matter.

She was afraid of the butcher—terribly afraid of the butcher—for he knew his business of selling, and she knew nothing about hers of buying ; and he generally cheated this proud looking young woman who entered his shop with her head held high, and her heart in her mouth. She had no idea how animals are constructed, and was filled with the vaguest notions about the various joints. But her first week's expenses at that shop so alarmed her that she set herself to study the matter as a new science, and now she knew a little more about it. But she could not conquer a certain terror of all the tradesmen, who seemed to her such superior beings, with such an intimate knowledge of their business. And she, alas ! was so utterly ignorant of hers. She was even a little afraid of her stupid maid-servant, for that young woman knew a great deal more about household affairs than her mistress did.

People forget all these agonising experiences, common to young housekeepers, and every generation of wives is launched upon the world in the same state of delicious ignorance. But in Lil's case it was much worse than in most, for she had been taught to disregard the very



details which now she found it so essential to understand. The result was perhaps good on the whole. She had no time to think about her father, or Lady Lynne. Her one object was to please Charlie and, somehow or other, to turn out a decent dinner.

So she sat down with a cookery book and determined to decide exactly what she wanted before she faced the butcher. The morning was soon gone, and the afternoon was spent in the kitchen. With a large brown holland apron over her dress, Lil stood over the kitchen fire, afraid to leave her saucepans or her ovens for a moment. She thought once or twice what Brough would have said to the spectacle. But she knew she was doing right, under the circumstances, and her only fear was, that after all this industry, her dinner would come to grief.

But it did nothing of the kind. Lil found her father was right, and that a brain accustomed to being used can be turned in new directions with ease. She studied her cookery book as she had studied her Latin grammar, and came forth successful. The only unfortunate circumstance was that the little maid could not be trusted to "dish up" the dinner, so that Lil was unable to appear until it was on the table; when she came into the dining-room looking so charming, with her flushed cheeks and bright eyes, that Davies was startled into a compliment. Charlie surveyed



the scene with satisfaction; it is wonderful how men at once despise and appreciate the domestic virtues.

"This is a pretty little place," remarked Davies, "and I must say you seem uncommonly comfortable. I should like to get married, too; I am tired of knocking about in lodgings and dining every day at the club."

"Why don't you?" inquired Charlie, with the air of a man of experience, who can recommend his own course of life.

"Well, you see," said Davies, "it takes a long time to make a good living at the bar. And it is not every lady who has the talent for making love in a cottage agreeable. I am sure Mrs. Newman is a bright and rare example. I always dread the sordid, bread-and-cheese side of it; some infernal butcher calling for his little bill, and my wife crying because there isn't any dinner."

"It's a matter of management," answered Charlie, with that delightfully wise and superior manner which young men of his age are wont to assume, "and of keeping strictly within one's income."

"Ah, well, that is exactly what I don't believe I could do," said Davies; "I hate short commons, and sticking at home because I can't afford to go out."

"You would like to have a home and to be a gay bachelor both at once?" remarked Lil, slyly.

"That's a severe way of putting it, Mrs. Newman," said Davies, "but I don't mind confessing that the difficulty with me is what all men, who want to marry before they have obtained any success in life, have to face. It is the giving up of all one's personal pleasures. You see Charlie here is such a desperately domesticated fellow. He never did care for his club, and I can quite believe that he never wants to go out of this house when he is once in it."

Lil laughed at this ; it was a very shrewd hit.

"When Charlie was a small chap, I well remember he always liked to play with the little girls," said Davies. "It's that poetic taste of his, I suppose. Men who write poetry are always fond of women, and contented with their society. I've noticed that in others, and as to Charlie ----"

"Now, Alfred," said Charlie, interrupting him, "we don't want any old love stories here. I am ready to confess that I have always been in love more or less, ever since I was breeched. Are you interested in old love affairs, Lil? If you are, I propose fair play, at all events, and that we should all relate the history of our pasts. I object to being the only person exposed."

"I'm not going to tell tales of myself," said Davies, looking up at Lil. "Are you, Mrs. Newman? The only fun in telling old stories is when they are about other people."

"Of course," said Lil. Davies, looking at her, kept his gaze fixed; for Lil had flushed from brow to chin, even her neck had crimsoned. It was partly that she had a momentary fear of this proposal being carried out; she would never have dreamed of refusing to tell her own stories if it had been expected of her, and she, involuntarily, and to her intense disgust, thought with horror of speaking of Dr. Swift before this Davies, whom she could not learn to like. But it was partly that she was a little tired and nervous.

Davies dropped his eyes at last, and turned the conversation; but he had noticed Lil grow uneasy under his gaze, and the fact pleased him. Being an ordinary man of the world he always suspected everybody until he knew they were innocent; and he thought of that little scene at the church door of which he had been a witness. He was very shrewd, too; and he immediately said to himself, "So she has never told Charlie about that old lover of hers! Women are all alike, after all."

"Keeping within one's income isn't always so easy as it looks," he said aloud. "I should much doubt my ability in that direction. Now, if that old uncle of ours would die and leave us each a neat little legacy, it would make a difference, wouldn't it?"

"He won't leave either of us a penny, you may be quite sure of that," said Charlie. "He hates us both, like poison, because we should

inherit if his son dies. And I don't believe his son will live; he takes too much care of him."

"Oh!" said Lil. Charlie had never talked of these expectations, they appeared to him too remote to be worth a thought.

"Didn't you know your husband has the chance of being a rich man, Mrs. Newman?" said Davies, noticing her evident surprise. "It is true enough, and I have the honour, at present, of being your husband's heir."

Lil paused a minute, to take in the meaning of this last remark, and then quickly said, "But there is no real chance, is there?—is this son really delicate?"

"Yes, he is," said Charlie; "but even if he should die, my uncle is as tough as an old horse; he will outlive me. And then, I expect, the boy will marry soon; he is nearly as old as I am. In fact the less thought about such far off possibilities the better."

"Quite so," said Davies, "but that crusty old fellow doesn't know how to use his money. I'd rather you had it, for with all your wise speeches about management, I think you would understand spending a good income, Charlie."

"I don't know," said Charlie, "I am perfectly contented at present. We will leave the future to take care of itself. What more could I have than I now possess, if I were the richest man in England? A large house and

plenty of servants don't make much difference in one's life. The only appreciable difference to me between riches and poverty is that wealthy men have all the arts at their feet. That, I confess, I envy. Art is the sunshine of life, and under its influence one's being expands and grows. Lil was the first really cultivated and developed woman I had ever met ; and I consider I am a new man since I have known her. I have expanded and changed as I never supposed it was possible for me to change."

Lil flushed and frowned ; she did not understand being regarded, in the abstract, as a work of art. Davies did not follow the idea ; it confused him.

"I've never gone in much for art, myself," he observed ; "you are a different sort altogether. As I said before, men who write poetry are always different. I daresay you would buy pictures, and be a sort of patron, if you came into this fortune ; now my notion would be to give dinners, get together a first-rate cellar, and have what the Americans call a good time."

"I daresay I should do that, too," said Charlie, "we never know what we may become, or what latent tendencies may develop in us, until we have been tried by the changes of fortune. What do you think, Lil?"

"I would rather not think of it at all," said Lil. "There is little likelihood of any change



for us ; and indeed I do not desire one. What more can one be than happy ? ”

“ True enough,” said Davies, “ only that is such a very uncommon frame of mind. Most people I know are always wanting something different from what they have got.”

“ I don’t think I like change,” said Lil ; “ it gives me the heart-ache.”

Davies put up his eyeglass and looked at her. This was a malady he had never experienced, and he was interested in anyone who openly confessed to it.

He became more sensible, as the evening passed away, of the charm of this bright little house. He knew nothing of the magic which created the delightful atmosphere ; he was ignorant of the very alphabet of love. The only meaning he attached to the word was that of selfish desire. He could not guess that these two young people were so closely attached, so united by sympathy, that they gave spontaneously and with delight, each to the other, and had forgotten the existence of self. This union, so innocent and joyous, produced an air of ease and pleasure about themselves and everything connected with them. Nothing seemed difficult, or hard or tiresome, for every task was glorified by the sense of its accomplishment being achieved, not only for oneself, but partly for one dearer than self : no moment seemed monotonous or sad or dull, for there was a presence ever near

which filled each instant with that life which is the joy of the world.

If he had been told in so many words, Davies would not have understood that here, in this cottage, the power which keeps the world alive and makes men's hearts keep warm within them, was present in all its strength and glory. Most men pass through a whole lifetime, cheered by mere passing sips of this beverage of the gods; but these two had the full cup in their hands, and gathered strength and courage and beauty from it, with every passing hour that let them look into each other's eyes.

Davies did not know what it meant; but even he was aware that life was so pleasant here it was no wonder Charlie did not care for his club. "I don't think I should care to go out if I were in your place," he said, as he shook hands with his cousin at the gate; "I shall think about getting married."

"Do," said Charlie, "and, meantime, come and see us again soon."

Charlie turned back and went into the sitting room, where Lil sat in a low chair; she had drooped into an attitude of weariness, when left alone.

"Are you very tired, Lil?" said Charlie, noticing this.

"No, not very," said Lil, looking up with a smile of delight at his approach. She thought he would have gone farther with his cousin;

it was joy to her to feel how quickly he returned to her side. She looked so fair and sweet as she sat there in the lamp-light with this smile lingering on her lips that Charlie found it difficult, for a moment, to believe she was all his own, and that she would not suddenly change and vanish and be Lil Warrington once again. And with that fancy came a half-mischievous, half-jealous spirit into him.

"What did you blush so furiously for when I proposed telling our love stories, at dinner?" he asked. "Have you got any terrible secret buried in your bosom?"

"No, indeed," said Lil, but with a quick rush of warm blood rising to her face again; "it was merely that I thought of that Dr. Swift who was at the church door when we were married, if you remember!"

"But you said then you hated him?"

"So I do," said Lil, heartily.

"Then he doesn't matter to me," remarked Charlie, with renewed cheerfulness. "Did he want to marry you?"

"Yes," said Lil, a disconsolate tone making itself evident in her voice.

"And did you want to marry him?"

"I should think not!" she exclaimed.

"Then if you never wanted to marry him, and if you now hate him, I propose we forget his existence. I can't recollect anything that happened before we were married; I daresay I was engaged half-a-dozen times, but I'm sure

I forget all about it. There can be no more absurd mistake than to mar the beauty of new relations by raking up the memory of old ones. For my part I firmly believe that I was born again when I met you ; I am quite a different person ; all those other girls were slow and stupid ; it must have been a former life in which I was capable of admiring them. It is really impossible for me to imagine existence without you, and therefore I can't imagine ever having been without you ; so that my past becomes non-existent."

"Yes, yes," said Lil, "only I feel ashamed of ever having flirted with anybody that wasn't as nice as you are !"

Charlie burst out laughing.

"You little absurdity," he said. "Well, I have nothing to say about that, except that I'm very glad you did not think Dr. Swift as nice as I am, because then you'd have married him, and I should have had to be content with one of the other stupid girls."

"All other girls are not stupid," said Lil, seriously, "there are some much more delightful than I am."

"I don't believe it," said Charlie, with emphasis.

"It is so, though !" said Lil. "Perhaps you will meet with one some day."

"Impossible," said Charlie. "To begin with, you are unique ; you have a cultivated brain and a white little soul, instead of a mind

crammed with nonsense and all sorts of prurient ideas picked up from nurses and boarding-school teachers. It does a man good to associate with a woman whose nature has been allowed to develop on its own pure plan."

"But," said Lil, timidly, a little abashed before all this enthusiasm, and confused too, for she had no standard to measure herself by, "I know papa's teaching has been something very special for me; but I am sure there are other women who have had opportunities as good, and made even better use of them!"

"A few, yes. But I don't believe there's any woman in the world that bears the least likeness to you."

"Oh," said Lil, with a little sigh of satisfaction, "as long as you think so it is all right, I suppose? It will not hurt me, perhaps, to be flattered to-night, for I shall be thoroughly taken down to-morrow, when grandmama comes!"

"I believe you are really afraid of that old lady," said Charlie.

"In a sense I am," answered Lil. "She has different eyes from mine. I never could learn to see the things she found fault with, at home. I did not know, till she showed me, that the wainscoting was only dusted now and then instead of every morning."

"Well, you can dust all the wainscoting before she comes, that is if we have any; I'm sure I don't know."



“Oh, but she will show me ever so many things I have never thought of. And she makes me feel so wicked, I really don’t think I am! I believe it’s all because we are quite different, but still, she makes me feel guilty if only for being different from her!”

“For a strong minded young woman you are more easily made to feel guilty than I could have imagined possible,” said Charlie. “Even I can tease you in a minute or two into thinking yourself all a mistake and quite a trouble to everybody and no use in the world. Can’t I?”

“You, of course,” said Lil, with a look which contained a whole world of love and devotion, “but then it is all-important that you should approve of me.”

“Oh, it is, is it?”

“Of course, what should I do, otherwise? My life is yours; I should have no reason to exist if I didn’t please you. And that will make me a little less afraid of grandmama than I used to be; because it really doesn’t matter whether I am a child of wrath if you are satisfied!”

Charlie laughed again. “I don’t doubt your being a child of wrath,” he said, “but I am satisfied all the same; so according to your view of the matter you needn’t trouble about granny or anybody else.”

“Oh, no,” said Lil, “I never shall again.”

“You will have an easy life, then,” said

Charlie, "for you will find it wonderfully light work to please me."

"Shall I?" said Lil.

"Yes ; I shall always be pleased while you are happy."

"Ah, that is delicious, for how can I help being happy?"

And so these two, like a pair of love-birds, looked only into each other's eyes and forgot the whole world outside their own circle of sweet content. There was joy in mere life, in the simple passage of time, through this enthusiasm of early passion.



## CHAPTER VI.

**G**RAN arrived, punctually, of course. She had never been late in her life, but was, as a rule, half an hour too soon for any appointment. Lil knew this and was ready. Everything was in perfect order by the time old Mrs. Warrington was expected, and Lil had even made efforts to fasten back her curls more decorously than usual. But those curls were very wilful and disliked restraint as much as Lil herself; she felt the loose hair blow over her forehead again as she ran down to the gate and she felt, too, Gran's look of disapproval. Lil belonged to the type of woman with whom tidiness in dress is an unattainable standard, perpetually aimed at. She was always picturesque, even in a cooking apron; for the artistic nature in her affected everything she touched or wore. But she was too full of a generous vitality to be thoroughly tidy; her dresses wore out in a strangely short space of time, and when she undertook to arrange them herself the result was rather a pictorial effect than any excess of neatness. But to-day she had dressed herself with the utmost demureness; and with the consciousness that her

cottage was in perfect order, met her Granny bravely. Mrs. Warrington was growing infirm very rapidly and could only move slowly from the gate to the house, with Lil's help. At the open door she stopped and put her arms round Lil, giving her a peculiar solemn embrace, which in Lil's early youth had been her horror, for it tumbled her hair more than ever, and smothered her face in black alpaca. But to-day she submitted patiently.

"My dear," said Mrs. Warrington, "I am glad, and indeed thankful to see you in a home of your own. I used to have many fears for you in the future, your father being so reckless and improvident that no provision was being made for you. Now, my dear child, you are saved from want, and I thank the Lord for you in my prayers every day. In His infinite mercy He has given you food and raiment, as He gives to the lilies in the field. A very nice Brussels carpet, indeed, my dear; how much a yard was it?"

They had entered the sitting room now. Lil flushed hot. She had posted herself carefully as to the price of coals and candles; she had never thought of the furniture.

"I don't know, Granny," she said, sorrowfully, compelled to use her old answer, which Gran had so often repeated after her with scorn; "I will get the bill and see." She felt some triumph in this reply; a collection of

receipted bills appeared to her a proud possession.

"You *don't know*," repeated Mrs. Warrington, with a look of incredulity and amazement. "Never mind, if you do not wish to tell me ; I only thought it handsomer than the new Brussels in my best room. But young people like pretty things, I know ; I dare say this would have been too expensive for me. My treasure is in Heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt. Don't you find moth in that goatskin rug ? I think they are nasty things, there's always moth in them."

"I don't think there are any moths in that," said Lil, with a deprecating humility which the old lady well understood.

"You haven't noticed, perhaps," she said, with a profound contempt ; "look it over yourself, instead of leaving it to your maid."

"May I take off your bonnet ?" asked Lil, in the hope of changing the conversation. Her plan was successful, and the large old-fashioned black bonnet was changed for a big white cap, which had come in a cap-box. It is a noticeable fact that people who are supposed to have given up all pomps and vanities are most particular in the details of their severe costume. It was a formidable business to get Granny into her cap, and quite distracted her mind from the hearthrug. But, unfortunately, it brought up a still sadder subject.



“Now that you are married, my dear child, I had hoped to see you wear a neat cap, or at least have your hair in smooth braids. Remember that now you have entered the holy bonds of matrimony it is not righteous that you should delight the eyes of any man; you must look to your husband only, and forget the thoughts of vain admiration which fill the sinful hearts of young women; and to your husband you will be sufficiently ornamented by that carefulness and industry which make a virtuous woman.”

Lil had hastily arranged her curls during this speech, and, knowing the subject of her personal appearance to be a very dangerous one, she made an effort to escape from it. She never could understand why her mere appearance should so irritate her Granny. The truth was, not so much that Lil was too pretty, but that she was too irrepressibly picturesque for the severe taste of the old lady, who had been reared in a very different school from that of her granddaughter. Lil's graceful figure, in its tight fitting dress, her hair which was soft and wild like that on the brow of a baby Greuze, her attitudes, unconsciously artistic, her gay, vivacious manner, all these things outraged Mrs. Warrington's sense of propriety. Had Lil worn black ill-fitting alpaca, put her hair over her ears in smoothly brushed bands, and always sat upright in her chair, Gran would have been

ready to believe well of her, and would have been prejudiced in favour of her, as a virtuous young woman. As it was, she was just the reverse, and had been so, all Lil's life, and would be, to the end; much as she loved the child, she was prepared to believe evil of her, simply because Lil was not cut according to the pattern familiar to herself. Yet everybody who knew her would have called Mrs. Warrington a reasonable being, with a good share of common sense. This kind of unconscious bias is usual enough among us; our judgments of others are too often a mere bundle of prejudices and baseless opinions. Mrs. Warrington would have seemed an unusual old lady in a fashionable drawing room; but she had a conventionality of her own, and one form of orthodoxy is as difficult to deal with as another. Lil had never been able to decide which tried her patience the more; Lady Lynne's fashionable Philistinism or Mrs. Warrington's stern code of order and morality. All the sweetness in the child's life had come from her father; and it is small wonder if she clung to his teachings and could not learn from either of these two women to aim at what they would have called a more feminine standard. He liked her to look like a study by Greuze, and so did Charlie; so she determined to avoid this terrible old subject of her appearance.

“Will you come and look at the house

before dinner?" asked Lil, with a little inward tremor as she spoke. Would the house seem all right to Gran's inquisitorial eyes? Would the dinner be all right? The little maid-servant was in charge of an early dinner, which Lil had prepared with great care; she still felt doubts about it, for extraordinary things sometimes happened when she left the kitchen. But Gran could not be left without offence; so Lil must needs do the best she could.

Gran was only going to stay until the afternoon; she did not like being out after dark. Charlie was delighted with this arrangement for he did not at all desire any theological controversies with the old lady; he had done battle with her before his marriage, and now, having won Lil, he desired peace, and peace was not very easily to be obtained, in Mrs. Warrington's presence.

Lil's star was in the ascendant, she thought to herself, as the day passed on. Gran did not find more fault with the house than might have been expected, the dinner was a success, and Lil was triumphantly positive about the price of everything on the table. In the afternoon Gran was established in the big arm-chair in the sitting room, and Lil sat, as demurely as possible, opposite her. She felt gently elated at her success in her new character of housekeeper. Granny really had not crushed her very much. Lil, being unused

to the way in which women regard such matters, was unaware that the fact of her being married had made her a more important person in Mrs. Warrington's eyes. Like the rest of the world, the old lady preferred people who had a definite position; and she knew very well that an unmarried woman has none. It was a real relief to her to see Lil, at so safe and early an age, sitting soberly on her own hearthrug. She took occasion to tell her so, once more.

"You see, my dear," she said, in her slow, measured tones, and with the solemnity which since her conversion had become a second nature, "it is a great comfort to me, before the Lord takes me to himself to know that you are provided for; your father is so careless and extravagant, and you have been so oddly brought up, that I have often been very anxious about you. I feel contented now to prepare for my grave, for I think your husband is a very worthy young man, with a proper sense of the duties of life. I am contented, although I cannot say I am rejoiced, for I would rather have seen you the wife of a true Christian than of a godless heathen."

This sounded to Lil rather like calling Charlie names behind his back; but she was determined to be good to-day, so she bit her lips and held her tongue.

"Is it possible," said the old lady, suddenly



lowering her voice a whole tone (this was a trick which she had learned from her favourite preachers); "Is it possible that I am to go alone when the Lord takes me to his bosom? that without either son or daughter I am to stand among the elect and see my beloved children cast by His hand, because of their unregenerate hearts, into the torments of Hell fire? Consider the welfare of your soul, my dear child, and resolve to turn to the Lord and lead a godly life while there is yet time. I do not blame you for what you are; your unregenerate nature has been untrained; you have had no guiding hand to lead you to the Lord, for He knows how little I have been allowed to say to you. Your father has wilfully turned his face away from the gospel of truth and gloried in the sayings of the heathen who speak vain words in the hardness of their hearts. You had no mother's teaching to help you; but I do not know that you have lost anything by that, for I never approved of your mother; she was a vain and frivolous woman given over to the admiration of the foolish works of her own hands."

This meant that Lil's mother had been an artist; it seemed to Lil a curious way of expressing it, but she still said nothing.

"I pray every day for you, my dear child," continued Granny; "I wrestle with the Lord for your salvation, and I have hopes yet that you may remember your soul before it is too



late. You are very young, and there is, humanly speaking, time for the sense of your sinfulness to fill you and bring you to the Lord. But, though you are young, you stand always ready for the hand of the avenger. Do not blind yourself to your awful position. Any day you may be struck down by death and given up to eternal torments. If you cannot feel the awakenings of grace and are unable to realise your state of sin, promise me, at least, that you will endeavour to avoid those evil amusements which make the Lord angry. Give me your promise that you will never enter a theatre or any place of public entertainment, and I shall be more at rest."

"I can't do that, indeed, Granny," said Lil, rising uneasily from her chair. Often before had Gran endeavoured to extort this promise from her, but always unsuccessfully.

"My dear," said Gran, with great earnestness, "consider before you reply foolishly! Think how little it is to give up these evil entertainments and how important it is to please the Father of us all, who can shrivel you to dust by a flash of His lightning, and cast you into Hell fire for evermore."

