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A Canadian Heroine

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A Canadian Heroine

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A Canadian heroine.

A Canadian heroine.

A Novel.

By

The author of "Leaves from the Backwoods."

"Questa chiese Lucia in suo dimando,
E disse: Or ha bisogna il tuo fidele
Di te, ed io a te lo raccomando."---*Inferno. Canto II.*

"Qu'elles sont belles, nos campagnes;
En Canada qu'on vit content!
Salut o sublimes montagnes,
Bords du superbe St. Laurent!
Habitant de cette contree
Que nature veut embellir,
Tu peux marcher tete levee,
Ton pays doit t'enorgueillir."---*J. Bedard.*

In three volumes.

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A CANADIAN HEROINE.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Leigh was in a very depressed and anxious mood. His late conversations with Mrs. Costello had disturbed him and broken up the current of his thoughts, and even to some extent of his usual occupations, without producing any result beneficial to either of them. She had told him a strange and almost incredible story of her life; and then, just when he was full of sympathy and eagerness to be of use to her, everything seemed suddenly to have changed, and the events that followed had been wholly, as it were, out of his reach. He thought over the matter with a little sensation, which, if he had been less simple and generous a man, might have been offence. Even as it was, he felt uncomfortably divided between his real interest in his old friends, and a temptation to pretend that he was not interested at all. He remembered, too, with a serio-comical kind of remorse, the manner in which he had spoken to Mrs. Costello about Maurice. He was obliged to confess to himself that Maurice had never said a word to him which could be taken as expressing any other than a brotherly feeling of regard for Lucia; he had certainly *fancied* that there was another kind of affection in his thoughts; but it was no part of the old soldier's code of honour to sanction the betrayal of a secret discovered by chance, and he felt guilty in remembering how far the warmth of his friendship had carried him. He considered, by way of tormenting himself yet further, that it was perfectly possible for a young man, being daily in the company of a beautiful and charming girl, to fancy himself in love with her, and yet, on passing into a different world and seeing other charming girls, to discover that he had been mistaken. It is true that if any other person had suggested that Maurice might have done this, Mr. Leigh would have been utterly offended and indignant; nevertheless, having proposed the idea to himself, he tried to look upon it as quite natural and justifiable. After all, this second theory of inconstancy rested upon the first theory of supposed love, and that upon guesses and surmises, so that the whole edifice was just as shadowy and unsubstantial as it could well be. But then it is curious to see how much real torment people manage to extract from visionary troubles.

While his neighbours were still at Moose Island Mr. Leigh received two letters from Maurice. The first not only did not contain the usual note enclosed for Mrs. Costello, but there was not the slightest message to, or mention of, either her or Lucia. Mr. Leigh examined the letter, peeped into the envelope, shook the sheets apart (for Maurice's writing filled much space with few words), but found nothing. The real explanation of this was simple enough. Maurice had written his note to Mrs. Costello, and then, just as he was going to put it in the envelope, was called to his grandfather. In getting up from the table he gave the note a push, which sent it down into a wastepaper basket. There it lay unnoticed, and when he came back, just in time to send off his letters, he fancied, not seeing it, that he had put it into the envelope, which accordingly he closed and sent to the post without it. But of course Mr. Leigh knew nothing about this.

The second letter was equally without enclosure or message, though from a very different cause. It was scarcely a dozen lines in length, and only said that Mr. Beresford was dying. Maurice had just received Mrs. Costello's farewell note; he was feeling angry and grieved, and could think of no better expedient than to keep silence for the moment, even if he had had time to renew his expostulations. He had not fully comprehended the secret Mrs. Costello entrusted to him, but in

the preoccupations of the moment, he put off all concerns but those of the dying man until he should have more leisure to attend to them. Thus, by a double chance, Mr. Leigh was allowed to persuade himself that Maurice had either never had any absorbing interest in the Costellos, or that his interest in them was being gradually supplanted by others. In this opinion, and in a curiously uncomfortable and contradictory humour, his friends found him when they came back from the island.

Mrs. Costello, on her part, had been entirely unable to keep Maurice out of her thoughts. As Christian's death, and all the agitation consequent upon it, settled back into the past, she had plenty of leisure and plenty of temptation to revert to her old hopes and schemes. Half consciously she had allowed herself to build up a charming fabric of possibilities. *Possibly* Maurice might write and say, "It is Lucia I love, Lucia I want to marry. It matters nothing to me what her father is or was." (Quixotic and not-to-be-counted-upon piece of generosity!) *Possibly* she herself might then be justified in answering, "The accusation brought against her father has been proved false---my child is stainless---and you have proved your right to her;" and it was impossible, she believed, that Lucia, hearing all the truth, should not be touched as they would have her.