This kind of thing always made Lil want to express her feelings; it seemed too dreadful to hear so many friends abused! Her mother, her father, were both condemned, her husband described as a godless heathen, and her Creator credited with an unreasonable cruelty which

would have disgraced an overworked London magistrate. Familiarity is a tremendous power to dull the edge of terrors ; and Lil had become a little accustomed to these speeches. But she was never used to them as most people are, to whom all remarks which have a religious tendency are accepted without particular inquiry into their meaning, and who repeat them with the faithfulness of well-trained parrots. "Most people" may be thought too wide a generalisation. Is it so? How is it then, that so many good "church people," who know their catechism well, and have sworn to give up the pomps and vanities of this world, yet live in palatial houses and wear diamonds, have their dresses from Worth and their coats from the Prince of Wales's tailor? These things are a mystery ; and it takes a Herbert Spencer, at least, to penetrate the confusions of the ordinary human understanding. Lil, having been educated outside the orthodoxies, and well trained in Latin and English, had the unusual faculty of understanding words in their proper sense. Thus it really hurt her when she heard Gran talk as she did now ; and she had to bite her lips to keep back her first answer. Then she said :

"I don't think you know what you are asking me, grandmama. I cannot promise a thing which really does not seem to me right. To begin with, I have promised to help papa in writing a book which may involve my having

to study the stage, for it is upon the English drama; and, though I have read a great many plays, for I am very fond of them, I don't know much about what they are like when they are acted. And when I think of all that I have learned from Shakespeare, I feel afraid to make such a promise, for I know the drama is a glorious form of art. And I have never seen Othello yet, or Hamlet, and so many others!"

Lil had almost forgotten whom she was talking to. Her thoughts had flown to certain passages which were written deeply in that memory (which was so treacherous as to the price of coals!), and which she longed to hear spoken by a true actor. The drama had been her passion since she was a little child and her father had first given her "The Tempest" to read. She had lived in the world of Shakespeare for weeks together, and almost forgotten that there was another world in which she had to live, more patent to the touch, if less vivid to the mind.

Her eyes had grown dreamy, as she thought of the art which she loved so intensely. She stood in the centre of the room, her hands clasped before her. She was facing the window through which she could see the entrance to the garden, but she saw, not that window, but something more real to the eyes of her mind, until suddenly she became aware that someone was opening the gate. A gentleman

stood there—and the familiarity of the form roused her attention.

“My dear!” said Granny, with a deep sternness; Lil’s last words had startled her as being evidences of a terrible sinfulness of soul. Lil seemed not to hear; her eyes were fixed on the window; her lips were a little parted, her breast was heaving, whether from the last moment of mental excitement, or from a sudden sensation of nervous apprehension she herself hardly knew. Gran, finding herself unheard, or at all events unnoticed, rose slowly and came towards Lil, intending to wrap her in one of her solemn and stifling embraces, while she implored her to consider the state of sin in which she was plunged. But, just as she approached her granddaughter, Lil, who had until now been standing motionless, darted suddenly to the door of the room.

“Ann! say I am not at home. Don’t you understand? There is a gentleman just going to knock at the door; if he asks for me, say I am not at home!”

“What in the world is the matter with the child!” said Gran, standing alone in the middle of the room and gazing after Lil in great amazement. Her mind moved slowly; the hinges had grown a little rusty; and she could not imagine how Lil could be so quickly distracted from the subject they were discussing.

Lil softly closed the sitting-room door



and stood inside, breathless, with flushed cheeks. She had acted on sudden impulse, and now had a doubt as to the wisdom of her action.

"Oh, I am afraid he saw me, for he looked at the window," she said.

"Never tell an untruth," said Gran, sternly. "Why could not you say you were engaged?"

"I did not think of it," said Lil, humbly, "and besides, 'not at home' has come to mean that, really."

"That is no excuse for you," said Gran, who was very angry at being interrupted when she was bent upon conversion. "Who is this gentleman you are so anxious to avoid?"

"No one that matters, Granny," said Lil, hoping she would turn from the window; for she had an instinctive dread of Gran's prejudiced judgments. But the consciousness of being one of the elect had not quenched the common place quality of curiosity in Mrs. Warrington's nature. She watched for the visitor to go out of the gate, and even put on her spectacles to see him the better.

"What!" she exclaimed, "it is Dr. Swift!" Lil had sat herself quietly down by the fire, when Gran turned and slowly brought to bear upon her the horror-struck gaze of those keen old eyes through the gold-rimmed spectacles. Lil was confused; she knew it, and try how she might to quiet herself she could not hide it. She was disturbed more than she



would have cared to own by Dr. Swift's calling on her. She hated to have to remember him, even; she had believed she would never see him again; and it startled her beyond measure that he should come to her house and ask for her. Yet, what was there in it? He was an old friend, after all, she told herself, nothing more. Why should Gran think fit to stare at her so?

"You have that man coming here in your husband's absence?" said Gran, dropping each word distinctly, as though she were knocking a nail firmly into somebody's heart. "This is the result of your wild bringing up? I had thought better of you than this. I had thought my own child must be a decent woman. But how could I expect it, when your father has been a friend of publicans and sinners all his life? I am being bitterly punished in my old age; but the Lord knows whom he chastens. I never really believed what Lady Lynne told me of your shameless adventure with Dr. Swift; I thought her an idle scandalmonger; but now I must believe her, instead of my own child."

"You must not!" cried Lil; "she did not tell you the truth——"

"What," interrupted Gran, sternly, "do you mean that you did not go out boating with this man, and come back the next day?"

"I did," said Lil, her eyes and cheeks aflame "but——"

"Say nothing more," said Gran; "do not perjure your soul by more lies. You have admitted that this is true; you cannot deny it. Tell me nothing else; I don't want to hear any lies, or any more shameful admissions from your lips. I know the vileness of the unregenerate human heart. Give me my bonnet, child, and let me go home. I am weary with battling for your soul with the evil one!"

"But, Granny," cried Lil, passionately, "you are all wrong! What do you suspect me of? Dr. Swift has never been to this house before; and as to that stupid old affair of the boating, there was no harm in that; I only took refuge from a thunderstorm. And I would not even speak to him all the way home, because he kept asking me to marry him."

"Did he? Then he was a very right minded young man, if it is true. But I cannot believe what you say now; I heard you tell your own maid to tell a lie for you."

"My dear Granny!" exclaimed Lil, in amazement.

"Don't try to deny *that*, because I heard you! Remember the fate of Ananias and Sapphira, and keep your mouth shut that no more evil come out of it; else the Lord may strike you where you stand. But I defended you to Lady Lynne, and would not believe what she said of you! It was all your father's

fault that I did not have the truth from you long ago. If he had let me speak, and I had known this, you should have married Dr. Swift."

"Oh, thank Heaven I had papa to take care of me!" cried Lil, her eyes suddenly filling with tears. She had never guessed that he had saved her from this.

Gran was tying her bonnet strings with fingers trembling with nervous anger. Lil, going through her accustomed task mechanically, was carefully putting the big white cap in its box. She had learned, ever since her infancy to fold each string separately and arrange the cap with the utmost reverence.

Gran paused and looked at her.

"You shameless girl!" she exclaimed. "It is all your mother's fault that you are what you are. You have not got it from me; I have been an honest and God-serving woman all my days. It is her blood that has come out in you; she, too, was a wicked, foolish woman, dressed like a Jezebel, and always looking hither and thither for admiration."

"You shall not speak of my mother like that," cried Lil, forgetting her own wrongs in this other sense of injury, "she was a good, sweet woman, and so everybody says, but you."

"She was a painted Jezebel," said Mrs. Warrington.

"How dare you," said Lil, now thoroughly roused; "I can't imagine how you can say such false things. But it is always the same; you never have a good word to say about anybody; it seems to be part of your religion to believe evil of everyone; I am very glad I am not religious!"

Mrs. Warrington tried to reply, but could not; this audacious speech of Lil's had literally taken her breath away. She snatched her bonnet box, and hurried off with tottering steps to the garden gate, where her cab now stood waiting for her.

Lil watched it drive away. "Oh, how angry she is!" she said to herself; "well, I am glad I have told her what I think at last; I have wanted to, so often. I have done it now. I wonder whether she will ever forgive me, or whether she will hate me always, like she does mama? Oh, how could she say such things! I hope she won't get ill with being so angry! Poor old Gran."

And so, her mind driven this way and that, she walked restlessly about the room, trying to grow calm. She did not know how late it was, and could think of nothing but the scene she had passed through. She was quite startled when Charley walked in, in the dusk; she had no light but that of the fire, and was so nervous that she gave a little cry when he came to her.

"Oh, it is you!" she said; "I am so

glad! Oh, Charlie, I have had such a dreadful day!"

"You poor little thing, how hot you are! Has the Granny been scolding you? Has she poked into all the corners and found some dust?"

"It is worse than I could have dreamed of. She has been so angry, and provoked me, and I don't know if she ever will forgive me!"

"This sounds bad," said Charlie, stirring the fire and creating a blaze. "There, I can see you now. How bright your eyes are! What has all the row been about?"

"Charlie," said Lil, with an air of sudden resolution, "I want to tell you something. It seems to me too ridiculous to tell, but they have teased me so that I must."

She knelt down on the hearthrug, in the full blaze of the fire light, and turned her face up to him. He, leaning against the mantelpiece, looked down into her eyes; their pure gaze held his while she spoke.

"Dr. Swift has been here to-day."

"What, your old flame, that you hate so! —been here?"

"Yes; I did not see him. But his calling made Granny say such dreadful things to me. And the reason why they seem to think I care about the horrid man is this:—Long ago, he used to stay at Lady Lynne's; he liked coming to see us, but papa could not bear him.



Sometimes he met me when I was out, and papa did not like that. One foolish day he found me, out in the boat, alone with the dogs. It was fearfully hot, I well remember, and I was so tired. He offered to row me a little way, so I let him get into the boat. We went on, and the heat ended in a thunder-storm so terrible I was frightened—and oh, so wet. We were near the White Horse, and the old landlady, who was always kind to me, dried my clothes, and let the dogs sit in the kitchen; and got us some dinner. We could not go back, it was so wet; the landlady said I should get a chill that might kill me if I went home in the rain. So we stayed, and she took care of me. I remember playing chess in the evening on an old chess-board; and then Dr. Swift asked me to marry him, and I was so vexed! and all the way home next day he teased me to marry him! But I would not; I hated the sight of him. That is all there ever was of the flirtation that Lady Lynne and Granny scold me so about. What do you say, Charlie?"

"That you are a dear little innocent baby, and that I should like my dinner."

"Oh!—I have never even thought of dinner," cried Lil, starting to her feet. Dr. Swift, Granny, everything of the past was forgotten in a moment; the immediate interest of dinner, and the pressing need of alleviating Charlie's apparently famishing condition drove

every other idea out of her head. She flew away into the kitchen to see what wonders Ann might be working there; and Charlie followed timidly in her wake and looked through the kitchen door, much more interested in his wife's present culinary abilities than in her bygone love affairs.



## CHAPTER VII.

**A**S the time passed on Lil grew accustomed to her daily tasks; she would have been absolutely happy, but for one anxiety which oppressed her; and that was concern for her father. He did not often write to her, when he did he assured her that he was "all serene" or "uncommonly jolly." These vague phrases did not satisfy Lil; she grew restless and uneasy. She had expected him to take the change of circumstances in a quite different way, to come and see her very often and be his old cheerful self. But this spell of dissipation, followed by a long spell of hard work, puzzled her; it made her think he had not lost her with as much ease as she had fancied. The one solitary visit paid so strangely in the late evening, as though an irresistible impulse had drawn him there—why did he come in that way, and not come again? Charlie told her that Brough was very wise; he knew he had to face the fact that he had given her up altogether to somebody else, and he was doing it bravely. Lil had to be content with this, as she could suggest no better explanation.

But she grew more restless about him, with every brief, unsatisfactory scrawl that she received from him. Amid the sweet bright content of her own home, her heart went out yearningly to the father whom she had left. She realised, perhaps, more than ever, how much she loved him, through this sense of separation. His existence made one of the glowing spots in the world to her, indeed, but for him and Charlie, the world to her would have been empty. With them in it there was a fulness which made her life joyous. Lil was rich, for she had an abundance of love, and this made her eyes so bright and her voice so soft; for Lil was made for love; she would not have been able to understand that life could exist without it. She was gay because she was so happy. But she wanted everybody else to be happy too; she was still young enough to think this a state of things which was to be expected. And she could not rest now in her own perfect content, because her keen sympathy told her that her father was desolate.

She could get nothing from him that satisfied her, and when she wrote to the old housekeeper, that worthy lady's reply frightened her more than ever. For it spoke of Brough having grown more fanciful with his food, "and taking walks as no Christian should in the middle of the night."

This epistle had such an effect upon Lil,

that she silenced her pride, without any further hesitation, and wrote to Lady Lynne.

In a fever of anxiety she watched for the postman during the next day or two; at last the morning post brought her a dainty little envelope, coloured and scented, and bearing the correct spider's-legs sort of lady-like handwriting.

"Mr. Warrington looks as well as ever," said this dainty little letter; "of course the housekeeper can tell you more than I can as to his life at home, as I have not been to the cottage since your marriage. But, whenever I have seen him, he has seemed to be as bright and well as possible; and I see him nearly every day. It is quite a rare thing, if he does not walk over in the afternoon to my house."

Lil dropped the letter for a moment and drew a deep breath. This was something new indeed!—What did it mean?

"Let me see what more there is in this horrid letter," she said to herself, and picked it up again.

"Dr. Swift has been down here to say good-bye to me. He has entered the navy as a medical officer, and is off, on what he calls a long cruise. He tells me that he came to say good-bye to you, and that you refused to see him, though he knows you were at home. Was this wise? I advise you not to offend him; it is very foolish ever to make



an enemy, but most foolish to make an enemy of a man, who has any power over you. You must learn to play your cards more carefully; a woman can seldom afford to be brusque or uncivil to an old lover; in your case it seems to me most rash. But, of course, I cannot expect you to follow my advice; you always would get into trouble by your wilfulness, and I can see you are little altered. Try to remember that you are judged always by what the world thinks of you, not by your own ideas."

"Oh, I will read no more of it!" cried Lil, and she threw the letter away from her. "How can papa like that woman well enough to go and see her every day? What the world thinks, indeed; what world is there to judge of me? Papa and Charlie are all the world I have. I wonder whether papa will be the same if he marries Lady Lynne!"

The sense of change, and change, too, perhaps for the worse, came upon her for the first time in her fresh young life. She it was who had originated this change—she it was who had got married first. But she had not realised it as change in her own case; it had seemed to her only an added fulness of life, a new richness which she was taking upon her. She had never thought how completely it would separate her from Brough, how far removed from him her new existence would be, until she was actually married; she had not under-

stood that her whole being would be poured out into a new channel, that, instead of a daughter, she would be a wife. She saw it now, she saw that she it was who had severed the sweet old links of love and habit, which had united her with her father. It was very natural that he should set about forming some new tie; for if she had been blind to it, he had seen clearly enough that his daughter was gone from him altogether. But Lil clasped her hands tight, and knitted her pretty brow, when she thought of its being Lady Lynne that was to come into his life and fill it with her butterfly presence. Lady Lynne—who had never understood her, never really liked her—would she not make Brough see with her eyes in time? Would she not separate father and daughter more completely than any one else would?

It is a difficult thing for a woman, who loves her father as did Lil, to accept a step-mother with a good grace at all, but when that stepmother has known her all her life, and been kept always just outside the charmed circle of affection, it is bitter indeed to have to take her into its very centre. It is always possible to imagine someone unknown, who would be perfectly acceptable, even in such a position as this, but the faults of any one well known are so familiar, and the difficulties of association are so clearly defined! Lil felt her heart grow heavier and heavier as she

thought of it. "If he does marry Lady Lynne," she said to herself, still cherishing the "if," "then he will be gone from me; Charlie will be all that I shall have. And is not one such dear boy enough for me? Yes, much more than enough! I have to grow a great deal, before I shall be satisfied that I am enough for Charlie." And so she put away her letter, and set about her daily tasks, determined not to have a heart-ache if she could help it. For, as Charlie said, she had got married with her eyes open, and if she had had any sense, it would have been easy to guess that her father might himself marry again. "But oh, I never thought of it till the very day before I got married, when I saw that look in her eyes," said Lil to herself. And, spite of all her attempted philosophising, she was not resigned. The inevitable had to be accepted, but it was not easy to do it with the grace of a true disciple of Epictetus.

For a day or two she was miserable, but she set herself to conquer her misery, for a very good reason; the sympathy between Charlie and herself had become so intense, and their union in mind and heart so close, that their moods fluctuated in unison. If one was vexed about anything, the other immediately drooped, and high spirits in either were more than contagious, they were reflected instantly. It would have been hard

to say which most often was the leader, and set the fashion of the hour. They went hand in hand through the happy days, leaning each on each. How glad and gay are these early years of life, when no harsh thing has met us on our way; when earth seems to hold a great and hopeful future; when we believe the world full of other human beings as happy as ourselves.

Lil was still full of the charming illusions of youth; she looked to each coming year to bring a more glorious unfolding of love; she fancied everyone about her to be as generous-souled as herself.

True she had already learned to fear and dislike a few people, but she told herself that was, perhaps, because she misunderstood them. She told herself this about Lady Lynne and about Dr. Swift. She had no idea that anyone would wilfully annoy her. Above all she had no idea that with some men the Byronic theory of love is the only one; they can love and hate in a breath, and, indeed, do not know love as a gentle passion, but as a fierce and aggressive one. But Lil, like the rest of us, was doomed to discover many strange things as she grew older.

One bright afternoon, about a week after her correspondence with Lady Lynne, she went out to give her puppy and herself a "constitutional." A parting look at the preparations for dinner was the principal duty before she started.



She had not yet acquired the proper style of "dressing" for a walk; she could not learn to put on a bonnet and veil, and wear a mantle, which would produce an elegant figure, so long as her arms were kept folded. All that kind of thing, so natural to a woman like Lady Lynne, was quite foreign to Lil. Her straw hat hung by the side of Charlie's in the hall, and her principal equipment was a book. With this open in her hands, and her eyes half the time on the page and half the time on the sky, and with her dog trotting close behind her, with puppy-like confidence in her guiding footsteps, Lil went out into the air.

She seldom noticed the passers-by, and so it was to-day. Had her attention been given to the people in the road, instead of to people in the play she was reading—who seemed to her so much the most significant—she would have observed coming towards her, a figure, the sight of which would have effectually roused her from her dreams. But she only saw the sunset light in the sky, and her mind was full of Juliet and her love. The play so charmed her now, and knocked so intelligently at her heart, that she often read it over, and wondered that she could have supposed she understood it in the old days when she had read it first.

"You will not pass me without a word!" said a voice at her side. For an instant she



was quite bewildered, for she knew no one in the neighbourhood, and could not guess who would speak to her like this. But the voice had an intolerable familiarity; she knew, before she raised her eyes to his face, that it was Dr. Swift who stood there.

"I am going away in a day or two, and may not see England again for a couple of years. Surely you will say good-bye to me?"

"Good-bye," said Lil, with the utmost simplicity, and moved on a step as though she supposed the conversation to be at an end.

Dr. Swift burst out laughing. "You are as innocent, as natural, and as unlike other girls as ever," he said.

And then, before she knew what he was doing, he had slipped his hand through her arm, and was walking close at her side. Lil suddenly crimsoned, drew her arm away, and stood back with an air of offended majesty worthy of a princess.

"Oh," said Dr. Swift, "you are not quite the same as you used to be. You did not mind my walking arm-in-arm with you in those pleasant old days by the river.

"When I was very tired sometimes you helped me, I know," said Lil, tears of vexation rising in her eyes; "but I am not tired now."

"Come then," said Dr. Swift, "let me walk with you a few steps, and I will not touch

your arm if that is such an offence. You look very angry. I have given you no reason to be annoyed with me."

Lil reflected before she spoke, and remembered that he had not; it was Lady Lynne whom she was angry with. That lady had made Lil feel guilty, where before she had felt innocent; had made her regard a man, who otherwise would have seemed to her a mere ordinary acquaintance, as a dangerous person. But that was no reason, after all, why she should be rude to the man.

"I have only a moment to stay," said Lil, covered with embarrassment from the double consciousness of having been, perhaps, unnecessarily indignant, and of a great unseemliness in her talking to this man after all that had been said to her about him.

"You were in no hurry when I met you," said Dr. Swift, with a good-tempered laugh, and a merry look in his eyes. "Your thoughts were wandering somewhere else, and I am sure you did not know whether you had a moment to stay, or a hundred. Why are you so positive about it now?"

"Because I really am late, I find," said Lil, looking at her watch, and making a great effort to recover her self-possession and do the right thing. "Will you not walk back to the house with me?"

"May I come in if I do? You would not let me come in before."

"My husband is at home, I believe, by this time," said Lil, with great dignity. "If you will come with me, he will be happy to see you."

"I don't want to see your husband," was Dr. Swift's reply. Lil lifted her eyes to his in amazement at his rudeness.

"Then, good-bye," she said.

"I saw him at the church-door when he had just gone through the ceremony which made you his property," was Dr. Swift's answer. "I don't want to see him again, I assure you. You liked me once; why do you speak to me now as if I were a crossing-sweeper? How am I altered? Look at me and say."

She did not know how to answer him on the instant, and so she raised her eyes to his face, unconsciously obeying him.

Most people would have thought Dr. Swift very handsome. Lil did not think so now, for she had learned to admire a gentler masculine type. There was something savage in the admiration with which this man regarded her, something so unlike the tenderness which she saw in Charlie's face, that it half frightened her.

Dr. Swift admired Lil more than any other woman he had ever seen, and she appeared to him to have developed, and become even more attractive since her marriage. He liked, too, the air of resistance with which she met

him; it was something entirely different from the conventional modesty that girls wear, as they wear anything else which is the fashion. It was real, this fire in Lil's eyes, the blush on her face came straight from her quick sensitive feeling. She was no doll, no inane presentment of a woman, worked by a machine, constructed on the same pattern as that which works all the other dolls of society. Here was a strong, passionate, individual woman. The vigour of Lil's face and movements roused this man's admiration, as the tiger's feline grace awakes the hunter's desire to kill. He was attracted to her by the strong, rich element in her character. It made him desire, fiercely, to prove himself the stronger of the two.

Since the rash day when, in the fever of a first hot love, he had asked Lil to marry him, he had decided altogether against marriage. Not that he was broken-hearted in any sense, but he really could not imagine being again provoked into making so reckless a proposal. For marriage presented no charms to him. He regarded women as a means of excitement, much as he regarded champagne, or quick horses, or anything else which roused and stirred him. Domesticity offered no pleasures to him, and the intimate relations of marriage with domesticity were enough to scare him from it. He had the nomadic instinct deeply implanted in him, he

liked change and variety in every phase of life. If Lil had ever really responded to him, he would perhaps have wearied of her in a week. What fisherman would care for his sport, if the fish sprang to him out of the water? If she had met him now with the masked manner of most women, he would have gone away thinking little of her, save as a bright figure in his past. But the simplicity with which she revealed to him her feelings, her inability to hide her indignation at his manner, interested him. She stood there like a primeval woman, insulted for the first time by the look in a man's eyes, and endeavouring to guide herself by the light of her own instincts, unaided by any conventional or familiar code of conduct. The idea was quite new to Lil that any man should distress her by his admiration. If she had ever been to a boarding-school she would have learned to expect this sort of thing, and rather to like it, while knowing just how to pretend not to like it.

"No," she said, quietly, after a moment's gaze at his face, "you are not much altered. You are a man now, while there was something of the boy still about you, when you used to stay at Lady Lynne's.

"You are very much altered," said Dr. Swift, "though the change is of the same kind. A slim girl, not ready to take offence, you were then a lovely playmate; now you



are a woman, with any amount of injured dignity ready to hand. But I don't mind that; it suits you very well; I like that look of devilry that comes in your eye, as if you would bite me if I came too near. It makes you splendid! By Jove, what a spirit there is in you if one roused it. Does your husband know how to bring you out, I wonder? I don't believe he does. That's right—offended dignity again—it suits you amazingly. Now tell me, Mrs. Lil, does your husband know of that little escapade of ours on the river?"

"What do you mean?" said Lil.

"You know, as well I do, how we went off in a boat, had a splendid time in a thunder-storm, and came coolly back next day. That was a glorious spree. What a jolly little girl you were then. Does he know about it? Have you told him?"

"Certainly I have," said Lil, with great composure and cheeks as red as fire; the catechism did not suit her at all, yet she felt a great relief that she could answer it.

"And isn't he jealous? didn't he beat you, or swear at you?"

"My husband is a gentleman, not a brute," said Lil, getting very angry and hardly knowing what she said, for her heart was beating so fast.

"That means a milksop," remarked Dr. Swift; "I thought he was no match for you, and now I know it. Well, listen to me,

Mrs. Lil, you may think your husband knows all about it, and is not jealous; you flatter yourself he has no reason to be. I assure you I have only to tell him that story—nonsense, I have only to meet him with a certain manner, to sneer at him as delicately as maybe, and I can convert him from this tender, forgiving creature that he is, to a furious, jealous tyrant. Even milksops have feelings.”

Lil looked at him in absolute perplexity for a moment, then she drew her brows together in a frown.

“Are you threatening me?” she asked.

“You may call it so, if you like. I will threaten no more. I will try to please you. I am going away for a long time; will you meet me here to-morrow for one pleasant talk before I go?”

“Certainly not,” said Lil. “How could any talk between us be pleasant after this?”

“I have put my foot in it. Come, Lil, forgive me; you were born in Bohemia, where people are free and forgiving, don’t grow stern because you are married. If I have said disagreeable things, it was because I admired you so much, I could not help it. Don’t throw me off altogether. I shall never marry now; I have no home in the world; I shall be a wanderer always. I should like to think when I am away on the sea in a ship full of men, that one of the prettiest,

pluckiest girls in the world has a memory of me stowed away in her heart, and will smile when I come back again."

Just then Lil saw in the dim light a figure approaching. Thank heaven! it was someone she knew. As he came close she stepped towards him.

"Is it you, Mr. Davies? Are you going to our house?"

"What, Mrs. Newman! it is so dark I did not know you. I came over so late in the afternoon because I thought I might catch Charlie."

"Yes, he will be in by now and wondering what has become of me. Good bye, Dr. Swift."

With a bow, into which she put all the haughtiness she could command, Lil left the doctor and walked away with Mr. Davies. It was only a short way to the house, and they were soon there. Lil talked and laughed; her spirits rose suddenly, for she was much relieved to have got away from Dr. Swift with such ease. And besides there was a little high-pressure, a certain excitement of her sensitive nerves to throw off. Davies was rather quiet; he was putting together various small incidents which he had observed. They were slight enough, the things he had seen, yet, with a mind constructed as was his, they seemed sufficient evidence of what he would have described as "something behind

the scenes." A man's disposition is much affected by his education; men in business, men in society, men at the bar all judge as they are taught to judge. Opportunity is a terrible and significant word to men of law. If man or woman has had the opportunity of doing any ill, it seems highly probable to the legal mind that the ill has been done.

Charlie was standing at the gate when they came to it; the dim outline of his figure was just visible in the gloom.

"Why, Lil, is it you, at last?" he said, a tone of anxiety sounding in his voice.

"It is evident you are not often out when he comes home," said Davies, laughingly, as he opened the gate for Lil. He looked hard in her face as she passed him, and even in that dim light the sweet steadiness of her eyes perplexed him. Her cheeks were aflame, and her heart was beating much more quickly than she liked, but the spirit that looked out from the windows of her soul was stable as ever. He did not understand her, she was of a type unfamiliar to him and beyond his grasp.

"That girl is too clever an actress," he said to himself; "I am glad she is not my wife."

"How are you, Alfred," said Charlie, who, now that he had Lil's arm in his, felt capable of noticing somebody else. If, at a moment when he was accustomed to her presence, she

was not with him, he hardly knew himself. It had come to this that his time was cut into two separate pieces; one part of it he lived with her, the other part he existed without her. This last was only at his office in the city, where, if she came by chance, she looked, to his eyes, like a bluebell dropped in the street. She gave him all the freshness, the woodland sweetness of his life. Once away from his work he would not leave her; clubs or bachelor parties had no charms to offer him; together they went out, if at all.

"I don't believe he'd have spoken to or seen me if I had come in before her," thought Davies; "just the man to be fooled by a clever girl like this."

"I am very well," he answered, "and have come to tell you some news; I am going to be married."

"The effect of a good example," said Charlie. "Who is the lady?"

"You don't know her," said Davies; "she is a stunning girl. I should like to bring her to see Mrs. Newman some afternoon. We shall have to begin life much as you have begun it, and I want her to see how charming a cottage can be."

"I shall be delighted to see her," said Lil, as in duty bound. "One of the charms of a cottage is that the dinner has to be looked after, and I must ask you to excuse me now."



"Then, good-bye, Mrs. Newman," said Davies, rising; "I shall be gone in a moment, for I have an engagement to dinner."

"Good-bye," said Lil, not at all sorry to have to say it, for she knew her own dinner preparations to be of the slenderest.

When she was gone, Davies turned to Charlie—

"Why can't that old fellow kick and leave me a legacy?" he said. "I shall have to borrow money to furnish with. I daren't write to him myself, he always swears at me for a beggar. Don't you think if you told him I was going to get married, the appropriateness of a substantial wedding present might occur to him, especially if you told him I was marrying 'expectations?' That may 'fetch' the old fellow."

"A silver snuff-box, or a clock with a gilt cupid on it, which will go for a week and stop for ever"

"No, no, bank-notes I mean."

"He gave me nothing," remarked Charlie.

"You don't need it as much as I do."

"Why? because my income is smaller than yours, and your chance of getting on double mine, and I did not marry 'expectations.'"

"Nonsense, I mean that you're such a much less expensive sort of fellow; you haven't got the tastes that run away with money; a pipe and your slippers seem to satisfy you. It's no use my saying I can live

in that way, I can't. And I don't suppose Lydia will be as clever a manager as your wife, at first. She has been a spoiled child, accustomed to be taken care of always."

"Lil knew nothing of housekeeping" remarked Charlie; "she has learned all she knows through a series of bitter experiences. However, I will do what you like. I shall be writing to my uncle in a few days about some business in the city, which I have been arranging for him. I will tell him of your marriage, and see if the news will stir his generous impulses. But I don't think he has any to stir."

"Thanks, Charlie, you're a capital fellow. Good-bye." And Davies, having got what he wanted, was soon gone.

Dinner was waiting, and the lovers sat down together. They thought more of each other than of any other thing in the world. Beef and mutton were not without taste because of this infatuated condition, but they had a glorified flavour which was common to all eatables, and made them all seem alike delightful. When the two sat down to table there was, every day, a sense of satisfaction to each in the simple fact that the other was opposite, that the bright union of their lives was perfect.

Lil remembered her recent annoyance suddenly, as she sat there. Alfred Davies and the hurry of being late, and her little amusement

at finding Charlie awaiting her so anxiously, had driven Dr. Swift out of her mind. But in the midst of a silence the memory of meeting him returned to her. She grew crimson and her eyes were wet, in an instant, like violets under the evening dew.

"Charlie," she said, "I was late this evening because I met Dr. Swift, and he would talk to me. I hate the man; I cannot imagine why he supposes I can care to see him."

"Probably he cares to see you."

"I suppose that is it," said Lil, with a little sigh. She did not seem at all gratified by the persistence of her old admirer. "Well, he is in the navy now, and his ship is ordered away, so I hope I have seen the last of him."

"That is all right, then. Don't talk of him any more, if you can't do so without such flashing eyes. I am glad that expression is not meant for me."

"For you!" said Lil, turning her eyes upon him; and, as she looked, the fire that was in them melted into a glance of ineffable sweetness. As Dr. Swift roused, by his presence, the fierce side of her nature, so Charlie called forth its tenderness; she leaned gradually towards him now, as though he attracted her; it seemed as if the mysterious sympathy which exists between the physical nature of people who love deeply, was drawing her by its magic chain; suddenly she put out her hand to him.

“Oh, let me forget that man!” she said;  
“I want to remember no one but you.”

“Not even your father?” said Charlie, curiously. He had never yet felt jealous of any one but Brough.

“Ah!” said Lil, drawing back, and a thoughtful look coming into her eyes, “that is different. I could not forget him if I tried!”

If she could but feel as confident that Lady Lynne could never separate her from her father as she felt that Dr. Swift could never come between herself and her husband!



## CHAPTER VIII.

**B**ROUGH WARRINGTON, left alone in his cottage, certainly did find Lady Lynne's ever-charming companionship a great solace.

Lady Lynne was a widow ; not exactly young, though very nearly ; not exactly beautiful, but with a style which was almost as effective as beauty.

She had earned her experience ; she understood men, or thought she did. Up to a certain point her knowledge of their likes and dislikes was great. She knew how to please them ; and, perhaps, it was no wonder that she did, for she had devoted herself to the cultivation of the art.

She felt Brough to be her superior ; never, even when she was in town for two or three months every season, did she encounter any man who gave her this feeling so strongly as Brough. She delighted in the consciousness of her littleness when by his side ; for she was effeminately feminine, and such women enjoy being mastered, as do horses and dogs. But in women of this type there is another element, which, fortunately for us, is not found in the



horse or dog—slyness. Lady Lynne feared Brough when he was in earnest; yet she believed she could manage him and have her own way, and enjoy her small tyrannies, if she were his wife; and this by simply hoodwinking him. Her plans and projects would not always bear open confidence and discussion; but with a man who was in the clouds half of his time this was unnecessary. When Brough's mind was busy he believed anything he was told about the details of life. He had not got Lil's habit of asking straightforward questions; a habit which had made Lady Lynne detest her. Lil had never had a secret in her life, and could not imagine that there should be hidden nooks and tortuous paths in the lives of other people. Thus, in her early youth, she had made Lady Lynne vow revenge upon her more than once.

Lady Lynne had a nice little income which just enabled her to keep her pretty little country house, and her pair of ponies, and allowed her to go to town occasionally. But she was growing tired of this somewhat narrow life. She had set herself for a coronet when first she was left, a sparkling gay widow. But the only coronet offered her had been burdened by such a lean and disagreeable specimen of male humanity that she recklessly refused it. She would not accept any offer which brought her merely a little additional comfort. She wanted position; to be some sort of centre,

and have a drawing-room of her own, the entrance to which should be coveted. She had not yet seen her way to getting this ; and, as she was no longer very young, she was growing more set upon obtaining it as soon as possible.

She thought she saw, for Brough's wife, a position which might be worth having ; not ready-made like that attached to a coronet, but ready for a clever woman to make. It appeared to her that he was not made the most of ; not used to advantage. What was the good of a man being a celebrity if he was to live shut up in the country ? When Brough did go to London he mixed, as all artists love to do, with people of his own sort. This, said the lady, was a great mistake. Actors frequent the society of actors, artists love the atmosphere of studios, authors love to meet those who, like themselves, do a little thinking. But such social meetings are of no use to them as far as success in life is concerned. Lady Lynne was a thorough woman of the world, with all that reverence for success which the world has. Brough's delight in midnight discussions with other men of his own sort seemed to her a delusion, a mistake. These hours which he could spare from his work should be devoted to society proper.

She was convinced that a "lion" like Brough, properly put forward by a woman like herself, would be a trump card. And, as she was as much in love with him as it was possible

for her to be with any man, she naturally cherished her conviction warmly.

Brough possessed that strong masculinity of character which makes a man absolutely demand some woman's presence in his life. The men and women who have their own sex most deeply implanted in them are those who hunger for the social influence of the other. Brough found life dry without a feminine atmosphere about him.

Lil's mother had so far fulfilled his ideal of womanhood, that he found it impossible to kill her memory, or fill her place. He did not know how to fall in love again ; he had passed through the passion with such intensity, and it had been so bitterly scorched out of him by the agony of loss. To such a man, one who revels in the natural life and finds keen exhilaration in the mere fact of healthy existence, death is an intolerable horror, however he may summon philosophy to his aid. Lil's mother had possessed a bright and beautiful personality ; it took Brough some years of life before he could realise that this personality, so strong and rich, had actually passed out of the world. He had no capacity for becoming misanthropic and he cherished the idea, during Lil's childhood, that when she had grown up he might fall in love again and find a new youth in a new union. But he was aware, now, that this was impossible. The great experiences of existence cannot be repeated. The strange

charm of human life lies in the impossibility of suffering the same sensations twice; whether they be sweet or sad, the moments are always new. Disappointment arises from the fatal delusion of unimaginative minds, that a pleasant day or a happy hour can be repeated an indefinite number of times with success. The effort to chain down the infinite variety of nature to a monotonous succession of similar events fails, and then comes a sense of disgust. Brough had observed life sufficiently to know something of this; he resolved, when he found that no woman he met could waken gain the old thrills of passion, that he would not expect them. Why should he desire to love a woman to the degree of worship twice in his life? Why not yield to a different set of impulses, and make love to a woman who roused the less ideal part of his nature? Such a woman was Lady Lynne. She knew how to use the magic power of her womanhood, just as an actress understands her art. It seemed to Brough that he could tell precisely the effect which Lady Lynne would produce when he met her, just as having once seen Ellen Terry's Portia he would know what to expect when he went again to see it. But he enjoyed this, as playgoers enjoy familiar acting. He liked the effect which Lady Lynne's art produced upon him; he liked to be roused, just as she roused him; amused and pleased, just as she amused and pleased him.



There was no illusion about it ; he knew she put on her smile when she met him as the actress puts on her paint. But as we grow older we cry out less for our illusions. We let them go and are well content if we get something practically pleasant instead. Lady Lynne's unfailing brightness and invariable power of pleasing was something very practically agreeable to Brough. In the midst of his solitude and constant mental work her society supplied the stimulant he needed. It was like having a good novel always at hand or a perpetual stall at the *Gaiety* just within easy access.

And so it came about, that every afternoon, at the time when Brough had been accustomed to go on the river with Lil, he walked over to Lady Lynne's with his dogs at his heels. The stalwart figure, coated in invariable black velvet, sometimes soaked by the rain, always wearing a straw hat with blue or crimson ribbon round it, came daily swinging up the gravel walk to Lady Lynne's front door. The dogs had to sit in the porch while Brough was inside; the Persian carpets which lay on the floors of Lady Lynne's rooms could not be desecrated by damp paws. Lady Lynne's rooms were small, but dainty to a degree which abashed even Brough a little. Coming out of the rain and the wind, or the sun and dust, there was a sense of fragility about Lady Lynne's little drawing-room, which made him feel very like a



bull in a china shop, and compelled him to behave with unusual decorum. Though she lived in the midst of the sweet, fresh country, Lady Lynne's atmosphere was as entirely one of scents and laces, gossamer and glitter, as if she were a queen in Mayfair and had the season and its artificialities always with her. Her garden was full of flowers, but she liked to wear diamonds far better; and, indeed, they became her as no tender blossoms would have done. The open air life of our moist island gives richer complexions and brighter eyes than any cosmetics can produce; yet Lady Lynne, following her nature, shut out from her drawing-room the air of the sweetest of English counties, and put on her cheeks rouge instead of roses.

Even this part of her character amused Brough; it was so unlike himself that it interested him.

In youth, while the stem of the tree is but slender, we yearn for sympathy; something to lean upon. But later we lose that desire, and find, in contact with a character entirely different from our own, a new excitement and fascination.

To Lady Lynne this man, with his breezy atmosphere and racy modes of thought, was something as foreign and delightful as is the air of the mountain peaks to a valley-dweller.

It amused her when he came in and sat

himself down carefully upon one of her gold-backed chairs ; making himself as small as he could, and yet looking so large amid her collections of knick-knacks.

She was sick of widowhood. She had waited long enough ; she was determined not to wait too long. Better fly low than sit always alone with drooped wings.

She determined one day, as she sat alone at her drawing-room window watching for her unfailing visitor, that she would marry him, if he asked her. This "if" was a very unimportant one to her mind. She believed in the power of her sex.

It was a wet day—a day on which few men would walk out of doors even to see their lady-love. No one but Brough, Lady Lynne felt very certain, would come to see her on such a day as this. But he would come, of course. He was a man of large build, never afraid of the elements and always a lover of nature and her caprices. Lady Lynne felt the charm of this disposition, so different from her own, as she sat there at her window and watched the steady rain gladdening the green lawn and washing the laurel leaves into vivid beauty ; she pictured Brough striding along the wet road, leaving his deep footprint upon the red soil, his wet dogs at his heels. Why did she shrink, as with horror, at the thought of going out in that rain herself, yet feel a certain pleasure at the idea of her broad-shouldered,

brown-bearded admirer coming to her through the downpour?

There he was, at last, striding up between the laurel hedges, all wet, with little drops falling from his hat and the tip of his nose, but looking as happy as if he had arrived in a brougham. With a faint little shriek of delight, Lady Lynne started up and ran out into the hall to meet him.

"Oh, you are too wet, positively too wet, to come in," she cried, while her eyes sparkled and flung fire into his. "You must stay here and dry with the dogs."

In bad weather, there was always a fire in Lady Lynne's hall, and, like an obedient large dog, Brough stood in front of it. He looked into Lady Lynne's eyes and saw something there which made him forget he was wet—made him forget everything save that his whole nature was being kindled by the fire of a woman's eyes. There was meaning in every movement, as she stood there; she was speech all over, to her very finger tips which rested for such a delicate instant on his sleeve.

Brough could make love royally when he indulged in this joyous, time-old folly. He made love in the right fashion, self-forgetfully. The young men of the new know-all and despise-all generation are so crammed full of consciousness that they repel the woman whom they admire. A woman's sensibilities are quick enough to tell her whether a man is thinking

of himself or of her. Brough thought of the woman whom he looked at, not of his own appearance and expression. Lady Lynne revelled in the sense that she had roused a real man, when his eyes burnt into hers and his strong grasp caught her wrist. Had she done well, she wondered, half shrinking away from the fire she herself was kindling, to take so sturdy a slave as this? Might he not after all prove master instead of servant?

Brough stayed a long time this afternoon, and when at last he went home through the dim, wet gloaming it was with a new future in his mind. Lady Lynne was to be his wife. Lady Lynne was to bring all her prettiness and delicacy with which to make gay the daily path of his stalwart career.

Lil would never have liked it, he knew; he rather doubted whether, even now, Lil would like it. "By Jove, though," he said to himself, as he strode along the moist road; "if the child objects I'll tell her she shouldn't have run off with that fellow Charlie. If young women get married, what can their fathers do but imitate 'em?"

With which queer bit of reasoning he satisfied himself. It seems odd that he should have thought of Lil's "objecting," but the phrase was a mere result of habit. He had become accustomed to defer to Lil's judgment in many things, and he often sorely missed her advice.



He walked home through the steady rain towards his cottage and his solitary dinner, with a queer mixed feeling within him. He had a strong boyish element in his character ; he was still so young in nature that a change so charming as this seemed to him certain to be all delightful. Yet he was so far taught of experience as to know well that "nothing is certain but the unforeseen." Men learn as they grow older to make the most out of the charms of anticipation. Brough let himself dream very pleasantly as he walked on between the damp green hedges, with the dogs close at his heels. Dogs never like getting thoroughly wet ; they hang their tails and wear a dejected, sorrowful aspect. But Brough enjoyed it ; the soft rain in his face gave him pleasure. And then, too, the whole country seemed to be his own. Only an occasional cart was to be met in the road, and the carters all bade him a friendly good day, whether they knew him or not, after the good old country fashion. There were none of the local middle-class, the stolid respectable people, out on such a day as this. The long road lay before him with nothing live upon it but a bird, or the slow cart and horses which seemed as much a part of the landscape as the hedges at either side. This solitude had a great charm for Brough. He was gregarious enough after a fashion of his own : but his society must be of his own choosing. He liked to go and



talk to the farmers in their dark little kitchens ; or lean upon their garden fences and look at their hollyhocks and sympathise with them about the "turmut's" and "taters ;" he liked Lady Lynne and her delicate bright gossip, as refreshing as a cup of fragrant tea ; but he could not endure the weary monotony of middle-class life in the country, unenlivened by character, culture, or individuality. These people consequently regarded him as something extraordinary and probably dangerous ; they would peep through their muslin curtains and say, "There goes mad Mr. Warrington, out in the wet again." It is a doubtful question whether it is worth while outraging the opinion of the majority even in a trifling, unimportant matter. But Brough loved freedom ; would have his own way and live according to his own convictions. This disposition he had very decidedly imparted to Lil ; whether for good or ill, time alone could show.



## CHAPTER IX.

**B**ROUGH meant to write to Lil that same evening, and tell her the news. But his courage forsook him when it came to pen and paper. He wondered whether he would not like better to run up to town and see her ?

When a thing was at all disagreeable to do, Brough had a well-developed capacity for leaving it undone.

He had never really allowed to himself that this would be disagreeable until the note paper actually lay before him, and then he became suddenly and vividly aware that Lady Lynne and Lil were not passionately attached to each other.

So he put the note paper away and went on with the article which he was writing.

This bit of procrastination, so very natural to Brough, produced a result which he would never have dreamed of.

Lady Lynne was writing to Dr. Swift that same night—she told him the news, in her pretty phraseology and, of course, in a post-script.

Dr. Swift laughed when he read the scented

note in the morning ; wondered how the experiment would answer ; and then wondered how Lil would like it.

That afternoon Lil was busy—very busy. She was always busy now. Charlie had no kind-hearted mother to investigate the great sock and shirt questions, and so stave off some domestic troubles from the young wife. Sheer necessity had already taught Lil how to darn ; and to-day she had an attack of what her father would have called that “intolerable feminine disease of sewing.”

Brough would have groaned indeed could he have seen her, sitting there with her mending-basket and a frown on her pretty forehead. Yet she made a pleasant picture. She did not look as most women do when they are darning. It was evidently a foreign occupation to her, and not a very pleasant one. She applied herself to it with the determination which was one of her characteristics. She was too absorbed to notice anything, and did not know that a visitor was at the door until he was shown in to the room. And then she rose suddenly, with heightened colour and angry eyes.

“Dr. Swift !”

“You would not say good-bye the other day, you know,” he said, with perfect good humour ; “you ran off with somebody else. So I have come to pay my respects and say good-bye properly. I positively sail to-morrow.”

His manner was so natural and gentle, that Lil felt she must be as polite as she could. They sat down, one on each side of the little table, where, instead of bric-à-brac, stood Lil's mending-basket. She put her work back into it, and shut it down; Dr. Swift's eyes followed her hand, with a twinkle of amusement in them.

"I should never have expected to see you sewing," he said; "how marriage alters a woman!"

"Necessity alters us all, I suppose," said Lil, coldly.

"Are you growing aphoristic, Mrs. Lil," he said, "as well as dignified? No, I think not. All these pretty mannerisms are put on, to keep me at a distance. Well, we'll say no more about it. I shall soon be far enough off to please even you. And, in the meantime, just tell me, how should you like having a stepmother?"

"A—what?" cried Lil, half starting from her chair and leaning towards him. Her warm breath came upon his cheek. He said nothing for a second but kept his eyes upon her face.

"You pretty girl," he said; "how charming you are when you are excited! If I had you I should be always provoking you to have you look like this!"

Lil sank back in her chair, a hot flush of anger arising in her cheeks. She bit her lip and tried to keep silent, but could not.