These imaginations, built upon such ardent and long-indulged wishes, acquired a considerable degree of strength during her visit to Mr. Strafford; and although a little surprised at not receiving, during her stay there, the usual weekly note from Maurice which she had calculated would cross her last important letter on the way, she came home eager to see Mr. Leigh, and to hear from him the last news from England.

But when she had paid her visit to her old neighbour, she came back puzzled, disappointed, and slightly indignant. There was an air of constraint about Mr. Leigh, especially when he spoke of Maurice, which was so entirely new as to appear a great deal more significant than it really was; and this, added to the fact that two letters had been received, one written before, and the other after the arrival of hers, neither of which contained so much as a message for her or Lucia, suddenly suggested to Mrs. Costello that she was a very foolish woman who was still wasting her wishes and thoughts on plans, the time for which had gone by, instead of following steadily, and without hesitation, what her reason told her was the best and most sensible course. She so far convinced herself that it was time to give up thinking of Lucia's marriage to Maurice, as to be really in earnest both in completing her preparations for leaving Canada, and in rejoicing at the receipt of a letter from her cousin expressing his perfect approval of her decision to return to Europe.

This letter even Lucia could not help acknowledge to be thoroughly kind and kinsmanlike. Mr. Wynter proposed to meet them at Havre, and, if possible, accompany them to Paris.

"If you are travelling alone," he said, "I may be of service to you; and since you have decided on going to France, I should like to see you comfortably settled there. By that means, too, we shall have plenty of time to talk over whatever arrangements you wish made with regard to your daughter. However, I have great hopes that when you find yourself away from the places where you have suffered so much, and near your own people, you will grow quite strong again."

There were messages from his wife and daughters, in conclusion, which seemed to promise that they also would be ready to welcome their unknown relatives.

"Blood is thicker than water." Mrs. Costello began to feel that the one secure asylum for Lucia, in her probable orphanhood, would be in the old house by the Dee.

The next time she saw Mr. Leigh, she told him her plans quite frankly. She did so with some suspicion of his real feelings, only that in spite of their long acquaintance she did him the injustice to fancy that he would, for reasons of his own, be glad that Lucia should be out of Maurice's way if he returned to Canada. She supposed that he had, on reflection, begun to shrink from the idea of a half-Indian daughter-in-law, and while she confessed to herself that the

feeling was, according to ordinary custom, reasonable enough, she was at heart extremely angry that it should be entertained.

"My beautiful Lucia!" she said to herself indignantly; "as if she were not ten times more lovely, and a thousand times more worth loving, than any of those well-born, daintily brought up, pretty dolls, that Lady Dighton is likely to find for him! I did think better of Maurice. But, of course, it is all right enough. I had no right to expect him to be more than mortal."

And Lucia went on in the most perfect unconsciousness of all the troubled thoughts circling round her. She spoke honestly of her regret at leaving Canada when, perhaps, Maurice might so soon be there, though she kept to herself the hopes which made her going so much less sad than it would have been otherwise. She was extremely busy, for Mrs. Costello, now that she thought no more of returning to the Cottage, had decided to sell it; all their possessions, therefore, had to be divided into three parts, the furniture to be sold with the house, their more personal belongings to go with them, and various books and knickknacks to be left as keepsakes with their friends. It was generally known now all over Cacouna that Mrs. Costello was going "home," in order that Lucia might be near her relations in case of "anything happening,"---a thing nobody doubted the probability of, who saw the change made during the last few months in their grave and quiet neighbour. They were a little vague in their information about these relations, but that was a matter of secondary importance; and as the mother and daughter were really very much liked by their neighbours, they were quite overwhelmed with invitations and visits.