“Do you mean it?” she said; “how do you know? I have heard nothing! Oh, do tell me, Dr. Swift, if you have really heard anything.”

“I had a letter from Lady Lynne this morning,” said Dr. Swift. “Ah, I see you don’t like it. Well, it won’t make much difference to you now, will it?”

“I suppose not,” said Lil, wearily; a heavy sense had settled on her heart as if somebody she loved was dead and buried.

“Ah! how foolish I am,” she added, after a moment, and rising from her chair, turned away and walked to the window. She wanted to hide two great tears which had started in her eyes. But they could not be checked or hidden; the thing had come so suddenly, in so unpleasant a fashion. If she had heard it from her father—but like this, and from Dr. Swift!—it seemed to remove her right away from the old life which she still loved so dearly. A little sob forced itself out. In another second she felt her hand caught and grasped by another, strong, warm, and resolute.

“You poor little woman, do you mind it so much as this? Why, what a sensitive little thing it is, in spite of that devil so ready to leap up in your eye. I am so sorry I should have brought you any news which distresses you like this; let me make up for it somehow, dear little Lil ——”

Lil’s tears were dry in an instant, and her eyes aflame.



"Why cannot you leave me in peace," she exclaimed. "I don't want you here. Surely I have been scolded enough about you already!"

"Oh, you have?" said Dr. Swift, with a half-pleased, half-amused smile. "Well, be it so, I will go away and you shall be scolded no more about me for the present. Has the milksop turned into a tyrant so soon?"

"What do you mean?" cried Lil, wishing heartily she had a footman for whom she could ring to show out this unwelcome visitor.

"You can't expect me to speak over civilly of your husband really," said Dr. Swift. "I wanted you, and he got you. Never mind, some day you and I may be on good terms again, when a little more experience of the world has taught you that a faithful old lover is not to be utterly despised."

"I do not want to despise you," said Lil, who was thinking much more of her father and his marriage than of Dr. Swift, "only I can't see why you persist in coming here!"

"Inhospitable!" said Dr. Swift. "I came here because we once were good friends, and I feel sure we shall be again. You have married a quiet sort of fellow who writes verses; I tell you, you are twice too good for him, and I shan't let you be wasted on him altogether if I can help it. He doesn't know how to rouse you. How should he? He thinks you a pretty girl, and a good girl who

mends socks and keeps house for him ; I know there is a panther in you, a wild, courageous, unbroken spirit, which makes you a woman a man can't forget when once he has loved you. Well, I am that man ; I shall never forget you, though I love a dozen women between now and our next meeting."

"I don't want to hear all this," said Lil, who seeing that she could not very easily turn this large and resolute young man out of her room, had taken refuge in the society of her mending-basket, and was now running a needle through the stitches of a sock, with a great appearance of pre-occupation.

"Perhaps not, but I want to say it," said Dr. Swift, coming near to her and looking down upon the graceful head bending so low over the darning. "And I am satisfied if you only listen. I am not a very expectant admirer, am I—contented only to look at you."

Lil looked quickly up and caught a twinkle in his eyes.

"What do you mean?" she said, letting her hands fall in her lap, while she regarded him gravely. "I never did understand you, and I do not now. You always seem to be suggesting things which I do not understand."

"I cannot help that," said he, coolly ; "you are such a remarkably innocent young woman, notwithstanding your Bohemian education. It is a pretty, piquant mixture. Well, I don't want to bother you with any enigmas ; but

remember this, I shall never forget you ; and if ever you want a man—not a milksop—to help you out of a difficulty, to carry your fan or beat your poodle, send for me, and I'll come home to do it. I admire you tremendously," he went on, with a sudden savage earnestness in his face, "and I will be your slave whenever you want one. Don't look incredulous ; I mean it."

"No slave, but a tyrant," said Lil to herself—she said nothing aloud ; but she looked up in his face and saw something there which made her feel there was truth, of a sort, in his words.

"Thank you —" came to her lips, almost without her knowledge ; but so cold was her tone, that the words expressed her feeling rather than their own meaning. It was just as though she had put out her hand and pushed the man away from her.

"You are an icicle now," he said, almost angrily. "What right have you to freeze whenever I come near you ? Have you no friend to tell you it is folly to offend an old lover ?"

"You cannot call yourself that !" said Lil, in a low voice. She always grew white, and quiet and determined when she was really roused.

"If you don't let me call myself so, you can't undo the past," said Dr. Swift ; "before Mr. Newman had any rights over you I loved

you. Ah, that *was* an evening when we played chess in the little inn—don't you remember—what a dear little witch you were! but come, I don't want to vex you indeed. Don't fly into a passion with me, it is not worth while. You can always do as you like with me, without that."

Lil stood, still and white, like a statue. She would not speak. If she must endure his presence, she could at least keep silence. But, oh, how she wished Charlie would come home! He might come very soon, she thought, as she covertly glanced at the clock on the mantel shelf. Her ordeal could not be a very long one now. Dr. Swift, watching her closely, seemed to catch her thought in her face, though he did not, or would not, read it aright.

"I am going now," he said, "I don't want to get you into trouble again. One—just one kiss—for I shall be away a long time! Good heavens, don't scorch me!"

For Lil's look of indignation was like a flash of fire.

In another moment he was gone, and Lil was free to sink back into her chair and press her hands to her chest and throat where there seemed to her to be some intolerable oppression.

At the station, on the stairway, three men met and came so close together that they stared into each other's faces under the glaring gas-

light. Alfred Davies was one of them, and he obeyed a sudden impulse of curiosity.

"Dr. Swift?" he said.

"Yes," said Dr. Swift, pausing; "but I think you have the advantage of me.

"We have met somewhere—at some evening 'at home,' I think," said Alfred, who was never at a loss and seldom troubled his head as to whether he told the truth or no. "My name is Davies; I don't pretend to have a very easily remembered face. I have met you here once or twice. Are you living down here?"

"Oh, no," said Dr. Swift, looking coolly across at Charlie Newman, who was waiting, a step higher up, for Davies. "I live nowhere. I sail to-morrow for China. Good-bye."

Lifting his hat with a politeness natural to him, he turned and went quickly down the stairs.

Davies joined Charlie Newman, and the two walked on in silence. Each was occupied with his own thoughts. Charlie was recalling what Lil had told him about Dr. Swift. It was a curious thing for him to meet the man accidentally, to look in his face, and then remember these things which he had heard from Lil. So this was Lil's old admirer, the man who had got her into trouble with her grandmother, the man who had wanted to marry her! This was the man who had been



the first to congratulate Lil as she came, a bride, out of the church door. Lil had confided then to her new-made husband, that she hated this other man. If she really did, Charlie said to himself, women are not so easily won by good looks as men suppose. For there was no doubt about it, Dr. Swift was an extremely fine looking man.

Charlie had his latchkey, and the two walked straight in. Lil was still sitting in her chair. The pressure had gone from her chest, and now the tears were rushing from her eyes. At the sight of Alfred Davies she started up and ran from the room. Charlie, after a moment of consternation, followed her.

Davies shook his head with that peculiar air of sorrowful wisdom which some worldly men affect. "Not cured of that old folly, it's clear," he said to himself; "if she cries like this at his going abroad, I'm glad she's not my wife." And he reflected with inward satisfaction upon the eminent virtue and propriety of the lady he was about to marry.

Charlie found Lil clinging to a chair, rather than sitting in it, sobbing and trembling.

"What is it?" he exclaimed; "you frighten me. Has Swift been annoying you?" But he could get nothing from her for a long time.

He behaved like an idiot, of course. He petted her like a spoiled child, he caressed her as if she were some wounded, terrified bird

that had fluttered into his hand. But, remember, his love was still young, still green as the spring leafage. No dust of long hot summer days had soiled it, no indifference born of familiarity had blunted it. It was agony to him to see her in pain, it cut him to the heart to hear her sob, it thrilled him with acute and keen delight to feel how she nestled and clung to him and found her comfort in his mere presence. This tender love, frail as all young things are, is beautiful as youth itself. Because the mere passage of the heavy years inevitably kills or alters it, there is no need to look upon it as a folly. It is a reality as vivid and glorious as all other bright emotions of the soul; but men and women will always suffer and have cause to complain while they expect love to keep its youth although they cannot keep their own.

Here, as ever, where youth is untouched and powerful, pain and pleasure mingled almost indistinguishably. There is pleasure in feeling a magic power in one's own touch, and Charlie could not quite have told whether it was most painful to feel Lil trembling with excitement, or pleasant to see that by his mere presence and contact he could calm her. As for Lil herself, the delight of clinging to someone who loved her as she understood love, not with the fierce admiration of Dr. Swift, was so delicious that she could only yield herself to the double sensations and

wonder dumbly whether it was not worth while to feel a cruel love, if it were to be thus contrasted with an exquisite and tender devotion.

They both forgot Davies altogether ; and, after waiting alone in the sitting-room for a long time, that gentleman began to feel offended. It was not difficult to offend him ; his dignity was of that slight sort which has to be frequently on exhibition or its existence would not be noticed.

When he began to realise that he really was forgotten, and that Charlie had no immediate intention of coming to explain or apologise to him, he grew righteously indignant. In the end he departed wrathfully ; and Charlie was much amazed when, later on, remembering that he had brought Davies home with him, he discovered that he had gone. Davies thought fit to nurse a sense of injury for a considerable time, and he paid no more visits to the cottage until events drew him there.

Charlie did not grieve over his immediate absence. Lil's excitement gave him an excuse for regarding her in the light of a tender and fragile creature to be treated with great care throughout the evening ; and he was delighted to be able to make the most of the opportunity. But there was something which disturbed him a little, and when Lil appeared to be quite quiet again he asked her about it.

How it would have amused either Dr. Swift or Alfred Davies to hear what it was that distressed Charlie!

"Are you still so jealous of your father that it should hurt you like this for him to marry again?" he asked. He had never said a word about Dr. Swift, except to say it was well he was going away and could no longer annoy her. What Davis had immediately accepted as a fact that her tears were for the departure of this old admirer, would never have occurred to Charlie. He knew her too well for such a suspicion even to suggest itself. But he had never been quite satisfied that she did not love her father better than anyone else. And a young lover is capable of intense jealousy even of father or sister—such jealousy as in later years he cannot feel of a real rival.

"Oh, no, no!" said Lil, "I cannot be so foolish! I don't know why I feel it so much, except that I don't like Lady Lynne as well as I ought. She is not half good enough for him. Why, there is no one in the world like my father, but there are plenty of Lady Lynnes. Why couldn't he look for someone as good as himself?"

"Perhaps you would have been more jealous of her," suggested Charlie, "and with more reason."

"I know I have no reason; I am ashamed of myself," said Lil honestly, "but the truth



of the whole thing is this: I know, whatever my feelings are, that Lady Lynne does not like me; and that makes me feel as if I was going to lose papa altogether. I shall, I know; he and I will never understand each other again as we used to, now Lady Lynne is to be always between us. We kept her outside before."

"You are a foolish child," said Charlie, in a low voice, which told Lil in a moment the state he was in.

"I know I am," she cried, "but it is over now; you know, Charlie, it is always hard to lose people. But it is done; I have accepted it, and now I have no one in the whole world but you. Oh, Charlie, I like that feeling after all; it seems as though we had a sweet little bit of the universe in which we two lived alone. Other people are very nice; but, oh, how completely they are outside our life—our own dear little world, which just holds our two selves!"

Lil had never said so much as this before, and Charlie in his heart blessed Lady Lynne. He took Lil's hand and held it as though it were made of some rare and fragile stuff.

"What a jolly little hand it is," he said to himself, "and to think it is really mine." All he said aloud was "dear old girl;" the words look very unromantic written on paper, but they sounded strangely sweet with the vivid and tender meaning that his voice put into them.



## CHAPTER X.

**B**ROUGH'S marriage was celebrated with very little noise; and, almost before Lil was able to realise the fact, she found herself in full possession of a stepmother.

Brough's mode of life was quietly, but firmly, altered from the moment Lady Lynne became Lady Warrington. She was determined to make the utmost of her clever husband, and she set about her task quickly and decisively. To Lady Lynne all persons about her were mere satellites to herself. Brough Warrington had now become her chief satellite, and she was bent upon his being as brilliant a one as possible. One of her first steps was to let her own house in the country, and take one in town. Here they passed about half their time, and, while Brough worked in his study, his wife devoted herself to society, and thought herself the more industrious and important of the two.

Lil observed all this with silent wonder. She marvelled how her father could endure to be shut up in a London street, away from his birds and his river. She began dimly to understand how much a man will submit to

in order to please the woman he is in love with. She went to the house sometimes, but not often. Her father was not quite the same, though he still loved to feel her clinging arms about his broad shoulders. Few women can marry a man who has a favourite daughter without grudging her the love she gets. Human nature has not yet learned to love without jealousy, and only a saint can see her husband devotedly fond of the child of another marriage without feeling some bitterness towards the unknown dead wife and her living memory. It is not always unreasonable cruelty which makes stepmothers unfriendly or unkind, it is simple human nature, which will rise to the surface in spite of all repression. Lady Lynne was no saint, and had no ambition to be one ; therefore she made no great effort to be affectionate to Lil. Apart from her own feeling of natural indifference to her, to call it by no stronger name, she was not very desirous to exhibit a stepdaughter so old as Lil in the society in which she herself made a fairly youthful appearance. When a man has not long been married, he is easily influenced by his wife, and thus Brough unconsciously imbibed the idea that Lady Lynne did not care to have Lil too often in her drawing-room. Lil, proud to a fault, quickly felt this, and kept away almost entirely. She lived in a different world now from her father, and she herself thought it was perhaps

*IN THE FLOWER OF HER YOUTH.*

the easiest plan for them to remain, as far as possible, in those separate worlds. She could not dress well enough to please Lady Lynne; the dresses which she made herself would have delighted an artist, when upon her slender graceful figure, but to Lady Lynne and her friends they simply appeared unfashionable. For Lil did not study the fashions, but only what suited herself. These various reasons combined to keep Lil away from her father, and she found it no hardship now, for she was absolutely content with Charlie for the centre and the sun of her world. Charlie worked very hard to make a small income; Lil worked very hard to spend it wisely. There seemed little time left for anything else. But Lil did not surrender her literary habits, even in the midst of her many tasks. To read omnivorously was a part of her nature, and she even preserved a habit of writing regularly; for her father, spite of all little difficulties, would have her help him in his new book. This work was a great delight to her, although it was impossible for her to give much time to it. She loved to go to Brough's study now and then, and feel that she still had an interest in common with him, which his wife had not. For that lady never dreamed of troubling herself as to what a man did in his study so long as he accomplished something there which would produce money, and which society would agree to admire.

A narrow income was positively Lil's only trouble at this time, and when people are so young, so happy, so much in love as Lil and her husband, the many makeshifts which poverty necessitates, are rather a pleasure than a trial. Lil's dinners, Lil's home-made dresses and jam, Lil's unexpected capacity for making guineas elastic, and a cottage artistic, and a suburban home rather like a joyous bit of fairyland than anything else—all these things were an incessant source of delight to Charlie, of pride to Lil. And Charlie, whenever he was at home, exerted his own powers and produced works of genius; packing-cases resolved themselves by degrees into bookshelves, a piece of wire, some old wood and a little green paint resulted in a magnificent dove-house; all sorts of devices were hit upon to make the cottage into a delicious little nook.

It was all so fresh and interesting to these two happy young creatures; to have a home of their own was so wonderful that they could not but think it perfection, however tiny it might be, or however small their power of making it beautiful. The desire to fill it with beauty worked wonders; and no "bijou residence," fitted by Morris and Company, was ever more admired than the interior of this quaint little house.

Lil was quite happy, perfectly content, and full of that sweet sedateness which comes from

the conviction that one's life is shaped and settled. She fancied herself dwelling in this little cottage half her life; then, perhaps, having one a trifle larger, and a few more pounds a year to spend. The future appeared to her one long dream of bright content; monotony or sameness were words not to be found in her vocabulary at this time of her life. If the day was pleasant, because busy and full of hope, and the evening perfect because made joyous by the most charming of all society, what could be imagined more delightful than to repeat this same day throughout time or even eternity? There was only one thought which sometimes made her shiver; one of the two must, in all probability, die before the other; the hideous loneliness, which would then make dark the earth and sky, was terrible to contemplate. But this terror stood a long way off, ghastly in the distance as seems the avenging angel to happy sinners. Lil was young enough to realise the very vigour and joy of youth; a whole lifetime lay before her, and she rejoiced in it. It is strange how the sweetness of love quiets the fever of ambition. Lil's was naturally an ambitious temperament, but all thought of success outside her home had died entirely out of her mind. She was too absolutely content to seek to strive after anything beyond the pale of her own immediate joyous life. It seems as though some string of evil fortune is



needed to spur men and women into embarking upon perilous enterprise. In the garden of love where the lips are ever sweet as with honey, the eyes ever glad yet never satiate with gazing, where all the senses of the soul are enriched and made passionate by delight, where the whole being rests and reposes as upon the very bosom of joy, there is no sting to make men stir, they linger content among the flowers. Lil was perfectly content in her garden; she had no ambition now but to make the utmost of her little opportunities.

She wished for nothing except sometimes that Charlie were not bound to go to his office every day as if he were a machine. After the apparent ease of her father's life at home this regular slavery had seemed to her very terrible; she still disliked it, though she had grown accustomed to the inevitable routine. And Charlie himself was resigned to it as men are to that which they cannot avoid. But it was the hardship in his life, this absolutely necessary office work. He hated it, and, but for Lil, could scarcely have faced the idea of working on like this through all his youth and middle age. Her companionship made all the difference, it was something to work for, but still the routine irked him terribly. The verses which were his pleasure were as valueless in the market as so much waste paper; and sometimes it seemed to him unbearable that he must go on through all his life

working the mere mechanical part of his brain, and working it sometimes so hard that his artistic sense was blunt and heavy, and the poetic instinct died away within him.

The consciousness that this was drudgery grew upon him more plainly as the time passed on, and it became a little cloud in Lil's clear sky to see this. But it made the life at home even more precious and delightful to them, for Lil gave herself up more absolutely than ever to creating a bright atmosphere, and Charlie clung to her as the sunshine of his world. They were more to each other with every hour of union, for they had no hopes or ambitions outside their own home. Charlie gave his strength to supporting it; Lil to making it bright. Only sometimes Lil whispered something about a cherished dream of hers—a volume of Charlie's verses. But his answer was always gloomy to this, and as the time passed on grew more and more gloomy till Lil was half afraid of the subject.

"Oh, it is no use," he would say; "no publisher would touch them, and I cannot save the money to bring them out."

This always made Lil sad, and she would wonder if there was no way in which she could save, or whether she could not earn anything herself. But this she seldom thought of seriously; she had so completely taken up the idea that her duties lay all at home. And indeed there were enough of

them there to fill all her time. She often wondered what Gran would have said if she saw the diligence of her granddaughter! But Gran was too entirely offended to make any sign of forgiveness, and Lil too proud to ask for any. So Lil had no feminine critics now, she made no new friends, for she was too poor to mix with the sort of people who would have understood or liked her. Alfred Davies brought his wife, both before and after their marriage, to make formal calls; but she and Lil were as far removed as though the Atlantic lay between them. A little discussion of the weather and of their servants, exhausted the sympathy of which they were capable. Thus Lil grew in her own growth, sweet and strong, unperturbed by social conventionalities, unbiassed by the opinions of people about her. She read, and thought, and quietly developed into womanhood, while Charlie watched her as though she were some rare and precious lily unfolding by his side. She was a constant wonder and interest to him; he found in her eyes "the right Promethean fire;" he learned from her lips how pure a woman's soul may be. The time passed on, almost unheeded, and the months lengthened into years, and still these two were blindly happy in each other!

No children came, and they were not missed. It seemed almost as if there would have been no room for them.

## CHAPTER XI.

**T**HERE is something in the very nature of happiness which takes us "out of space, out of time;" we are living, when we are quite happy, in that part of us which shall be eternal, and we taste for the moment some of the supreme satisfaction of the life which has no relation to hours or days. "To-morrow, or next year, perhaps luck will turn,"—these are the words of the unfortunate. To the fortunate there is no to-morrow, or next year. A delicate haze of beauty, like that which makes Rome glorious in the sunset, blends the days into one delicious whole, the years into one long harmony.

The years passed over Lil's head and she scarcely noticed them. Five whole years had flown out of her life and she had never paused to count them. For five sweet years, rich in happiness, she had been Lil Newman; it seemed a dream, a dead and long-forgotten dream, that she had even been anything else. It was a pleasant memory, that of the old girl-life on the island with her father; but it seemed like a pleasant memory out of some

former existence. She had so given herself into Charlie's life that it was difficult to imagine any previous mode of living. And yet, though it seemed as if she had never lived except with Charlie, these years had been so sweet that, like all tender things, they fell softly and had passed unmarked.

But one day the fact flashed vividly into Lil's mind in this shape.

"Five years—it is a long time—and a week's holiday in each year—surely that is enough to make a man tired!"

She was standing out in the spring sunshine, in her little garden. The light upon her hair brought out the sun-colour in it; like an aureole it fell about her face. But that face was not quite in harmony with a glad spring morning. It was pale and a little drawn, as if in pain.

The trouble which had been but a little cloud in the sky was growing larger, and made a dimness before Lil's eyes.

Charlie was growing tired. Not as a man grows tired who wants a brief holiday; but with the weariness of wanting a new interest, a mental change.

Some men can sit on a clerk's stool year after year, knowing no regret, hungering after no forbidden pastures, desiring no freedom of fresh life. Charlie was not one of these. His temperament was essentially artistic. The adding-up of innumerable figures was an easy



enough task to him now, by force of habit ; but it was an even heavier soul-weariness than when he first began to do it. It was intolerable to a man of his sort to go on, day after day, month after month, doing such work as this, and obtaining thereby the barest living, with a possible ten pounds rise of salary in the year ! Sometimes it seemed a hideous fate to him ; for all power of other work was fading away. At first he had been able to write, and to study, in the evenings ; but for the last year a weariness of mind had fallen upon him and he had to let the evenings go in mere idleness. When this became a habit, he grew dejected and dispirited. And then Lil found, for the first time, that she had not the power to cheer him. Probably her sympathy was too real. Her individuality was all but merged in his, and, when he came home depressed, her smile was too evidently an effort. She could not resist his mood when it became persistent ; and indeed his life was so entirely hers, his interests and purposes hers, that when he surrendered them, she, too, felt helpless and forlorn. When he rose in the morning as pale and tired as though he had not slept, the sense of this weighed down her spirits and she looked as weary as himself.

The bull-dog element appears to have departed out of us in this generation. Men want change and rest and recreation ; they cannot cling persistently to one small avocation

and pursue it in patience as their grandfather's could. Education must be to blame for this, surely; men learn, and with knowledge the imagination develops and the mind grows hungry. Charlie was of an essentially modern temperament. He wanted life, not mere existence; he desired to see and hear, and gain experience, not merely to earn his dinner and eat it. He had known, well enough, when he married, that this earning of bread and eating it was all he had to look forward to. But Lil was something so new to him—there was such a glow in the dream of a home with her—that he had never realized what the monotony of his daily work would be. And for the first two or three years that monotony had not made itself felt; he adored his wife, he loved his home, he could find interest in his writing. When his brain grew too tired for him to find that interest, then first came the taste of the ashes of life in his mouth.

Lil saw this only too plainly. She thrilled with every feeling which he experienced, she went with him through every state he suffered.

After a time she began dimly to apprehend that this was not good. The intense sympathy which doubles pleasure, doubles pain also. Lil began to find she had not the power to change his mood; she could but intensify it. When both were content, this added infinitely to the pleasures of life; they seemed to strike fire in contact and create delight. But when

the one grew dull or weary, it seemed impossible to avoid following the same law ; the other grew dull and weary also. The two temperaments were the same, and this similarity was made stronger by so keen a sympathy. The same incidents depressed or exhausted them both.

Only dimly this fact was making itself visible to Lil. But she was very vividly conscious that Charlie came home dispirited now instead of cheerful ; that, instead of reading, or watching her with the old pleasure in the mere sight of her, he would sit for hours with his eyes shut and apparently desire nothing but peace. Lil could not rouse him to an interest in anything. It seemed only to harass him if she talked to him ; yet he desired no other society ; Lil was all the world to him. Only he had lost his own quick vitality ; the world, even with Lil in it, seemed to have grown pale before his eyes. The colour had flown from the sky, the scent from the flowers ; the garden of love was no longer aglow ; but he came there to rest and to find the quiet which was all he desired.

At first Lil had thought this a mere temporary phase of weariness ; but as time passed on she saw it was more than that. It was a growing thing. And she could not arrest its growth ! Their love was as strong as ever ; no faintest cloud had ever arisen between them ; they clung together and leaned each

upon each as in the first days of their union. But habit had dulled the magic a little ; Lil's mere presence, her tenderness, her brightness, were no longer things to wonder at, sun rays to gladden existence. Charlie desired nothing but to come home to his cottage and sit by Lil's side ; but her smile could not now bring one into his face, her love could not exhilarate him as once it did. Lil saw this, and the consciousness that her power had so far lessened put the first keen stab of pain into her poor little heart.

What was to be done ?

He had gone away, just now, from the gate ; with the mere ghost of a smile on his face, instead of the boyish laugh which used to linger in her ears all day. This little ghost of a smile got into her heart and haunted her like the wraith of a dead hope.

Was he really so tired, so tired !

"Well, it is five years," said Lil to herself, "five years of very weary work—work he hates, I know. And only me, all the time—he has had nothing else. After all, it must be dreary work for a man to go on like this, with so few interests or pleasures, and so much hard work ! I never thought of it so before !"

Indeed, she had not ; it was a new idea to her. Her life had so fully satisfied herself that she never dreamed of its being unsatisfactory to Charlie. But she told herself that men are



different from women ; they need many things which women do not need. She said this to herself as she stood in the sunshine, her hand on the garden gate, her eyes on the turn in the road where Charlie's figure had vanished. He needed something. What was it? Could she not find out? Could she not give it to him? Until now she had always been able to anticipate his wishes. Could she not puzzle this out, and find what it was he needed in his life?

So she went back into the house and sat down to think, her chin in her hand, her eyes fixed on the floor.

She had never been so puzzled in all her life before. Her own power had faded. She knew that do what she might, she could not interest Charlie when he came home tired. She could only be sorry for him, and she doubted whether that was not, after all, a mistake. He wanted a touch which would rouse him, instead of one which could only express sympathy. After a few moments, in which she realised this, and writhed a little under the stab which the realisation of it cost her, she put herself out of the question, and wondered where she could find external help.

She had never understood until now how poor they were ! Charlie had found it out a good while ago ; had chafed against his narrow means and absence of future scope. He



had submitted in silence, and said nothing to Lil, for he fancied she felt it as fully as himself. He had found their sympathy so keen as to make the thoughts of one perpetually echo the thoughts of the other, and he did not suppose he had to tell her anything. But Lil had been so absolutely content in his love, in his society, that not until now did she see how little breathing space they had, how shut in they were by sheer want of means, to their own life together. The discovery, that faithful as their love was, her society was evidently not enough for Charlie, opened her eyes to the fact that they were too poor to have any society save their own.

A dim sense of failure, a sudden feeling of apprehension, seized upon Lil's heart and made her tremble as she sat. After all this joy which they had tasted together, was it possible that the mournful dulness of ordinary married life could settle upon them?

This was impossible, she knew, as far as she was concerned. Charlie was all the world to her, and, without him in it, the world to her would have no existence. She was bound up in him and could not even fancy losing her anchorage. But she could just catch, dimly, and with trembling heart, at the barrenness which would descend upon her if he should grow sick of the narrow life he led with her.

What was to be done! Was she to sit idle,

making no effort? This was unlike Lil, who never understood how to sit silent or idle under any trial. Patience was never one of her strong points; she could suffer but she did not know how to submit. Her temperament was intensely active, and essentially cheerful. With a cloud over her head she had naturally but one thought—how to remove it.

“If I could only think of anything new to interest him,” she said to herself. “If he would only try to get his poems published!—I shall go and ask papa about it.”

She went and got ready to go out, with a feeling of intense relief. She was not clever at carrying her burdens alone. This one she could not take to Charlie as she took every other. How delightful it would be to recall her girlhood, and go to Brough for the advice she needed!

An hour later and she was knocking at the door of Brough’s study.

Brough never demanded absolute solitude like some less hard-working authors. He never locked his door, and he always said come in, in answer to an inquiring tap, like Lil’s.

He looked up with the old familiar frown of abstraction on his forehead. It died away as he saw Lil standing doubtfully at the door. He put down his pen and flung himself back in his chair.

“So it is you, little woman?” he said, in

his big, breezy voice. "You are in town early to-day. Her ladyship is not dressed yet."

"I wanted just ten minutes alone with you, papa," said Lil. Her serious face, and some dark lines under her eyes suddenly arrested his attention.

"What's up, baby? You look as if you had buried your best friend."

"I haven't done that, yet; but I want to know what to do for him."

"For the best friend? Oh, you mean Charlie. Sit down, old chap, and tell us all about it."

With which Brough settled himself to listen, half-an-eye, meantime, on the unwritten page before him. Lil observed this, and knew it meant he was behindhand with his work. So she made haste and tried to think how to put her tale in few words.

"What I really want to know is whether there is no chance of getting Charlie's verses published for him."

"Humph—drug in the market," interrupted Brough.

"I know people say that, papa; but do think if there is no way through the difficulty. I am anxious about it for this reason. Charlie is over tired, I suppose; but it's more than physical weariness. It has lasted quite a year now, and it gets worse and worse. It makes me wretched. What am I to do? He cares for nothing; he seems tired of life. I can find

nothing that will interest him. He has given up writing because he says he is too tired to make more manuscript just to put away in a drawer. If I could get some of his work published, it might rouse him."

Brough's frown had grown deep again during this brief tale of woe.

"It's all the cursed morbidness of this gelatinous generation," he exclaimed, angrily; he always got angry over this subject. "What right has a man to get tired of life while he has a soul in his body and God's sky overhead? While there's work to do, and fresh air to breathe, and a glass of good wine to be had, I can't see what a man's made of who loses interest in his life. At all events, he must be decidedly wanting in inner resources."

"Papa," said Lil, reproachfully, "if you want to abuse Charlie, do it to his face."

"I apologise, baby; and my abuse doesn't amount to much, for I always thought Charlie an uncommonly good fellow, only with a touch of the modern jelly-fish about him. I abominate these young fellows who criticise everything and do nothing; incapable either of enthusiasm or honest cheerfulness; they are a burden to themselves and everybody else, and so create the boredom they complain of. How to cure the complaint, heaven only knows—I don't. If Charlie's poems were published now, he would probably have discovered by this time that it was not worth while to write

while reviewers are so uneducated or indifferent or spiteful, and that the public has no true taste for caviar but greatly prefers lollipops. Or worse still, he would have concluded, on seeing himself in print, that he was a mere poetaster of the lollipop order, and then he would sink into a forlorn melancholy over his own incapacity. I tell you, baby, you can't cure a man easily who has sickened of this abominable disease; you must get at the very springs of his nature to do him any good."

Lil leaned back in her chair and a big hot tear fell slowly down each cheek. She turned away her head that Brough might not see them.

"I am afraid I can't do that now," she said, softly; and then added, in a hurry, as if afraid she had suggested too much, "At least tell me whether you think I might try my luck with these poems; I have them here. I can't go home without making an effort. Give me an introduction to one of your publishers."

"Very well, baby," said Brough, submissively. He had not lost the habit of doing what Lil told him when she was in earnest. "Mr. Crosbie Hall will do, I should think. He is a gentleman, at all events, which small circumstance makes 'interviewing' a shade more agreeable."

He wrote a brief note in his delicate handwriting, so small and beautiful to be writ by so large a hand, and gave it to Lil. With this slight comfort, she started forth again. Her



father had not sympathised with her as much as she would have liked ; but then she could not draw more sympathy from him without hinting too much. She had a strong sense of the sacredness which should pervade the relations of two persons who had chosen to live for one another. She could not bring herself to speak to any outsider of any doubts or difficulties which belonged to her life with Charlie.

She went straight to Mr. Hall's office, and having sent in her card, with "Brough Warrington's daughter" written beneath the modest "Mrs. Newman," she was very speedily shown into an inner sanctum where Mr. Hall himself awaited her.

He was large, bland and smiling ; if he had to give unhappy authors bitter cups to drink, he did it in a delightful fashion. He was a publisher of the new school ; his manners were wonderfully sweet and his sanctum was furnished with a certain magnificence.

It was all very grand ; and Lil felt decidedly small and insignificant in the presence of this great creature. However, she had the courage of her convictions ; and she believed in Charlie's poems. So she stated her case and brought out her manuscript. Mr. Hall smiled on it with a supremely gentle expression which would have told Lil enough if she had had a little more experience.

"I will have them read, with pleasure,"

he said, "but of course you are aware that poetry cannot be made to pay in the present day. Even the most noted names are a loss to their publisher. If these poems are fairly good, I shall be very glad to bring them out if you or your husband will put down about sixty pounds towards the cost of production."

Lil just succeeded in repressing a little shriek of horror.

"Oh, thank you," she said, "for telling me now. I need not leave the poems at all. Why six pounds would be quite an impossibility to us."

"I am really very sorry," said Mr. Hall, handing back the manuscript with gentle reluctance, "but it is really out of the question for a publisher to undertake the whole cost of such a book. We could not live if we were to bring out volumes of poetry at our own expense."

Lil, who was always absurdly proud, had a queer feeling as if she were a crossing-sweeper who had asked for a penny and been courteously refused. She made all haste about her departure, and scarcely breathed freely till she was in the street again.

"I'll put them back in the drawer!" she said to herself, "and tell Charlie nothing about it. How glad I am he did not try himself! It would make him more disappointed than ever."

And so her poor little effort ended in failure,

and she went home feeling as weary as Charlie himself. What was she to do? The magazines Charlie had already tried; and had seriously concluded that to be continually knocking at their doors for admission was a great mistake. The amount of discouragement which falls to the lot of a young author who makes this attempt produces, as a certain great writer said in a private letter on this subject, "an unnatural discontent with one's own offspring."

So there was nothing for it but to take home the poor little papers and put them gently away in their drawer. Lil felt when she closed it as if she had shut a coffin lid. People who have money, and opportunities, cannot even guess at the sense of weariness and depression which follows such a failure as this. Lil stood silently looking out into the quickly gathering gloom, for she had passed nearly the whole day in making this fruitless experiment. She knew not how to break the spell of dulness which lay upon the poor little pretty cottage. She could not suggest the theatre, or asking people to dinner, or any other gentle form of dissipation; they were much too poor. There was nothing for it but to go and see that their own modest dinner was not being spoiled, and then to get the mending-basket, which to-day she had neglected. She felt too dispirited to go to her own writing-table and go on with the work she was doing

for her father. Literature seemed one huge disappointment to her at the moment. What was the use of making more books when good verse was a drug in the market? No; she would not write; a little wholesome darning would be better for her; no one could dispute the usefulness of that.

As she turned to go and look after her various tasks, she glanced round the room, full of home-made devices and decorated by their own hands. "It is a dear room," she said half-aloud. "I could always, always be happy here. Why can't Charlie? Men need more life than we women, I suppose. Perhaps I could grow tired in time; would it be possible? No; I think not, yet this room looks to me as if its colours were fading; as if the life of happiness we have enjoyed in it was over. Oh, what am I saying? It is impossible! There he is at the gate. How can I think such silly thoughts? I will go and make my face red at the kitchen fire!"

Charlie came in, slowly, and sat down in the first easy chair he reached. He did not go in search of her now, through all the cottage, as he used. He was too tired. Lil came presently from the kitchen, with flushed cheeks and troubled eyes.

"Are you very tired?" she asked.

"Oh, I am all right," he answered, in a slightly vexed tone that had become natural of late. Everything worried him more or

less, even to be asked how he was. But he forced a smile and touched her hand gently as it lay on the arm of his chair. With this Lil had to be satisfied. How different it was from the old days when coming home made of every evening a festival! But no one erred, or had failed; both loved still; both were true as pure hearts could be. What was amiss? Why was the evening a gray dream now instead of a time of pleasure?

These questions had no answers.





## CHAPTER XII.

**T**HIS phase, or state of things, which at first Lil refused to accept as a fact, became so definite a fact as to be like a new presence in the house. It seemed to Lil as if there was some one else who sat down at table with them, who followed them into their sitting room, and remained there, unseen, but not unfelt. She knew of no way to banish this hateful presence; she felt powerless and baffled before it; never had she yielded like this to any sense of straightened means, any difficulty of debt, any sternness of economy. Indeed, all these things which sound so hard, had been pleasant, joyous, bright experiences, compared to that through which she was now passing. Anything which necessitates activity is less painful than a difficulty which has to be borne with folded hands; and Lil's present difficulty was one which seemed to enforce submission. Into that house, where once every hour had had its separate charm, had crept the intolerable presence, the hateful thing, for which we have no proper name in our own language, and this thing, this *ennui*,

now made the hours go heavily. Time seemed to stand still, as with Rosalind's lawyers, but they at least awoke at the end of vacation; whereas it seemed to Lil that this vacation of hers was an endless one; she could see no break in the long path that lay before her. And yet all this arose from nothing in herself. She had inherited too keen and wholesome a temperament to suffer from the fatal modern weariness, even if she were cramped in a narrow life; but as yet she felt no cramp, she could imagine feeling none, for she had the object of her devotion with her; and her devotion was as absolute as it had been at any time. But she reflected every phase through which Charlie passed; she lived so strongly in his life that this would have been unavoidable even if their natural sympathy had not been so extraordinary.

Extraordinary it was, and so Brough said, when a few days after Lil's fruitless excursion to town, he came to see her.

"Because that confounded young fellow has got himself into an ill-humour with life, why should you go and fret about it? Babies all have puling fits, I suppose; he's got one, and he'll grow out of it."

"That sounds very cheerful, papa," said Lil. "But I am only a baby, too, and I can't look at things as you do. This 'puling' fit, as you call it, seems to be interminable."

"Why don't you go away and forget all

about it?" suggested Brough, with his usual practical wisdom.

"I would, papa," said Lil, "only I don't know where to go, and I haven't any money to go with, and I don't see who would keep the house whilst I was away."

"Oh, bother it," said Brough, "ever since you got married you've done nothing but mend stockings and cook dinners; why in the world don't you use your brains, and then you wouldn't worry about these trifles."

"It's all very well, papa," said Lil, "but you know I am doing the right thing; you didn't believe I should turn out a success if I took up what you call domesticity, as a profession, but, you see, I have."

"A success, indeed," said Brough; "why, you ridiculous infant, if you had done something worth doing, instead of letting yourself get absorbed into this absurd business of keeping house, Charlie would never have had the chance of getting bored as he is now. He has had to sit on his clerk's stool too long, that's the long and short of it. Your atmosphere here is always the same when he comes home, I suppose. You have not a large circle of acquaintances, I believe."

"Don't try to be sarcastic, papa," said Lil, with a touch of her old manner, "you never can do it properly; of course we have not many friends; we can't afford it."

"Can't afford it," growled Brough; "what

ridiculous nonsense ! You fellows haven't any enterprise. Poor old Charlie ! the disease he's suffering from is clear enough, I take it. Your society is charming, of course ; I like it ; but whether I should like it, and none other, for five or six years consecutively I don't know ; and then you two are so outrageously alike, that I don't see how it can be called ' society ' for you to be together ; one of the great charms of human association is the contrast between people who are in totally different moods. I don't see what people get by being together if they are always in the same mood."

" It strikes me, papa," said Lil, " that you are being rather severe, considering I can't do anything."

" Perhaps I am," said Brough, " but I have seen a good deal of life, and I know I am talking sense. Unless you can emancipate yourself, somehow or other, from this domestic routine, you won't get any happier."

" Well," said Lil, " I'll see if I can evolve an idea, but I don't believe I can ; I don't see any way of escape."

" Nonsense ! " said Brough, in his big, cheerful way ; " something will turn up."

Brough had a childlike faith in the future, and " something will turn up " was one of his favourite forms of expression. When things were uncomfortable, as they now and then are with everybody, he would say this with a breezy infectious cheerfulness, and go on living

from day to day in the firm faith that the gods had good things in store for him.

Things were not over charming in Brough's own home. Lady Warrington was taking the upper hand very decidedly just now, and Brough was being put into his proper place as a big boy who had to work very hard and do what he was told. He would like to have taken Lil home with him ; to have kept her for awhile, and sent her back fresh into her own life. He had an instinctive feeling that her difficulty at home was greater than she knew it to be ; or would be greater. He imagined that she and Charlie were simply wearing out their affection by taxing it too severely ; true, he thought theirs an affection very easily over-taxed. He had never felt sure that people so much alike should yield themselves to the pleasure of sympathy. He had rather an idea that Byron's theory contained an element of truth, and that love between man and woman should have something of enmity in it—should, at all events, contain that peculiar quality which, when the wind changes, may turn it into hatred.

There was nothing of this in the love between Charlie and Lil ; a strong and deep friendship lay beneath all other feeling.

He would like to have taken Lil home with him ; he fancied there was nothing needed but a change—a break in the relations between these two—but he knew too well how Lady



Warrington would arch her eyebrows at the bare suggestion of such a thing. There was never any room in her house for any one but herself and her satellites; and Brough had gradually learnt to accept this fact as a phenomenon of natural history.

But still, something might be done; he could not go away and leave Lil like this, with those big eyes of hers looking as if they had tears hidden behind them. Brough lived in the present moment, he enjoyed the present pleasure without thought of the future and its troubles, and he sympathised very thoroughly with the pain of any one who was actually with him. Away from Lil, he would have decided that she must find her way out of the wood by herself; but with her face, and those new marks of pain upon it, actually before him, he felt as if he must do something, however slight.

"Suppose you come up to town with me, baby," he said; "we will go and dine at the 'Criterion' together, and then we'll go and see Laurence's new play; he's been worrying me half the week to go and tell him what I think of it; if you'll come with me, we'll go and see it."

"Do you mean it's the first night?" said Lil, her face suddenly lighting up.

"Yes," said Brough. "Would you like to go?"

"First night of a new play?" said Lil;

"why, I have never seen such a thing! As to liking to go, I should like to go to the theatre every night."

"Then why the devil don't you?" said Brough.

"You always were unreasonable, papa," said Lil, with dignity, "and always will be, I suppose."

"Ah!" said Brough, "that sounds just like the majestic small mite, who used to lecture me when she was about ten years old. Do you remember when you were about three, you coolly observed to me, 'You think your way, papa, I think mine.'"

"Yes," said Lil; "but I always have found that, unreasonable as they might appear, there is some amount of sense in your remarks. It is plainly impossible for me to go to the theatre every night, because I have not got the money, and nobody would give me tickets; but, oh! I should like to go to-night."

"Then you shall!" said Brough, with an emphasis that would lead one to suppose that he had settled some mighty matter. "Get ready, and we'll be off."

Lil rushed into the kitchen and interviewed her little maid, ran to her table and wrote a note to Charlie, and then hurried away to dress. She had a talent in this matter of dressing, with regard to which most women are so tremendously helpless; she needed neither maid nor dressmaker to help her give

shape to a thing. She could make herself up with her quick fingers and rapid insight into effect just as some people can make up a bouquet or set a table. In a few minutes she had exhausted all her simple resources, and made the utmost of herself; for she was as proud of going out with Brough as if he had been a new lover.

"I have never done such a thing before, papa," said she, as they went off together like two children let out of school; "I have never been out without Charlie before, in all these years."

"More fool you!" was Brough's somewhat gruff answer. "I say, old chap, what shall we have for dinner?"

"As if I cared!" said Lil.

"Well, you are a little idiot!" said Brough, in a discontented tone. "I thought you would have outgrown the folly of not caring what you had for dinner, by this time."

"Perhaps I shall outgrow it yet, papa," said Lil, who could not help taking a cheerful view of things. Her spirits had risen under the novel circumstances, and she felt very much inclined to dance. She said so, presently.

"Dance, then," said Brough. "I don't care what the people think. You shall dance into a hansom, as soon as we see one. I declare, you looked a hundred years old, moping over your little grievances indoors; you don't look twenty now!"

“But I am, papa,” said Lil, with sudden gravity. “Twenty-two! and I shall have been married six years in the autumn—why, I ought to be dead and buried soon.”

Brough gave vent to an extraordinary sound which he generally used to indicate a contempt beyond words.

“You ridiculous infant!” he said, “why, you’re not grown up yet—you’ve got a lifetime before you.”

“A lifetime, papa?” said Lil, with a strange sound in her voice. She imagined that lifetime passed, as the last year had been passed, and she felt that it might not be easy to live cheerfully through many such years.

What an evening those two had! It seemed to Lil as if she had gone back to the days of her girlhood, only with added powers of enjoyment. To drive about in a hansom again with Brough, without having to think how much that hansom was going to cost! She threw off all her small responsibilities, and caught the infection of Brough’s jollity. It seemed to her, that to go about with him like this, with no particular business on hand except their own enjoyment, was something most delightful. It was years since she had dined at a restaurant; it seemed to her quite wonderful not to have the dinner on her mind, and not to have a certain sense of anxiety as each dish appeared. How delicious the things

seemed to her—the dainty little courses which succeeded one another.

Brough ordered a dinner after his own heart. Lil did not like it all, but she admired it with the humble feeling that she was still a very amateur in that art which the *chef* of the “Criterion” had evidently conquered. She was not very hungry, and a very little champagne made her feel languidly happy; but she did not mind how long the dinner lasted, for it was charming to see Brough enjoy it. It was, above all, most charming to hear him talk with the old witty geniality and happy discursiveness which he always kept for the dinner-table. Lil firmly believed that no man ever had talked, or ever could talk like her father, and it was quite as enjoyable to her as going to a new play, to sit and listen to him.

The dinner-hour appeared to Brough to be the crowning moment of the day—the foam and sparkle of the whole twenty-four hours. Then he was at his ease, with nothing to do but exercise his faculties of enjoyment. He would lean back in his chair between the courses, and think or talk about any subject that occurred to him, with a glorious sense that now he was at liberty to be as irrelevant as he might choose to be.

A man of genius most often speaks to the point when he is irrelevant; he has broken then the trivial chains of time and circum-



stance; he is thinking for himself, and probably will think of some matter concerning the real life of human beings.

Brough's presence in a room was not unlike that of a large dog—people always noticed him after a while, and seemed rather inclined to pat him. He was so big and boisterous, so like a large schoolboy, that sometimes people were surprised to find that there was sense and humour in all he said. Lil began to feel again an old familiar sensation of being with some one who had a very peculiar power of his own. Some people who knew him well—for instance, his mother—never understood, and, in consequence, never thoroughly liked Brough; yet, put him among a room full of strangers, and he seemed to draw a certain proportion of them to him by sheer force of his personality.