So the days passed on quickly; and for the second time, the one fixed for their journey was close at hand. One more letter had arrived from Maurice, containing the news of his grandfather's death. It was short, like the previous one, and almost equally hurried. He said that he was struggling through the flood of business brought upon him by his accession to estates so large, and till lately so zealously cared for by their possessor. As soon as ever he could get away, he meant to start for Canada; and as the time of his doing so depended only on his success in hurrying on certain affairs which were already in hand, his father might expect him by any mail except the first after his letter arrived. There was no message to Mrs. Costello in this note, but, on the other side of the half sheet which held the conclusion of it, was a postscript hastily scrawled,

"Tell Mrs. Costello to remember the last talk we had together, and to believe that I am obstinate."

This postscript, however, Mr. Leigh in his excitement and joy at the prospect of so soon seeing his son, never found out. He read the letter twice over, and then put it away in his desk, without even remembering at the moment, to wonder at Maurice's continued silence towards his old friends. The thought did strike him afterwards, but he was quite certain that he had read every word of the letter, and was only confirmed in the ideas he had begun to entertain. He sighed over these ideas, and over the loss of Lucia, whom he loved with almost fatherly affection; but still, even she was infinitely less dear to him than Maurice; and if Maurice really did not care for her, why then, sooner than throw the smallest shadow of blame upon him, *he* would not seem to care for her either.

So Mrs. Costello learned that Maurice was coming, and that he had not thought it worth while to send even a word to his old friends.

"He is the only one," she thought, "who has changed towards us, and I trusted him most of all."

And she took refuge from her disappointment in anger. Her disappointment and her anger, however, were both silent; she would not say an ill word to Lucia of Maurice; and Lucia, engrossed in her work and her anticipations, did not perhaps remark that there was any change. She made one attempt to persuade her mother to delay their journey until after Maurice's arrival, but, being reminded that their passage was taken, she consoled herself with,

"Well, it will be easy enough for him to come to see us. I suppose everybody in England goes to Paris sometimes?"

And so the end came. They had not neglected Maurice's charge, though Maurice seemed to have forgotten them. Whatever was possible to do to provide for Mr. Leigh's comfort during his short solitude they had done. The last farewells were said; Mr. Strafford, who had insisted on going with them to New York, had arrived at the Cottage. Mrs. Bellairs and Bella had spent their last day with their friends and gone away in tears. All their life at Cacouna, with its happiness and its sorrow, was over, and early next morning they were to cross the river for the last time, and begin their journey to England.

CHAPTER II.

Maurice had full opportunity for the exercise of patience during the last weeks of his grandfather's life. It was hard to sit there day after day watching the half-conscious old man, who lay so still and seemed so shut out from human feelings or sympathies, and to feel all the while that any one of those hours of vigil might be the one that stole from him his heart's desire. Yet there was no alternative. His grandfather, who had received and adopted him, was suffering and solitary, dependent wholly on him for what small gratification he could still enjoy. Gratitude, therefore, and duty kept him here. But *there*, meanwhile, so far out of his reach, what might be going on? He lived a perfectly double life. Lucia was in trouble---some inexplicable shadow of disgrace was threatening her---something so grave that even her mother, who knew him so well, thought it an unsurmountable barrier between them---something which looked the more awful from its vagueness and mystery. It is true that he was only troubled---not discouraged by the appearance of this phantom. He was as ready to fight for his Una as ever was Redcross Knight---but then would his Una wait for him? To be forcibly held back from the combat must have been much worse to a true champion than any wounds he could receive in fair fight. So at least it seemed to Maurice, secretly chafing, and then bitterly reproaching himself for his impatience; yet the next moment growing as impatient as before.

To him in this mood came Mrs. Costello's last letter. Now at last the mystery was cleared up, and its impalpable shape reduced to a positive and ugly reality. Like his father, Maurice found no small difficulty in understanding and believing the story told to him. That Mrs. Costello, calm, gentle, and just touched with a quiet stateliness, as he had always known her, could ever have been an impulsive, romantic girl, so swayed by passion or by flattery as to have left her father's house and all the protecting restraints of her English life to follow the fortunes of an Indian, was an idea so startling that he could not at once accept it for truth. In Lucia the incongruity struck him less. Her beauty, dark and magnificent, her fearless nature, her slender erect shape, her free and graceful movements---all the charms which he had by heart, suited an Indian origin. He could readily imagine her the daughter of a chief and a hero. But this was not what he was required to believe. He had read lately the description of a brutal, half-imbecile savage, who had committed a peculiarly frightful and revolting murder, and he was told to recognize in this wretch the father of his darling. But it was just this which saved him. He would believe that Christian was Mrs. Costello's husband and Lucia's father, because Mrs. Costello told him so herself and of her own knowledge---but as for a murder, innocent men were often accused of that; and when a man is once accused by the popular voice of a horrible crime, everybody knows how freely appropriate qualities can be bestowed on him. So the conviction which remained at the bottom of Maurice's mind, though he never drew it up and looked steadily at it, was just the truth---that Christian, by some train of circumstances or other, had been made to bear the weight of another person's guilt. As to the other question of his giving up Lucia, Maurice never troubled himself to think about it. He was, it must be confessed, of a singularly obstinate disposition, and in spite of his legal training not particularly inclined to listen to reason. Knowing therefore perfectly well, that he had made up his mind to marry Lucia, provided she did not deliberately prefer somebody else, he felt it useless to complicate his already confused ideas any further, by taking into consideration the expediency of such a connection. There was quite enough to worry him without that; and by some inconceivable stupidity it never entered his head that, while he was really so completely incapable of altering his mind, other people should seriously think he was doing it.