Before the dinner was half over, he had scattered, to some extent, the icy reserve of London etiquette; he was engaged in a hot discussion with a gentleman at the next table, and another gentleman came half way down the room to put a question to him. Brough met all this with delight; it was a common experience of his to pick up friends at all the odd corners of life; he was intended for an easier and freer-hearted sphere than that of London society.

All this amused Lil very much. It was like going back to a bright and Bohemian phase of existence which she had left in the past.

Her surroundings through all her married life had shut her away from this kind of easy atmosphere. This was not altogether a matter of character ; it was, perhaps, more a matter of circumstances. But still, there was something of character in it. Charlie had been trained in a strict, perhaps slightly priggish, school ; he rebelled against the limitations of very ordinary society, but his tendency was rather towards a delicate artistic development, than any rebellion which should savour of Bohemianism.

The dinner was over, and all the bright talk ; and as Lil rose to go, she wondered how Charlie had enjoyed his solitary meal at home ; but she had no time to think much of this, for Brough, now that he had made up his mind to go and see his friend's play, was as interested as if he had never been to a play before. He hurried Lil downstairs, and they drove off to the theatre.

Brough deposited her on a red velvet divan while he started off to find Laurence, who was somewhere "behind." He came back very soon, having followed Laurence into the green-room, and there caught some of the infectious excitement of a first night. They went into the stalls, and Brough began to show Lil the various people of distinction who were scattered here and there in the house. Some one came into a box quickly, looked round, and went away again.

“That was Laurence,” said Brough. “Did you notice him? Such a capital fellow! You would like him; and he—by Jove!” as he looked for a moment into Lil’s upturned face, full of brightness and interest, “you are just the style of girl he would admire.”

“Style of girl, papa!” exclaimed Lil; “why, I am a middle-aged matron!”

“Yes; you might have five urchins at home, only you haven’t; and a good thing too. Fancy a baby like you taking care of other babies!”

“Well, I do feel a baby to-night, papa; it is such fun coming out with you again!”

She nestled a shade nearer to him as she spoke. There was a singular charm to her in her relations with her father, and it was very delicious to resume them.

She entered into the various excitements of a first performance with breathless interest. The play was an adaptation from the French, thrilling, and sometimes dramatic, but not at all grand. The audience was very uncertain in its opinion, and did not always laugh at the funny points; whereas the whole house buzzed with amusement when an obstinate doorstep, which had refused to descend to its proper place at the right time, fell suddenly with a loud noise, in the midst of a pathetic soliloquy of the hero’s, startling the actor so much that he turned to look at it. The gallery was charmed, too, when some of the walking ladies

and gentlemen who came on under umbrellas to give realism to a snow-storm scene, rashly tried a fresh promenade, and stuck between a lamp-post and a wall.

"How humiliating!" said Lil, as the laughter rose in the gallery at this absurd incident.

"What?" asked her father.

"To have such an audience. Oh, if I were Mr. Laurence I should feel it dreadfully."

"Oh, he's hardened by this time," said Brough. "Any one who works for the public must be prepared for this sort of thing. But, when all's said and done, there are no better critics than our friends in the gallery. See, they have come over to Laurence, after all."

So they had. The heroine had caught their attention and won their interest by her pathos at the end of the snow-storm scene; and when the curtain fell there were loud cries for her, and then for the author. Laurence came forward to the front of the box he occupied and bowed to the house. Lil had unconsciously clasped her hands with excitement and her eyes were eager and glittering.

"Papa," she said, as he put on her cloak, "this is rather poor stuff, though your friend, Mr. Laurence, wrote it, and the actors—oh, they are poor, indeed!—but I love the stage! How I wish I could work for it in some way. It thrills me with a sense of power. Just see what an influence it has on all these people!"





“Well, go on it, baby,” said her father. “The stage has become quite a sufficiently respectable institution for a little Bohemian like yourself; and I think you’d look uncommon well there.”

“Oh, what a glorious idea!” cried Lil, her face aflame with sudden enthusiasm; but, no, that would never do—Charlie wouldn’t like it!”

They had both forgotten Charlie for the moment, and had dropped back into the old time when Lil’s future was free in her hands. Now she recalled him with a pang of mingled love and sadness. Dear old Charlie! how was it possible that she could have forgotten him for an instant, or dream of doing anything which he would not like? And she knew very well that he believed a woman’s sphere to be in her home. Lil was not an individual now; she had become part of his life, and must shape herself accordingly. Fortunately for her, it was a greater pleasure to do this than to follow out any dream of her own, so she quickly put her new enthusiasms aside.

Brough saw her into a cab. He could not take her home, though Lil suggested an extempore supper after their old delightful fashion, and told him she had a bed ready if he felt lazy afterwards. “No,” he said, somewhat shamefacedly, with an odd look in his eyes, which came there when he knew he was not appearing to advantage. “No; he had not told her ladyship that he would be late;



so he must go home, or she would be alarmed." It was funny to see how admirably the little woman of the world had got this big Bohemian into order in all the minor details of life.

Lil thought of this as she drove home alone. It seemed very strange to her to see this man, who dominated others of his own quality, governed by a woman who, though she was wonderfully clever, had no intellect at all. Lil could not help disliking her stepmother, try how she might to prevent the feeling; when she saw how her father submitted to be kept within bounds like a boy who has not yet earned his liberty, she hated her. The very fact that Brough always yielded so gently in the smaller matters of life, should make a domestic tyrant generous towards him. So Lil thought. But she was not a domestic tyrant. Women with brains (spelt with a capital) seldom are. The true domestic tyrant has no generosity. Poor little Lil thought to herself how comfortable she could make her father, with the experience which she had now earned; how his household should follow his whims or customs, as a good accompanist obeys the individualities of a singer. She did not know yet that men love to be domineered over; that they kiss the feet of their tyrants.

Lil found Charlie sitting over the fire, smoking, a paper and pencil in his hand. He seemed absent, and to rouse himself with a little difficulty; but when he did awake

to her presence, he was more cheerful than usual. She looked covertly at the paper and saw the truth in a second. He had been writing verse—the first time for a long while. Once her presence inspired him ; he caught fire from her eyes. That was over. In her absence he had found an inspiration. Lil was bitterly wounded. She resolutely hid the sharp sensation of pain which penetrated to her heart ; if it was so, it was, and she well knew it was unreasonable for her to complain. How generous of him that he should never have hinted at this, never have shut himself away from her !

He was interested in her account of her evening, which she forced herself to give as brightly as she could. He said no word of having missed her. Why should he ? Lil thought with another pang how she would have missed him had he been away a whole evening. There was something wrong here, she said to herself, while her lips talked of quite other matters.

“ Oh, I was very interested in it all—excited, I suppose. Papa said I ought to go on the stage ; I almost wish I had the courage,” she said, gloomily.

“ It would be a new life for you, indeed,” said Charlie. “ But I should not like to see you there.” And then his attention fell back upon the paper he held in his hand.

Lil went away silently, with a burning heart, wondering blankly what she was to do !

### CHAPTER XIII.

“**I** WISH I had some one I could ask advice of,” cried Lil, to herself, the next morning, as she walked restlessly backwards and forwards in her little sitting-room. Her dog—a puppy when she was first married—had now grown middle-aged and decorous in his conduct. He sat up by the hearth, and watched her with eyes full of a dumb perplexity. If she was so very anxious for exercise, why did she not go out and give him the chance of a walk? But no, she did not do anything so sensible. She was harassed by the future as the dim dog mind can never be. She was haunted by the grim demon, responsibility. She had one quality which her father in his half-humorous fashion had often told her was entirely unnecessary. That was conscientiousness. She was unhappy about Charlie and what she should do about him. She felt convinced she could not be doing her utmost, else surely daily life would not be the failure it seemed to be just now? She had been able to colour it in the happy past. Her magic had flown. She could deny this to herself no longer.

Perhaps they had been too fond of each other, lived too much together, sympathised too deeply, been too entirely devoted. Perhaps such love could not last; perhaps human nature was incapable of sustaining such a passion. Perhaps what cynics said was true, and married people always grew tired of each other after a certain time. But she was not tired! No, she was more full of tender devotion than ever, as she asked herself over and over again these heartrending questions. She had no answers for them; the fact was before her, the stern, immovable fact. She could not turn back the heavy wheel of time, and find again the easy, joyous years of young love. No, the present must be faced, and faced bravely.

"Had I but anyone a little wiser than myself to talk to!" thought Lil, when she realised how helpless, how ignorant she was before this new phase of life.

She would not worry Brough. She fancied his own life was quite full enough of small annoyances without her adding any more. And he had so much work to do now, for his expenses appeared to grow larger daily. Lady Warrington regarded his brain as a bank upon which she might draw without limit. Lil saw this, and knew how busy her father was. She could not bear to harass him any further.

Oh, if she had but a mother! When a

woman is in trouble this yearning for mother love rises passionately within her. A mother ! What had she in a mother's place ? · Lady Lynne. She might as well ask guidance, in such a matter as this, of a handbook on etiquette. She could almost tell herself what Lady Warrington would say to her. Excellent advice it would be from the point of view of a woman of fashion, a butterfly without a heart, like the little lady herself. Absolutely useless to Lil, who had mind enough to go all round Lady Warrington's character, and recognise the motives which prompted her words. Her grandmother ! Surely she might stand in a mother's place ? Lil almost laughed at the thought, though it would have seemed impossible for her to laugh at anything. Go to Granny with such a problem as this ! Why, old Mrs. Warrington would have supposed the world was coming to an end if a respectable young married woman had told her that her husband was getting tired of her. True, Granny had had a great deal of experience ; she had seen three generations of men and women, and sometimes when real life interested her very much, she showed a great deal of good common sense, which was generally buried beneath a whole heap of dogmas and religious formulas. When it was possible to reach her natural, sensible mind, Gran was found to be shrewd enough.



Lil thought of this, and hesitated for a second, after her first sense of the absurdity of going to Gran with so romantic a difficulty. But her hesitation was soon gone. Since that unfortunate day when she had so direly offended Granny, she had never really been taken into favour again. Once in every few months Lil went on a dutiful pilgrimage to see the old lady, but though she was received, after the first time, with the old voluminous and suffocating embrace, and regaled on tea and toast and home-made jam, which was an embodied reproach because Lil's jam did not keep properly, she knew only too well that she was regarded as an utter outcast and a deliberate disciple of the evil one himself. Moreover, with the consciousness that she had just been to the theatre, and hoped sincerely to go again, she could not honestly claim the stern old lady's affection.

No, she was motherless. There was no doubt of that, and she did not know a woman among her limited acquaintance whose opinion she had the least respect for. Not one would have understood her; not one would have had an idea to offer. Fancy Alfred Davies's wife amid her noisy boys and her bustling commonplace daily life, listening to a tale like Lil's! Mrs. Davies, whose "expectations" had melted into thin air, having at no time been more than a plausible fiction; and who had quite grown accustomed to an embittered

and disappointed husband. She would have thought it a mere moonshine madness. Was it only that, after all? No! It was fact, hard as granite. It was clear that there was no counsellor for Lil. Brough had been her one friend in her girlhood, Charlie the one friend of her married life. Now that she had a problem before her which neither of these two could help her to solve, she stood alone.

"And I must act alone!" said Lil, aloud, in her excitement. Wild thoughts were in her mind of attempting the stage—of forming a new life for herself. Oh, if she had but the power to! But what would be the first step? Something certainly which would cost money. She did not know how to speak; she knew nothing of the stage save its literature. She would have to get some lessons. These would cost money. She had none. What should she do—what could she do; powerless, helpless, at a dead lock for want of money! What, if she limited her ambition to her own home, was in her power? She could not get a holiday for Charlie; she could not prevent the necessity of his going off every morning, in all weathers, in good or in bad spirits, in good or bad health, to his office; she could not give him change of air, scene, or society.

"What wealth twenty pounds would be to me just now!" she thought as she stood aimlessly looking from the window at the

outer sunshine. "A mere nothing to a rich man—twenty pounds, not wanted for a bill, would work wonders for me. I am afraid I can't earn it—I have almost forgotten how to write, with all the little things I have had to do."

She looked disconsolately at her writing-table, which wore, indeed, a deserted and disconsolate air. In the capacity of a writing-table it scarcely could be regarded as having existence; the papers had been pushed into a drawer, and the books heaped into one corner, for Lil was in sore need of a new dress, and had set about making it; in no other way could she obtain it; while a set of Charlie's shirts, all cut out and ready, were wanted the very moment fingers could stitch them. Lil disliked this sort of work as much as ever, though she had learned to do it tolerably well by dint of sheer determination. She looked at it now, and tried to believe what she had so often told herself, that saving money was as good as making it. This may be absolutely true, but it is very difficult for active minded people to understand it. Lil knew very well that she had a day's hard stitching before her. A leaden sense of weariness and heart-sickness oppressed her as she eyed the heap of sewing which lay ready for her. It was easy to conquer a repugnance to certain sorts of work when someone was pleased that the work was done, and

praised the doer ; it was easy to work hard all day and resist the temptation of the sunshine and the solicitations of one's dog to go out, if someone admired the industry, and was delighted with the results. But, if no one cared much about it, how different it seemed ! —if by all her hard work she just enabled Charlie, on his narrow income, to keep her, though he was half weary of her—why, how empty and foolish this slavery was ! But these thoughts, she suddenly told herself, were madness. Charlie had only herself to help him, to cheer his life, to make his income cover his needs ; they were bound together, and their interests were one. It was no use thinking wildly of leaving him, even for a short time ; it would be but a cruel kindness to desert her post, and so she resolved to work off her irritation upon the shirts ; as a rule a dress interested her most, because there was some scope for an artistic sense to find exercise in its construction, but she felt in her present frame of mind that it would be much pleasanter to work for Charlie than for herself ; so she turned from the window to go to her work, humbled and resolute. She cast one parting glance at the sunny road, and, in so doing, caught sight of Alfred Davies coming hurriedly along it. He looked disturbed and excited, she thought, in her momentary glance ; but she did not look again. She sat down to her work-table, and, taking up a shirt, began



to stitch. She disliked Alfred Davies, as cordially as she could dislike anyone. She did not want to see him; but he was Charlie's cousin, of course he must come if he chose; at all events, if he saw how busy she was, he would not disturb her for long, so she stitched away with bent head, and when he came into the room, rose to greet him, without putting down her work.

"Have you heard—has Charlie gone?—didn't he see the paper?—wasn't he telegraphed to?—I thought I should, perhaps, catch him!"

All this Alfred Davies said in a breath, shaking Lil's hand the while. She was amazed, bewildered.

"What do you mean?" she said.

"Don't you know?" said Davies; "then they have not sent to him—but do you mean you don't see a paper?"

"Charlie says he can't afford one every day," answered Lil, endeavouring to disengage the hand which Davies seemed inclined to keep altogether. He let it go reluctantly.

"Well, Charlie will have heard by now, and I have the pleasure of telling you——"

"What?" asked Lil, rather languidly. Her imagination could suggest nothing which would interest her very much.

"You'll wake up when you hear it," said Davies, with the rather vulgar manner into which he easily relapsed when excited.



"Uncle Sam and his son have both been killed by a carriage accident, travelling in Switzerland. By Jove, I should never have thought such a splendid thing could happen ; but, of course, people do get killed every day. I congratulate Charlie with all my heart, though I'll not deny, being an honest man, that I wish I was the heir."

"The heir," faltered Lil, through lips that trembled as she spoke.

"You don't realise what it means, Mrs. Newman. Charlie has got five thousand a year, that's all."

Lil stood a moment, hesitating to believe what she heard ; but there was truth in Davies's face, and in the tone of his coarse congratulations.

She faltered, stepped back, and sat down in her chair. She forgot Davies was there—forgot everything but what he had told her, and what it meant to her.

"Oh, I'm so glad, so glad, so glad!" she said. Then after a moment, "thank God—oh, heaven is kind, after all. I am so glad, so glad, so grateful! Oh! it is too good to believe—too good!"

She went on saying this at intervals, faintly, yet with an emphasis which showed how much she was feeling. Davies stared at her in surprise.

"I didn't suppose she'd care as much as all this," he said to himself. "They must be in

debt; no, that's not like Charlie; she's got some debts of her own, I expect, and she thinks she'll get them paid now without a fuss."

So men judge continually, who will not take Charles Reade's advice and put themselves in others' places. Davies had the common failing of supposing everybody to be like himself. He felt sure Lil had some secret which made her so strangely glad over this great good fortune.

"Well, I must be off," he said, presently; "I am glad to have had the pleasure of bringing this good news. I will call in to-day on Charlie, just to congratulate him."

He really was in a hurry, so he took Lil's unconscious hand and shook it with a great show of politeness and affection, and then went his way.

"Queer girl that," he thought, as he walked quickly away; "I never can make her out. She's got luck, though. If I'd been the heir, those two would never have gone to Switzerland at all. Everything is always against me, and then people wonder I owe a little money. What's an unlucky devil to do but use his wits?"

With these cheerful thoughts Alfred Davies went on his way to town. His circumstances were certainly not very flourishing. He was one of the not uncommon class who believe themselves ill-used in having to work for a

living. He did not attempt to forgive his wife for misleading him about her expectations, nor fate for having allowed her to do so. He considered it a positive wrong that his uncle and cousin's death brought him no immediate benefit. He had a fine hatred for work and poverty, and yet he had to pick up his living here and there in the unhappy fashion familiar to men in most professions during the early part of a career. Income did not increase in proportion to the necessity for it, and though, to do him justice, Davies worked hard when he had work to do; yet there were many horrid, unpaid debts hanging over his head.

He went to Charlie's office, eager to be early with his congratulations. "Uncle Sam was a wretched, old screw, but Charlie's a generous sort of fellow," he said to himself, as he hurried in search of the new man of fortune. But Charlie had had the news, had told his principal, had got leave of absence, and had rushed home to Lil. His first thought was for her, and when Lil saw him at the gate and guessed how immediately he must have come to her, her heart smote her for all she had been lately thinking; and, indeed, Charlie looked wide awake for the first time for many months; his eyes were full of light as he came straight to the sitting-room where Lil stood awaiting him.

"Ah, you have heard it," he said, the

moment he saw her face ; " We have got a new life, before us, Lil ! No more of this narrow old drudgery of which you have got so tired ! "

" I ! " exclaimed Lil, in utter amazement. But she said no more, for Charlie had made a rush upon her work-table, and flung the shirts away into a corner of the room. Lil rescued her half-made dress from his reckless treatment, but it made her laugh with pleasure to see him a boy again.

" By Jove," he said, after a minute, " I can't believe it yet. Never to go to that office again ! We'll be off to Italy in a week. But I can't take it in yet ; it isn't easy to drop one's skin all at once ! How do you feel about it, old lady ? "

" Glad," said Lil, " of course, glad ; and it's such fun to see you like this again."

" Like this ! " I don't know what I'm like yet. What figure shall I cut as a man of fortune ? You will look charming ; you always have the air of a small princess, even when you are making pudding. And now you need make no more puddings ! "

Lil laughed to hear herself called a small princess again ; it brought back the sweetness which she had thought lost. Charlie stayed a little talking excitedly about the future. Then he said he would go into town again to visit the family lawyers. It would make the affair feel more real to hear all the particulars.

“Oh, take me with you,” said Lil; “I must go and tell papa.”

“Won’t the old boy say ‘Hooray for you!’” said Charlie. “Make haste and put on your hat; I can’t wait above two minutes.”

So they went off together down the little street where their home had been so many years. The old ladies who peeped through the blinds at them, the old gardener who touched his hat to Lil, the little girl who dropped her curtsy,—how strange, thought Lil, that they should see no change in these two. Yet how should they; what should people living such changeless, colourless lives know of the probable expression of a man who has just come into five thousand a year?

“There’s a house in town, I believe,” said Charlie, abruptly. “I had almost forgotten it, but I am nearly sure there is. Of course, I remember going to see old Uncle Sam there, years ago. A dignified place in one of the squares.”

“Shall you live there?” asked Lil, doubtfully.

“Oh, I don’t know! It’s too soon to form a plan. My one idea first of all is to go to Italy. I have been craving for some sunlight for months; we’ll go in search of it now. I believe I shall begin to feel young again—‘young and delightful,’ as Postlethwaite, of *Punch*, would say.”



"You look a different creature, already," said Lil, admiringly. She was content to look at this newly-brightened face. She adored Charlie after that faithful clinging fashion which seems to belong peculiarly to women. He thought of the future; she thought of him; he looked at the changed aspect of life; she at the changed aspect of his face. Is it all nature, or partly education and tradition, which produces this capacity for concentrated adoration in women? At all events, it does not always result in happiness either to the woman or the man she adores.

Lil found Brough in his study as usual. He was biting the feathers of his quill, and looking ferocious.

"Baby," he said, the instant she had opened the door, "just take down Coleridge, and find me those lines about, 'In humble trust, mine eyelids close'—you know what I mean, don't you?"

"Yes, papa," said Lil, and from force of habit she crossed the room and took the volume down. Then she turned round with a laughing face.

"I can't look till I've told you, papa. It's come!"

"What?—don't be enigmatic, that's a good baby!"

"Why, I felt the other day when I came to you here that I couldn't bear life any longer

unless some change came. Well, it's come. I felt it coming, I suppose, as one feels change of weather. Charlie's uncle and cousin have both been killed by a carriage accident, and Charlie's come into the money."

Brough stared.

"Ye gods and little fishes," he exclaimed, at last. "How much is it?"

"Five thousand a year, I believe."

Brough combed his curly hair with his quill pen, and wrinkled his brows. "Mercy on us," he thought to himself, "and see how hard I work to make two!" But he didn't say this. He was not as a rule conspicuous for delicacy of this sort, but he knew Lil well. Such a remark would have sent all her smiles away.

"He's a lucky beggar," he said, aloud, "uncommon lucky. Don't you feel inclined to dance a jig, Lil? I'm awfully glad; you won't have to waste your time on sewing any longer. And you're looking pale; you can have a real holiday."

"Charlie wants to go to Italy, directly," said Lil; "he needs a holiday, indeed. Oh, how thankful I am he can have one. Now, I'll look for the quotation."

"Not a bit of it. Put Coleridge back in the shelf. He was an old fogey who didn't know the value of money. When may I congratulate Charlie? Tell him to ask me to an oyster supper, and let me order the wine I

like. He can afford to do that sort of thing now in proper style."

"And how he will enjoy it," said Lil, an old dimple coming into life again with the many smiles of her new happiness.

"Of course, he will. He's a capital fellow, Charlie, but he's never had any scope. Suppose we go up to the drawing-room and tell Lady Warrington?"

This was not a particularly agreeable proposal to Lil, but under the circumstances she saw no way out of adopting it. So they went upstairs to the drawing-room where Lady Warrington sat reading a novel. Her pet dog, a tiny imp with wicked eyes, was coiled up in her lap, so she could not rise—at all events not for Lil. She held out her hand, and saluted her prettily, but with a certain distance which she had preserved ever since her marriage. She had never liked Lil, and now she had married Brough, there was no need to conceal that fact. She made it quite plain, with all the politeness imaginable. One of the fictions which she was fond of was that Brough and Lil had many secrets in common from which she was excluded. She always arched her eyebrows with surprise when they came to her like this, and gave them to understand that if they preferred to be without her she did not exact their society. Her union with Brough was one of those strange, almost incredible things which we meet with

every day in that marvellous volume of romance, real life. They had not a taste in common or a sympathy between them, these two. Yet their attachment was very real, though of so queer a character. Brough worked like a mill-horse to please her ladyship; in addition, he was at her beck and call, and often waited on her like a most exemplary footman. She, in return, was exacting to a degree, thought nothing he did for her enough, and complained perpetually of her folly in marrying a literary man whose labours were so ill-paid, and whose time was so much occupied; but her hold over Brough was such that nothing she did appeared to weaken it. Probably he was too true a philosopher to rebel, having married her with his eyes open. At all events, his butterfly still pleased and amused him with her dainty ways, her capriciousness, her ever-shifting moods, the peculiar delicate frivolity which made the colour of her character. He was her slave, and seemingly a very willing one; while she groaned often at her hard task of tyrannizing. Possibly it seemed to her to be quite as easy to write a clever book, and smoke cigarettes the while, as read a foolish one and nurse a lap-dog.

"We've got something to tell you," said Brough, solemnly. "Shut up that third volume of yours and listen. This is quite as good as any third volume ever written.

Chapter nineteenth and last, Charlie, our hero, comes into all his money, and is happy ever after."

Lady Warrington stifled a yawn successfully, and looked puzzled.

"Please explain, Brough," she said; "you know I'm not clever."

"Ah," said Brough, just a little drily. "It takes a clever woman to say that. But I have nothing to explain. I have said Charlie has come into his money, and is the happy possessor of five thousand a year."

The change of expression which took place upon Lady Warrington's face was a study worth observing. She had always regarded Charlie Newman as an insignificant young man with nothing to live on, and having the bad taste to admire her step-daughter. She looked down upon the whole Newman establishment with infinite contempt. If you have ever entered a room and happened to notice some particularly small, plain, and spectacled lady, and then been introduced to her as the great author of the day and the lioness of the evening, or looked with total lack of interest at a lean, bald man, with a bored expression and found him to be "the Duke" or "the Prince," and much too grand for you to be introduced to at all; if you have experienced one of these shocks which occur to us all at times, you will be able to guess something of what Lady Warrington



was going through. Before her very eyes, Charlie Newman, of the clerk's stool, whom nobody could possibly know, developed into Charlie Newman the owner of a nice little fortune—a man with a good house in town, who will drive good horses and give nice little dinners—in fact, my son-in-law, Mr. Newman!"

It was perfectly natural and unconscious, this mental change of attitude. For five years she had persisted in disregarding the fact that Charlie Newman was even a connection of hers. Now she saw him suddenly as a near relation.

It was but a second that she was silent—and Lil, watching her, saw how wonderfully her face changed—and then she rose, put down her dog, much to his disgust, and held out both her hands to Lil. "My dear child," she said, "I am delighted. I always felt you might have married better, that with the good looks and cleverness you have inherited from your father, you ought to have filled a very different position. But now it has come to you. You must go into society. You are quite pretty enough to become a favourite. You really may be a success, for you are still young. I am delighted!" And she kissed Lil with that sort of kiss which reminds one of a canary bird pecking at his seed.

"She kisses five thousand a year, not me!" said Lil to herself, and thought of the old

Italian story of the money-bags, from which, it is said, Shakespeare took the outline of King Lear.

Some little time the three sat and talked over the event in the pretty, dim-lit drawing-room, and then Lil said she must go, or Charlie would be home first.

"And he will want someone to talk to!" she said, laughingly.

"Egad, yes," said Brough, with one of those shouts of uproarious laughter which he now and then indulged in, and which made Lady Warrington put her fingers to her ears. "Come, I'll take holiday for half-an-hour in honour of the occasion, and walk with you through the park."

Brough whistled his dog, Lil said good-bye to Lady Warrington, and was pressed to come again soon and talk over her plans, and then the two went out, arm in arm. People turned to look at them in the street, for they were a handsome couple. "By Jove, they think we are sweethearts," cried Brough, and enjoyed the joke enormously.



## CHAPTER XIV.

**T**HE next week seemed to pass so rapidly that a day—one of the dull days of stiching and silence—had often appeared longer than these seven. So many things there were to do, such plans to make! Charlie was restless to a degree; he seemed unable to stay at home. They went to see the house in London; it was in Portman Square; roomy and comfortable. Old uncle Sam despised fashion, and æsthetic taste was unknown to him, so that all his surroundings were of the simplest, though very substantial. It was just the house to please a new owner. Nothing was in bad taste, so that there was no need to move or disturb what was already there. The old oak chairs and chests were charming in their way; only the final touches were needed to make the house delightful. Silken hangings, some Persian carpets and Turkish embroideries, such pleasant furnishing as this was all that was wanted to convert the old bachelor's quiet house into a rich and bright interior.

“Let us leave it all till we come home,” said Charlie. He was passionately desirous of

change, of finding a bright sky and genial climate; everything at home oppressed and wearied him.

“I hate London, with its dark sky and dirty streets,” he said half-a-dozen times a day. Nothing held him long, or interested him thoroughly. He had but one idea—absolute change. To Lil this seemed reasonable enough; it was almost an artistic necessity to create a gap between the old life and the new. So she readily agreed to the idea of taking a long holiday, immediately, and leaving all making of plans or arrangements until the return home. But still they could not resist the temptation of buying anything particularly charming when they saw it, and sending it to the house. Although they had no idea of living there until their return from abroad, it was amusing to go in now and then, and arrange some of their new purchases in the grave old rooms. Charlie found it amusing, and to Lil it was like a new beginning of life, to fancy herself the mistress of this large house, full of its stately furniture. But nothing pleased Charlie for long; too soon there came the weary look which had become stamped upon his face, and he would say: “There, that will do.” Lil knew those words, and the look which accompanied them. When she was enjoying some detail of daily life as heartily and innocently as when she was first married, these words and the tone in

which they were spoken—a voice of suppressed irritation—would tell her that Charlie's interest had quite worn out, that she was worrying him, that what brought out in her the old childish pleasure, called forth no response in him. There was the same delight to her in the idea of arranging Charlie's house that she had found in furnishing and ordering the cottage; there was the same strong charm in the thought of association with him. But this had evidently passed away from Charlie altogether; the little circumstances of domestic life, which had pleased and amused him years ago, irritated him now. Lil saw that she must order her life, now that money had made change possible, on a new plan; she could, at least, prevent his learning to associate her, as men so often learn to associate their wives, with the annoyances of domestic affairs, by never letting him hear of them. She took this resolve and began to execute it at once. No longer did she stitch, or make puddings, or darn stockings. She was always ready to go wherever Charlie wanted to go. He lived in a fever, and seemed unable to tolerate existence at home now that he could escape from it. This pleased Lil vastly in one respect. They went very often to the theatre; and, in the brief time before they left England, Lil learned more about the actual stage than she had ever known before.



"I think I should like to write a play," she said, one day.

"Why don't you, then?" said Charlie, "you have plenty of time now."

"Papa says," remarked Lil, "that, to write a play, one should either be an actor, or else go to the theatre very often in order to understand the business of the stage."

"Well, we can go as often as you like, when we come home," said Charlie; "I'm quite ready to help you carry out that part of the affair. When I can't go, we'll hire some nice old lady to chaperone you."

"That will be jolly," said Lil, rather drily, "especially the old lady; I am not fond of old ladies. However, I should like to learn something about the stage. Whether I shall ever have ambition enough to write a play I don't know."

"It will amuse you to think about it", said Charlie, indifferently. He had become so accustomed to see Lil absorbed in her household matters that he never thought of her in any other vocation. Ambition had been almost killed in him by his own life of drudgery; the artistic desire had scarcely shown a sign that it was still within him, as yet. He wanted nothing but change, absolute change; his mind was too wearied to entertain any other ideas. Amusement was all he wanted, and he imagined Lil to be in the same state. She was content enough

to let him think this. Her greatest pleasure was to follow his mood and enter into his wishes. But she was disturbed by remembering what her father had suggested as her right plan, when she had gone to him with her troubles—to leave Charlie for a time. All her old obstacles to this plan were now removed. She had money, there was no house to keep, for Charlie was going abroad. One evening, when Charlie was saying where he wished to go, she suggested he should go alone.

“I don’t want to go,” she said, “and I really think it would be better I shouldn’t.” She did not dare to say more than this.

“Not want to go?” said Charlie, with an incredulous stare. “Why, you must want to see Rome—what ridiculous nonsense!”

“Another time,” suggested Lil, timidly.

“Another time!” said Charlie; “I shall never go there again; I hate going to a place twice. I don’t know what you are talking about, when you say you don’t want to go.”

“You might enjoy it more; you would be more independent without me.”

“I do wish,” said Charlie, angrily, “you would look after yourself and let me look after myself. You want a holiday quite as much as I do. I propose to take you for one. Why go making difficulties and all sorts of absurd suggestions, at the last moment?”

“I didn’t mean it in that way,” faltered Lil,

who, one of the most courageous girls imaginable, was abjectly afraid before Charlie's irritability.

"I don't think you know what you do mean," said he.

"Perhaps not," said Lil, humbly. In such a case explanation was worse than misunderstanding. So she did what many of us often have to do. She let ill alone, for fear of worse; and Charlie received the impression that she was changeable and unreasonable.

They had not too much time to themselves just now, few though their friends were. Lady Warrington was extremely kind in offering to help Lil in making her arrangements. She asked her to lunch and talked to her about dress, and society, and the importance of doing justice to one's position. Lil saw that she was considered a very ignorant and rather foolish person who must be made the best of now that the sun saw fit to shine upon her. And so she listened quietly, and made many discoveries, interesting to a student of character. And this Lil was, though she hardly knew it yet.

Then Alfred Davies and his wife were positively assiduous in their attention. Davies borrowed ten pounds before a week was out.

"I am glad we are going away," said Charlie. "Otherwise Davies would get all I have out of me. When I am used to being rich, I shan't be so soft. I have noticed that

the possession of money has a hardening effect on the heart."

Lil wrote to her grandmother and sent her some presents, the choice of which absorbed an extraordinary amount of time. She had not the courage to go and see her and be told that the new possessions and opportunities were mere snares of the devil.

"I will go and see her before we leave," said Lil, "unless, when she writes, she seems very gloomy about Satan and his traps."

But no; when old Mrs. Warrington wrote, Lil found, to her surprise, that Granny, like everyone else, seemed to think a great deal more of her than she had done before. Lil had always understood from Granny's talk that people who had riches, and who consequently could never go by the narrow path to heaven, were in the very worst possible position, and that to have money was to be on intimate terms with the evil one himself. But Lil began to think now that all this was because neither the old lady, nor her son, nor anyone very nearly connected with her, had any money worth speaking of.

So Lil, finding that the sin of becoming suddenly rich was not so great as she had feared, started off to see her Granny. She was very fond of the old lady, spite of their differences, for, in truth, Brough and his mother and Lil had certain fundamental similarities of character. They had developed



in totally different directions ; but all alike had a strength and stability of purpose, a great power of faithfulness in affection, and a certain uprightness. Then, too, Lil had a great fund of filial love in her. Most of this was given to Brough, who had, indeed, played very admirably the double part of father and mother. But a large piece of it was yet ungratified, and this went to old Mrs. Warrington ; who, however uncongenial spiritually, was that which, after all, we love better than any friend, a close relation. Lil came home again, the better for grandmotherly counsel ; it was pleasant to find how the stern old dogmatist could soften when any real event called her out. And she realised, as only a sympathetic woman could, how vital an event this was likely to be to Lil ; how it would change all her daily life, alter her future, make different her whole horizon.

“ Take everything quietly, my dear,” said the old lady, “ and remember that nothing which happens in this world is worth exciting yourself very much about. Keep your head steady under all circumstances, and you will find affairs, which at first sight seem very large, are in reality very small. If you would only give your thoughts a little more to the welfare of your soul, you would find the pomps and vanity of riches no snare to you.”

As of old, the advice of grandmother and of stepmother were so strangely opposed, so



difficult to combine, that Lil was left uncounselled!

At last the travelling rugs, the travelling cloaks, were all ready; the luggage was packed and filled up the entrance to the little cottage, which was now no longer Lil's cottage, for it belonged to a new tenant. The melancholy "four-wheeler," with which all people who have no carriage are doomed to become acquainted when they start on a journey, was the first dismal step towards future pleasure. The train was more cheerful; a first-class carriage, in a night train between London and Dover, is by no means a disagreeable place. The journey over that piece of English ground is in fact a deceptively pleasant introduction to the varied miseries of continental travelling.

Lil, as she sat down in a comfortable corner, to begin the first long journey of her hitherto quiet life, felt as if now, indeed, a new phase of existence had commenced for her. Anyone who has had a number of small cares and responsibilities must know the sense of rest which a long journey gives. A ship, where posts are impossible; a train, in which one has but to sit still and where one may think with folded hands for hours without reproach or stir of conscience; how charming these are sometimes! It seemed to Lil as if a time of peace and joy had dawned for her; a period of new pleasures, in which the old happiness would be restored. The sense of motion, of

change, exhilarated her, and she looked forward with rising anticipations to the future in store for her.

So with Romeo, who said on the morn of his misfortunes, "my bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne." Like him Lil went out to meet that stern fate which fills the days of men and women with sorrow ; like him she went gladly, looking for the crown of her satisfaction, to find instead the intolerable bitterness of a torn and wounded heart.



## CHAPTER XV.

“**L**ET us go straight to Rome,” said Charlie, “the change will be so complete. There will be so much to see and do there, that one will have less chance of getting bored than anywhere else I can think of; that is, as long as we don’t come across Jack Poynings, one of the best fellows and greatest bores I ever met with.”

“An odd description,” said Lil.

“Well, he might not bore you, but he does me, for he believes in society, makes himself a sort of slave to it, knows everybody and everything, and expects one to do likewise. I never heard him talk anything but scandal and small beer, though I have met him a good many times. I believe he lives principally in Rome now; still, it is very unlikely we shall meet him. I think it might rouse one to go straight from London to a city so different.”

As Charlie’s getting bored was a greater terror to Lil than any distress of her own, she readily agreed to this arrangement. What pleased him would certainly please her. After Chambéry she passed into a condition of continual delight. It was all so absolutely new

to her, that it was like an entrance into another world. Probably, people who have travelled when mere children, lose some of the keenest sensations of pleasure. Lil was just at the age when everything new and beautiful is most intensely appreciated. A few years ago, and all this wonderful mountain scenery would have been merely beautiful, like a panorama. But now, the silence of the stately snow-touched summits seized her imagination. She caught from them something of the excitement and fascination of lofty solitude.

But the idea of Rome was the one which absorbed Lil, as it must everyone who goes there for the first time. The strange glimpses of the lovely Mediterranean lit by magical moonlight, the beauty of a quiet dawn over country which seemed to her quite familiar, for she had learned its effects from pictures; all the many excitements of the journey passed away when the train left Civita Vecchia, and Lil knew now there was but the Campagna to cross, that the next roofs which she would see would be those of Rome. Fortunately, for the lovers of art, the English and American tourists who turn the Spagna and the Pincio into reproductions of Regent Street and Hyde Park, cannot change the majesty of Rome itself. The city is as wonderful as ever, though fashionable people entertain and give parties, and regard the eternal beauties of the place as mere subjects for small talk. To Lil,

though her journey was done on the smooth, frequented rails, it was as exciting as to any art student in the days when Rome was really isolated, and the wild country was crossed in a carriage, and the city entered by one of the gates. This mode of entrance is, after all, a loss in some respects. The beauty of the first sight of Rome must have been much more impressive when, after the long drive over the silent, uncultivated country, one entered at the Porta del Popolo, and passed straight into the busy, picturesque Corso. It is impossible not to look anxiously for the first glimpse of the city. Now that one enters by train, it is equally difficult not to be disappointed. The view from the train, at all events, on the line from Civita Vecchia, is perhaps the least impressive of all the views of the eternal city. The great station and its Parisian looking surroundings, are another blow to a romantic soul like Lil's. But how soon this commonplace entrance is forgotten! how soon, before your very hotel door is reached, the picturesque details of the streets, the magic charm of the whole place interest you. The first week in Rome is a week not easily forgotten. It is bewildering, exhausting, yet most exciting. Lil was worn out with the journey; but the moment she was fairly awake in the morning, she was up and dressing, with her head full of something which she was determined to see. The idea that the Belvedere



Apollo was silently awaiting her audience, that the Sistine chapel was within her reach, that the expenditure of a franc would carry her to the Colosseo or the Pantheon, gave her unnatural strength. Even Charlie found enough to satisfy his restlessness. To see Rome is not unlike learning a language. There must be some steady, hard, elementary work done, before you reach the choice bits of enjoyment ; you must wear off the first fever of sight-seeing before you can begin to reach the real spirit of the place. Charlie and Lil did this with indefatigable enthusiasm. They lived in an hotel in the Via Bocca de Leone, a street which is tolerably clean and healthy, because more horses than Romans reside there. Morning and afternoon they were out, sometimes going straight to what they desired to see, sometimes stumbling by chance upon what they wanted. No way is so enjoyable of seeing such a place as Rome, as to go about unguided, unfriended, until you become to some extent familiar and at home with it. You have earned your familiarity then ; you have made the place your own ; and the odd sensation of recognising a street which you have never seen, yet which you have known all your life, of coming accidentally upon a strangely familiar building, and entering without premeditation some superb interior, whose every outline is recognised, the charm of all this is something which no guidance or saving of time can compensate for. You feel

that you have some relationship with this old-world art, that the familiar forms have a friendliness for you.

Charlie tired first. The excitement wore off with him very soon, and the weariness of mind began to return. A reaction set in. Here, in the midst of the greatest glories of the world, he felt as "bored" as though he were at home again, with his daily work to do.

"Off again!" he said, one morning, when Lil put on her hat, as usual, directly after breakfast. "I am sick of these sights, but I suppose they must be seen. Where are we to go?"

"What ; sick of sights!" exclaimed Lil, her eyes round with wonder. "Why, we have not been to the Capitoline Museum, or to the Vatican picture gallery, or to the Palazzo Torlonia, or the Palazzo Barberini—fancy, not having seen poor Beatrice yet!"

"I am ready," said Charlie, with an air of resignation. Lil went out with a feeling that this wonderful holiday was beginning to be a failure. She was still off her feet, as it were, with enthusiasm, but she felt half afraid to show it. Charlie had begun to count how often she had said "lovely," how often "exquisite," and to look wearied, as if it were a trouble to turn his eyes, when she attracted his attention to anything. Silently they went down into the Via Condotti, and there got into one of the little carriages.

"Where to?" said Charlie,

"Wherever you like," said Lil.

"I don't care, go where you choose," he answered, with an indifference which fell on Lil's heart like a heavy weight. Oh, that she had her old power over him, to change his mood! But she knew she had not; she succumbed to his.

"The Palazzo Barberini is near," she said; "let us go there!"

It was very cold, driving through the streets. It was the first of December; Lil never forgot the date, or the feeling of that cold wind. A brilliant sun made the city beautiful. The sky was high and clear and lovely. In the Piazza di Spagna, brown-faced, black-eyed peasants sold great bunches of pink roses and narcissus; one boy ran up to the carriage with a basket of wild strawberries. It was all a sort of intoxication to Lil; but she was afraid to say "lovely" again, and she was too absorbed in gazing to think of anything better.

The gallery of the Palazzo Barberini has been called the gallery of disappointment. There could be no worse place to go to in a state of *ennui*. The expedition was a lamentable failure. Charlie declared the Fornarina absolutely disgusting; and the unfortunate so-called Beatrice Cenci, a positive swindle. Lil did not dare to say that though she did not admire the Fornarina herself, she thought the painting of her hands and bosom very wonder-

ful ; nor had she the courage to confess that she found some fascination in the face of the Beatrice. It is now so much the fashion to abuse that poor mis-named picture, and once it was so much the fashion to praise it, that it is really difficult to entertain an opinion of one's own. But Lil made the effort.

"I really think," she said, "if I had never heard of the picture ; if I had never read *Hawthorne's Transformation*, for instance, if I had not raised my anticipations so high, I should have been startled by the pathos of that face, by the wonderful hidden tears which lie behind those eyes. But, as it is, I can only feel that Hawthorne created the picture he wanted in his own imagination, instead of describing this. I can keep his Beatrice, if I discard this one. But, still—still there is a fascination here, after all."

"What, in that simpering, silly girl? Well, I am going. The sunshine is better than this."

Lil followed him, rather reluctantly, with a long, parting look at the two pictures. Charlie hurried on, and she overtook him at the entrance to the palace.

"Let us be out of doors this afternoon," he said ; "I am sick of pictures and statues."

"I should like that," said Lil. "Where shall we go?"

"It is the day for the Ludovisi Gardens ; they are said to be the loveliest in Rome. I have an order ; suppose we go there. Let us go



in to Morteo's and get some lunch ; we shall get to the Gardens then, as soon as the gates are open."

This programme was carried out ; they went down to the Corso in search of lunch. Lil thought to herself, as she drank her coffee silently, what a little festival such a lunching out together would have been two or three years ago. Why must that young romance inevitably pass away with the passage of time ? she asked herself. It evidently had passed and it was useless to yearn after it.

It is but a short distance to the Villa Ludovisi, and the gates had not long been opened, when they reached them. As they drove up, a steep hill, a peacock flew upon the wall, right into the sunshine, and spread his gorgeous tail ; he was followed by another and another. Lil was so delighted by the splendid birds, that she stood at the gateway watching them, until Charlie took her arm and led her on. A spacious fairyland opened before her. Straight from the gateway stretched a long, long avenue of cypress. The wide walk of this avenue is smooth and gray, undisturbed by wandering feet, for a chain is drawn across it. The long lines of straight cypress trees stand like sentinels, in front of groves of ilex, which grow thickly up to the avenue ; stately groves, with the sense of seclusion about them, which is an essential attribute of the shadow of the ilex.

"There is a collection of ancient sculpture



in the Casino here," said Charlie, rather sadly ; " I suppose we had better just go in and look at it."

They went in accordingly ; the Casino was close to the gateway. " Fortunately, it is very small," said Charlie. They went through the two rooms, and Lil caught sight of the grand Ludovisi Juno, and longed to stay and look at it. But Charlie just sauntered round, and went out again into the sunshine.

" These statues are cold forms of beauty," he said, when she joined him. " I want something warm. Let us keep in the sunshine."

So they strolled on slowly past the kitchen garden, where enough vegetables grew to supply a small town. Amid this rich stretch of profitable growth is a quaint oasis of flower garden, which delighted Lil, for there were great heads of crimson coxcomb in it, and love-lies-bleeding. In this garden, too, was a huge aviary full of gay canaries. All this they looked at over a thick, straight-cut hedge ; and suddenly on this hedge Lil espied a green lizard, and another, and another. The hot sun which poured down upon this sheltered walk, called them out to enjoy themselves. Cold as the wind was in any exposed place, here, the air was like that of summer ; and as Lil loitered on between the high hedges, she felt as if a summer day of childhood had come back to her. Charlie came more slowly after her ; he seemed as though he did not care to

speak, and so Lil went silently on in the sweet sunshine. Suddenly, there was a heavy scent upon the air, as of myriad hawthorn blossoms. Lil found she had entered upon an avenue of Japanese medlars, full of flowers, and oh, so sweet! the exquisite perfume brought keen tears of delight to her eyes. Half-way through the avenue is a cool fount, its stone work all lichen-covered, and fringed with maidenhair; the water in the basin is so clear that the fallen leaves within it are as bright as those above. A worn, gray figure of Hermes stands over it; on his unconscious cheek rested a great coloured butterfly, in all the gorgeousness of summer dress. Sure this is some fairyland I have wandered into, thought Lil. Years after, she remembered the ecstasy of that sunny afternoon, amid the sweet scents and gorgeous foliage of the Ludovisi Gardens. It was impossible to linger long in one spot, where all was so beautiful. On beyond, she caught sight of magnolia trees; the flowers were gone, but the great cones were almost as beautiful.