Yet as he read Mrs. Costello's letter over a second time, he began to perceive something in its tone which seemed to say clearly---"Don't flatter yourself that the matter rests at all with you. I have decided. I am no longer your ally, but your opponent." At this a new element came into play---anger.

He had been rather unreasonable before---now he became utterly so. "A pretty sort of fellow she must think me, after all," he said to himself. "I suppose she'd be afraid to trust Lucia to me now. However, if she thinks I mean to be beaten that way, she'll find that she is mistaken."

He was walking up and down his room, and working himself up into a greater ill-humour with every turn he made.

"If I could only get to Lucia herself," he went on thinking, "I should see if I could not end the matter at once, one way or the other---that fellow is clear out of the way now, and I believe I should have a chance; but as for Mrs. Costello, she seems to think nothing at all of throwing me over whenever it suits her."

Poor Maurice! he sat down to write to his father in a miserable mood---Mr. Beresford had become suddenly and decidedly worse. The doctors said positively that he was dying, and that a few days at the utmost would bring the end. Maurice had stolen away while he slept, but his angry meditation on Mrs. Costello's desertion had taken up so much of his time, that Mr. Leigh's note was short and hurried. Ill-humour prevailed also to the point of the note being finished without any message (he had no time to write separately) to the Cottage.

His packet despatched, he returned to his grandfather's room. Lady Dighton, now staying in the house, sat and watched by the bedside; and by-and-by leaving her post, she joined Maurice by the window and began to talk to him in a low voice. There was no fear of disturbing the invalid; his sleep continued, deep and lethargic, the near forerunner of death.

"Maurice," Lady Dighton said, "I wish you would go out for an hour. You are not really wanted here, and you look worn out."

"Thank you, I am all right. My grandfather might wake and miss me."

"Go for a little while. Half an hour's gallop would do you good."

Maurice laughed impatiently.

"Why should I want doing good to? It is you, I should think, who ought to go out."

"I was out yesterday. Are you still anxious about your father and Canada?"

Lady Dighton's straightforward question meant to be answered.

"Yes," Maurice said rather crossly. "I am anxious and worried."

"You can do no good by writing?"

"I seem to do harm. Don't talk to me about it, Louisa. Nothing but my being there could have done any good, and now it is most likely too late."

She saw plainly enough the fight that was going on---impatience, eagerness, selfishness of a kind, on one side---duty and compassion on the other. She had no scruple about seeing just as much of her cousin's humour as his looks and

manner could tell her, and she perceived that at the moment it was anything but a good or heroic one. She thought it possible that it would have been a relief to him to have struck, or shaken, or even kicked something or somebody; and yet she was not at all tempted to think the worse of him. She did not understand, of course, the late aggravations of his trouble; but she knew that he loved loyally and thought his love in danger, and she gave him plenty of sympathy, whatever that might be worth. She had obtained a considerable amount of influence over him, and used it, in general, for his good. At present he was in rather an unmanageable mood, but still she did not mean to let him escape her.

"He looks dreadfully worried, poor boy!" she said to herself. "Being shut up here day after day must be bad for him. I shall *make* Sir John take him out to-morrow."

But when to-morrow came, and Sir John paid his daily visit to his wife, she had other things to think about. He found the servants lingering about the halls and staircases in silent excitement, and in the sick room a little group watching, as they stood round the bed, for the old man's final falling asleep.