Decay, the tender decay of young autumn, mingled with the richness of undefeated summer. Here and there lay the fallen leaves, which the gardeners had made into great heaps; the dew lay heavily upon the grass, in spite of the hot sun, which brought the little green lizards out upon the walls and hedges, so that the grass looked perfectly green, and speckled as it was, with dainty wild flowers,

was a fairyland of itself. Yet Lil was attracted away from the friendly and often familiar faces of these blossoms, to the stately severity of the great blue-green aloes, which were planted in thick lines about the villa and the casinos. The huge spiked leaves, so strong and firm in their growth, delighted her; and the strange unfamiliar odour had a fascination of its own for her eyes, which always found pleasure in the unfamiliar. She wandered on, rapt by delight, her hands full of tender wild flowers, her eyes intent upon the larger beauties which were on every side of her.

A casino stands at the end of this sweet avenue; it is worth entering, though its ceilings are lamentably daubed by Guercino, for, from its upper story there is a most wonderful view of Rome to be obtained. Lil, with one glance at the painted ceiling, ran quickly up the staircases and out on the balustraded roof. What air! a bath of sunshine and sweetness. The sky above, unclouded, perfectly blue, with that flame-like tremulousness which makes the atmospheric effects of Italy so lovely: Rome below, hemmed in by her historic hills. The sweet sunny air, with just the stimulant of coldness in it, was to Lil most exhilarating. She clapped her hands with delight. "Oh, Charlie, isn't it wonderful," said she, half wild with enjoyment, as he came slowly up the stairs.

"Tenth time of 'wonderful,' to-day," said

Charlie. "Suppose we have a new adjective?"

"I can't stay to think about words," said Lil, "my time is filled up with looking. Oh, I wish papa were here!"

They stood silent awhile, looking at the incomparable scene before them. But Charlie soon wearied of anything; he turned to go.

"There is an ilex grove down there," he said. "I should like to go into it. Its shadows fascinates me more than anything I have yet seen."

As they moved towards the stairway, there came floating on the air the faint sound of low-toned laughter.

"What was that?" exclaimed Charlie. "Where did it come from?"

"There are some other people in the casino, I think," said Lil, absently; her eyes were drinking in the shades of colour on the Sabine hills. "Probably, they are laughing at the Guercinos."

"It seemed to me to come out of the air," said Charlie. "It might have been the laugh of a spirit."

They went down the steep staircase, and out into the glorious sunlight.

"Oh, how happy I feel," said Lil, as she stood a moment, to take in the beauty about her, and to feel the kind sun upon her face, but Charlie had already crossed to where the



ilex trees grew thickly, and had entered the grove. Lil followed him.

The trees mingled their boughs overhead. As Lil passed under their shade, the sun seemed suddenly to fade out of the sky. In entering a grove of ilex, one appears to touch upon a world of mystery and magic. No cathedral can impart so strange a sense of awe as the weird shadows of these trees. Their foliage is so thick above, and of so dim and dusky a green. The boughs that uphold this mass of mysterious-looking foliage, are knotted and tortuous in shape as though in pain they had brought forth the unearthly beauty of their clustered heads. The gray green bloom, that lies upon the dark and rugged bark, gives an air of age and remoteness to the stern trees. Ilex trees have always these characteristics, but surely no ilex grove can surpass in strangeness that of the Ludovisi Gardens. These trees which cling so closely together, forming a deep shade that kills all growth from the ground beneath them, are torn and twisted, as though at some time they had passed through a mortal agony. The earth about their roots is gray, covered only with dead leaves from the boughs above.

"Oh, it chills me to come here out of the bright sun," said Lil. "Let us go ! Surely this would be a spot to celebrate cruel and superstitious rites ; it is no place for pleasure !"



“Why cruel, if superstitious?” said Charlie. “I like this place; its very air has magic in it. Remember, we are not only happy in the sunshine, we are not butterflies. Men may love with pale lips in the shadow, and perhaps the kisses given under such a shade as this might have an intenser passion in them than kisses in the sunshine. See how these trees are rent and torn as though they had yielded up their very lives! Perhaps the nymphs have gone from the grove, and the trees were torn like this when they burst out from them! Are they gone for ever, I wonder? Surely the spirit cannot have departed altogether from such a spot as this! Perhaps one pale nymph lingers here alone, with love-whispers trembling on her pallid lips! How I should like to see the solitary spirit of this place!”

It seemed strange to them both that just as he spoke a figure should appear; the form of a woman, and one too with a certain spirit-like air. Lil almost uttered a cry of surprise, but instantly seeing that this new comer, spirit, or woman, or whatever she might be, was unconscious of their presence, she suppressed it.

“Adelaide,” cried a voice from out of the sunshine; “come, we must go back to the carriage.”

“I am coming,” replied Adelaide, in a low, clear voice. Charlie immediately knew

it was her laugh he had heard in the casino. She raised her eyes now, which had been fixed on the gray earth, and saw the two standing so near her, and looked from one to the other, with a grave interest. Then she quickly turned, and went out of the shade into the sunshine.

Charlie followed her as though drawn by some magic chain ; and Lil went with him. When they came out into the light they saw ahead of them two ladies ; one evidently middle-aged, who walked with considerable grace. The other was Adelaide, who, though tall, carried herself with a peculiar air ; her figure was poised most delicately. They walked on through the heavy scented avenue of Japanese medlars ; and Adelaide turned aside a moment to look down into the water of the fountain. As she rejoined her companion she looked back at the two who were following on the sweet sunlit path. That scene was printed for ever on Lil's mind. The scent of the medlar carried always so vivid a memory with it that in after years it was like spoken words to her.

On, past the canaries, the lizards, the heavy-headed coxcombs, to where the carriages stood. Adelaide and her companion got into a private carriage and drove away.

" They are residents here," said Charlie.

These were the first words he had spoken since their first sight of Adelaide.

The sun was setting ; it was time to go home.

As they drove to their hotel, Charlie took out his pocket-book and opened it.

"I wonder," he said "whether I brought Jack Poynings' address."

"Why, I thought you did not want to meet him," exclaimed Lil, in surprise.

"He is a bore," said Charlie ; "but he knows everybody in Rome."



## CHAPTER XVI.

“**I** AM going to hunt up Jack Poynings, this morning,” said Charlie, the next day, when they were ready to go out.

“Very well,” said Lil, “I will go up on the Pincio, and you will find me there.”

She was delighted to see him take an interest in anything again ; and she went off very contentedly to bask in the broad sunshine that lay full upon the Pincio. How enjoyable it was, after all this sight-seeing, to climb slowly up the hill, and turn now and again to look back at the view of Rome, which gradually unfolded itself. How green the grass was to her feet, how splendid the huge gray aloe spikes, rising from it, how pure that clear high sky above her head.

Having reached the summit, she went and leaned upon the parapet and looked at that marvellous basin below her, where Rome lay still and beautiful in the sunshine. It was another day of fairyland.

“I have my Italy now !” she said to herself, as she looked away to St. Peter’s ; “I can never lose it again.”

She did not notice how the time passed, she

was almost startled when someone touched her and she found Charlie was at her side and a gentleman with him.

"My wife," he said; "Mr. Poynings. Jack is coming home to lunch with us, Lil, and then he is going to take us to one of the prettiest houses in Rome, so he says."

"Not a house, a flat," said Mr. Poynings; "nobody lives in a house here. How do you like Italy, Mrs. Newman?"

Jack Poynings was just the man to ask such a question, and to expect an answer in two words. He was perfectly empty as to the inside of his head, and very bald as to the outside of it; he was always laughing, and never said anything worth hearing. Yet he had an extraordinary faculty for getting on in society, and always knew everyone wherever he might be.

It came out, as they walked down the hill, that he was going to take them to an afternoon "at home;" and Lil felt a little startled when she understood that it was to be at the house of Adelaide's mother. Jack Poynings knew them intimately, and had full permission to take his friends to their afternoons. Charlie, with the directness of aim which he could use when interested in anything, had discovered all this, and made arrangements accordingly. So all Lil had to do, was to open her trunks and get out a dress which had no travel stains upon it.



Lunch over, they went out and walked through the streets. "It is but a little way," said Jack Poynings. Lil felt very strange, as if some strong wave of destiny were sweeping over her, as she went on under the guidance of this man, whose frivolous small-talk jarred upon her, to go to the home of the nymph of the ilex grove.

Suddenly, as they were going down the Via Condotti, Jack Poynings turned into a doorway. "Here we are," he said, but they climbed two stories before they arrived at the front door they wished to enter. A trim little page answered Jack Poynings' knock, and they were shown through a hall, where some large green plants made a pleasant colour, into a room dimly lit, and with a heaviness of incense on the air. There was a low murmur of voices; several people were in the room; a lady detached herself from one of the groups and came forward; Lil was introduced to her; she recognised, immediately, that this handsome woman was one of those they had seen in the Ludovisi gardens.

Mrs. Mainwaring remembered noticing the Newmans there, too; she had been struck by them. She was a woman with strong social instincts, very hospitable, and always glad to make new friends, if they appeared at all desirable. She was charming to Lil; sat by her and talked to her for some time. Then she brought to her a bright young artist, who

admired Lil very much indeed, but thought her one of the most absent-minded beauties he had ever talked to. For Lil's eyes and thoughts were with Charlie. He was at Adelaide's side, speaking eagerly with his old earnest manner, which she had not seen for so long. He looked like the Charlie whom she had married; not the weary irritable man of the last few years.

It was wonderful to watch, it delighted her. She was quite content and happy while she could see this pleasant cheerfulness upon his face. It seemed to grow stronger during their stay, which was not very brief, for Jack Poynings was too popular with everybody to be easily spared; Charlie was too interested in his conversation to notice how time passed, and Lil was forgetful of all else in watching him.

There were few people there who were not intimate friends of the Mainwarings', so nothing interrupted the talk between Adelaide and Charlie. He found an indescribable charm in the sound of her low-toned voice; it had, indeed, a charm so great that for a while you scarcely observed how much there was in all she said. Adelaide Mainwaring was a woman of that rare character which discovers its beauties as you grow familiar with it, just as a light grows stronger upon near approach. Charlie did not realise immediately that he was talking to a woman of intellect; what he

felt was an extraordinary personal attraction. It was as if he had suddenly met with some new exotic flower, the perfume and colour of which was so strange and delicious, that he could not tear himself from the enjoyment of them.

Adelaide Mainwaring was not beautiful, though elegant in the extreme. But she possessed the strong artistic temperament which makes the eyes flame and the lips tremble with pure enthusiasm. A voluptuousness, as of a blown rose, was in her air and manner, a delicate warmth which impressed those who were about her with a sense of riches. She had studied and loved art till it filled her whole being; her enthusiasm seemed to colour the very air she breathed. Her vivid words, her low thrilling voice, her impassioned look, all were as so many sharp sweet stings of wakening life to Charlie. His artistic nature stirred within him, and the power of pleasure suddenly leaped into its strength. He remembered that he was in Rome, that the greatest glories of the art world were about him, that he was free, that in fact, life was ready at his bidding to become delicious.

"I am longing to understand the beauty of Rome," said he, as he listened to her words, quick and many, yet spoken with no effort, but an eloquent ease as if thoughts came perpetually before her eyes and formed themselves there; "you know what is beautiful in

that casino in the Ludovisi gardens, for instance, but I did not—I suppose that is why nothing attracted me.”

“And the Ludovisi Juno is so lovely, with her grand unconscious face, which always makes me feel as if she had risen above emotion, into a different condition, where she has found a perfect calm.”

“I am afraid,” said Charlie, rather dejectedly, “that I have not a pure enough taste to appreciate statuary as I might; I should like to study it; where shall I begin?”

“You must go to the Museo Torlonia,” said Adelaide, very earnestly. “Mamma,” she added, turning her head to Mrs. Mainwaring with a languid movement like that of a water lily moved gently by the tide, “are we not going to the Torlonia Gallery, to-morrow? Mr. and Mrs. Newman have not been there yet.”

“Oh, come with us then,” said Mrs. Mainwaring, who thoroughly understood making up parties and helping people to enjoy themselves; “we shall be delighted if you can.” Charlie’s assent was sufficiently visible in his face, so Mrs. Mainwaring immediately went over to Lil and asked her would she go with them? and what time would suit her best?

“I think it is better to go early,” she went on, “if you can manage it. Suppose we come for you in the carriage, at half-past ten?”

Mrs. Mainwaring’s easy kindness was very charming, and Lil liked it.



Charlie and Lil and Jack Poynings left together. Silently they went downstairs, out into the Via Condotti, which was lit now, and looked pretty enough with all its gay shops. Then Jack Poynings began to chatter.

"Very nice people these, aren't they? best people in Rome always to be met there, too; pretty set of rooms they have, eh, Mrs. Newman?"

"Very pretty," said Lil.

"And how do you like the ladies themselves? Miss Adelaide is rather art-mad, you know; talks your head off about the Renaissance and all that sort of thing if you let her; but she is a most fascinating woman when she likes!"

"I can't imagine her anything else," said Charlie, in a low voice. Lil had been looking into the pretty shops as they passed up the narrow street; the way Charlie spoke attracted her attention, and she looked up into his face.

There was a dreamy look in his eyes, a tender expression about his mouth which she had not seen for many a long day, which had been upon his face when their love was young. She had not been able to call it there for a long, long, weary time; its absence had chilled her heart, and had made her feel as if the world had grown cold and dark.

It had come upon his face again; it was there; but was not for her.

Jack Poynings left them at the door of their



hotel; hardly knowing what she did, Lil shook hands with him, and went up the stairs to her room. She sat down wearily in a chair, feeling suddenly so tired that it seemed too great a task to lay her hat aside. In her pretty dress, she was a lovely picture of a fair tired woman. She knew nothing of that. She only knew that a blank wall was rising in front of her, that something had happened or was going to happen, which would shut her out from the light. She did not think clearly what it was; she tried to believe that she was only so very tired; too tired to think.

Charlie lit a cigarette and walked about the room, an absent look on his face. He did not seem aware of her presence. She did not attempt to remind him of it.

Dinner was eaten, the evening was passed, and some great gulf seemed still to lie between these two. Hardly a word did they interchange; Charlie was wrapped in his own thoughts, and Lil had a strange feeling as if her heart was a stone within her, and she had enough to do to carry it about.

The morning came, a brilliantly beautiful one. Lil had to put on her cloak immediately that breakfast was over, for Charlie seemed filled with a fever of apprehension lest she should not be ready when the Mainwarings came.

She was ready, however, standing at the door of the hotel when the carriage came down

the street. Adelaide looked out smiling, and seeing Lii there held out her hands to her as the carriage stopped. Lil took them and gazed a long moment into the dark mysterious eyes that met hers. In that moment she knew that these eyes held a fate for her in their power and beauty; she knew, too, that she could not help loving Adelaide whatever dark fate might fall between them.

It was a glorious morning indeed, and Adelaide seemed a part of it, so tender was her face, so radiant her expression. She had a peculiar habit of abstraction which sometimes offended people who did not understand her. She sat by Charlie's side in the large open carriage; but though when he spoke to her, she answered him, it seemed as though the answer came from far away. They drove through the Corso, and Mrs. Mainwaring bowed to several people who were passing through that bright busy street, but Adelaide did not appear to observe them. Her eyes were sometimes closed, sometimes fixed on the clear sun-lit sky, visible between the high houses.

"I expect some friends to meet us at the gallery," said Mrs. Mainwaring; "Mr. Poynings, for one, said he was coming. I don't fancy he cares much about statues; do you, Adelaide? He is not generally fond of coming with us to such places. I expect it is to meet you, Mr. Newman."

Mrs. Mainwaring formed a charming centre to a party. She talked incessantly about nothing in particular, but always in the kindest spirit. She was affectionate, and made herself at home with people the moment she had made their acquaintance. If they were well-off and good-looking, she had not the slightest difficulty in making of them intimate friends at once. Lil listened to her a great deal, and talked to her a little, and learned to like her very much. But she could not help noticing that Adelaide did not always reply to her mother, and that sometimes she seemed to shrink away from her a little.

The sun steamed down upon the muddy Tiber; and when they crossed one of the bridges it lay below them like a stream of sluggish molten gold.

"Isn't it lovely?" said Mrs. Mainwaring. But no one answered her. Lil had long since exhausted her ejaculatory capacity; and Adelaide looked as if she could not speak. Charlie gave one look to the river which to-day was wearing its true poetic colour, and then his eyes turned back to Adelaide's face. He was watching the expressions which passed over it, and trying to guess at their meaning.

The carriage stopped in a sort of side street, which looked like the back entrance to some stables; Mr. Poynings was immediately at the carriage door, and there was a lady with him. The party was complete, and Mrs.

Mainwaring led the way down the dark, uninviting path, from which all sun was shut out by high palace walls. A ring at a great bell, and a door opening in the wall, admitted them suddenly to fairyland. It was only a courtyard full of sunshine and orange trees; but it was exquisitely pretty after the shaded, dirty streets. The green-leaved full-boughed trees were covered with golden balls; some of the oranges were still half-green, and these perhaps were the prettiest. Lil uttered a little cry of delight and then was silent as she went into this sweet place.

Suddenly a hand stole through her arm; it was Adelaide's. They said nothing but went on, silently looked about them, through the beautiful courtyard, to the door of the gallery.

How cold that gallery was! It seemed to Lil that something death-like fell upon her as she passed out of the sunshine. It was a chill like that of the ilex shade.

"Miss Mainwaring," said Charlie's voice at that moment, "you have promised to help me understand these things. Here is the catalogue writ in choice Italian; I can read Italian only a little. There are five hundred statues in this gallery; how am I to know which to look at?"

"Come," said Adelaide, "I will show you."

It seemed as if she had forgotten him till now. In a moment she turned the light of

her face full upon him and smiled her pleasure in the task before her. She drew her hand from Lil's arm and went quickly, with her graceful step, down the gallery with Charlie at her side. Very soon they paused, in front of a most beautiful Venus. They were alone. The others lingered about some of the statues near the entrance.

The Torlonia Gallery is deliciously arranged; the statues are separated by innumerable curtains of a dull, faded colour, which form an admirable back ground for their pale beauty.

The place had a strange effect upon Lil. Its grandeur, its gloom and chillness, affected her like some dim and awful dream. She moved silently on between these lines of statues, looking at them, but more conscious of the two living forms moving on still in advance of the others.

The seated Livia charmed her; she stood a long time looking at the beautiful figure of the Roman lady, and fancied herself standing alone; but a voice at her side said:

"Do sit down a moment, Mrs. Newman; you are looking awfully white."

It was Jack Poynings, who had been with her all the time, and had made several ineffectual efforts to attract her attention.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Poynings," she said, suddenly aware that she was very tired, and that the offered chair was just what she needed.



But she said no more, and Jack stood looking at her dolefully.

"Doesn't this place strike you as being excessively like a tomb or something equally dismal?" he said, presently. "Suppose we go out among the oranges and wait for the others there? I'm sick of the fine arts; one gets a positive surfeit of them in Rome. Shall we go out?"

"I am very cold," said Lil, doubtfully; "perhaps too cold to appreciate anything; but I should like to go into the ante-Phidian room over there."

Jack, who was the most good-natured of empty-headed beings, submitted willingly, and they went across into this room. Charlie and Adelaide were here alone. Lil had not known anyone was there, and her sudden shrinking back was momentarily perceptible even to Jack's not very alert faculties. But she conquered it instantly and advanced into the room.

Adelaide was standing in front of the "Vesta;" she had been speaking and her face was full of emotion. When she saw Lil, she turned to her, and putting her hand within her arm again, drew her in front of the statue.

"Look at that face with its deep-lidded meaning eyes, and its tender generous mouth," she said. "Do you feel what those hands mean? To me the down-drooped one says 'silence,' the raised one 'look up.' She speaks to

women. Whom else should she speak to? It is for men to talk. We must learn in silence. Oh, the majesty of that strong womanly figure, that pure face with its marvellous expression of complete knowledge, of absolute quiet. That face has haunted me in my dreams. It will haunt you, Mrs. Newman, if you look at it long enough. Oh, to have lived in the days when art was alive!"

She turned and went away out of the room. Her eyes were wet with unshed tears. Charlie followed her. He scarcely seemed to guide his own feet, he followed her blindly. Lil remained gazing up into the sweet woman's face bent down towards her with a light in it as though the vision of the great beyond had once gladdened those eyes and made them goddess-like. But what was known to that stately face was held there secret. An atmosphere of stillness seemed to breathe forth from the cold marble.

"I will try!" said Lil, to herself, "I will try to learn—I will endeavour to look up, and surely I can be silent!"

That strong sweet face and the gestures of the meaning hands often afterwards returned to her. Friendless and alone in her difficult path, this voice from long past ages penetrated her inner ears.

"Shall we go out now?" suggested the faithful Jack Poynings again, after he had let her look a long time at the Vesta.

"Yes," said Lil, "I am very tired and cold. But that statue had really made me forget it for the moment!"

They went down the long galleries to the outer door; the others had wandered away into the side rooms, and they saw no one as they went on. There was a faint sound of voices sometimes, and once Adelaide's low-toned laughter reached them.

"How delicious the sunshine is!" exclaimed Lil, thrilled with delight as she entered its warmth.

"I'm so glad you like it," said Jack Poynings, cheerfully; "I don't believe Miss Mainwaring does. She revels in chilly, tomb-like places. People who have what is called the artistic temperament seem to me generally to like uncomfortable things! Hasn't your husband got an artistic temperament, Mrs. Newman? I remember he used to write verses when I knew him years ago, and now, like Miss Mainwaring, he is fascinated by that horrid cold sculpture gallery."

All this he said, leaning against an orange tree, and professedly studying its bark. In reality he was covertly observing Lil's face. He began to think there was something queer about the quiet of this woman, who looked as if she ought to be what he would have described as "awfully jolly."

She had found a seat in the sun, upon the

side of a stone basin; and she sat there, very still and silent. Her eyes were fixed upon the door of the sculpture gallery. Poynings, watching her face, saw suddenly a strange dark look come over it, a heavy look, as if a cloud had darkened the resplendent sunshine in which her form was bathed.

Charlie and Adelaide were just coming out together. She was speaking, and his eyes were on her face, and once, as she spoke, she raised her own eyes, full of fire, to his, and they seemed to draw light into his face, as the touch of a torch might bring sudden flame into kindling wood.

No one could look at that and not see! Jack Poynings looked, and saw, and understood. He was sorry for Lil, and sorry for himself. The sight did not please him, for he adored Adelaide Mainwaring. Yet, to him, though painful, it was not serious. He could not view it so. He did not like to see Adelaide flirting with a married man, but still, with a woman of her type, he could only regard it as a flirtation of the most innocent kind imaginable.

Lil looked and saw, and the whole naked truth stood before her eyes, alive, not to be put down or ever hidden away!

Charlie Newman was in love, in love with Adelaide Mainwaring. So deep, so overpowering was the passion that it had caught him unawares; it bewildered him by its

sudden intensity. He did not know his own state yet.

But his wife knew, and the earth seemed no more to be solid under her feet.

END OF VOL. I.