He had been conscious early in the morning, and spoken to both his grandchildren; but gradually, so very gradually that they could not say "he changed at such an hour," the heavy rigidity of death closed upon his already paralysed limbs, and his eyes grew dimmer. It was a very quiet peaceful closing of a long life, which, except that it had been sometimes hard and proud, had passed in usefulness and honour. And so, towards sunset, some one said, "He is gone," and laid a hand gently upon the stiffening eyelids.

Sir John took his wife away to her room, and there she leaned her head against his shoulder and cried, not very bitterly, but with real affection for her grandfather. Maurice went away also, very grave, and thinking tenderly of the many kind words and deeds which had marked the months of his stay at Hunsdon. And yet within half an hour, Lady Dighton was talking to her husband quite calmly about some home affairs which interested him; and Maurice had begun to calculate how soon he could get away for that long-deferred six weeks' absence.

But, of course, although they could not keep their thoughts prisoners, these mourners, who were genuine mourners after their different degrees, were constrained to observe the decorous, quiet, and interregnum of all ordinary occupation, which custom demands after a death. Lady Dighton returned home next day, hidden in her carriage, and went to shut herself up in her own house until the funeral. Maurice remained at Hunsdon, where he was now master, and spent his days in the library writing letters, or trying to make plans for his future, and it was then that the letter with his lost message to Mrs. Costello was sent off.

Yet the space between Mr. Beresford's death and his funeral was to his heir a tedious and profitless blank. He had till now been kept here by living powers, gratitude and reverence; death came, and handed his custody over to cold but tyrannous propriety. Now he rebelled with all his heart, and spent hours of each solitary day in pacing backwards and forwards the whole space of the great dim room which seemed a prison to him.

The day before the funeral broke this stillness, two or three gentlemen, distant relations or old friends of his grandfather, came to Hunsdon, and towards evening there arrived the family solicitor, Mr. Payne. At dinner that day Maurice had to take his new position as host. It was, as suited the circumstances, a grave quiet party, but still there was something about the manner of the guests, and even in the fact of their being *his* guests, which was unconsciously consoling to Maurice as being a guarantee of his freedom and independence. Next morning the house was all sombre bustle and preparation. Lady Dighton and her husband arrived. She, to have one last look at the dead, he to join Maurice in the office of mourner; and at twelve o'clock, the long procession wound slowly away through the park, and the great house stood emptied of the old life and ready for the commencement of the new one.

The new one began, indeed, after those who had followed Mr. Beresford to the grave had come back, and assembled in the great unused drawing-room to hear the will read. Lady Dighton shivered as she sat by one of the newly-lighted fires, and bending over to Maurice whispered to him, "For heaven's sake keep the house warmer than poor grandpapa used to do."

"Used" already! The new life had begun.

There was nothing in the will but what was pretty generally known. Mr. Beresford had made no secret of his intentions even with regard to legacies. There was one to his granddaughter, with certain jewels and articles which had peculiar value for her; some to old friends, some to servants, and the whole remainder of his possessions real and personal to Maurice Leigh, on the one condition of his assuming the name and arms of Beresford.

It was a very satisfactory will. Maurice, in his impatience, thought its chief virtue was that it contained nothing which could hinder him from starting at once for Canada. He told Mr. Payne that he wished to see him for a short time that evening; and after the other guests had gone to bed, the two sat down together by the library fire to settle, as he fancied, whatever small arrangements must be made before his going.

He soon found out his mistake. In the first place the solicitor, who had a powerful and hereditary interest in the affairs of Hunsdon, was shocked beyond expression at the idea of such a voyage being undertaken at all. Here, he would have said if he had spoken his thoughts, was a young man just come into a fine estate, a magnificent estate in fact, and one of the finest positions in the country, and the very first thing he thinks of, is to hurry off on a long sea-voyage to a half-barbarous country, without once stopping to consider that if he were to be drowned, or killed in a railway accident, or lost in the woods, the estate might fall into Chancery, or at the best go to a woman. Mr. Payne mentally trembled at such rashness, and he expressed enough of the horror he felt, to make Maurice aware that it really was a less simple matter than he had supposed, and that his new fortunes had their claims and drawbacks. Mr. Payne followed up his first blow with others. He immediately began to ask, "If you go, what do you wish done in such a case?" And the cases were so many that Maurice, in spite of the knowledge Mr. Beresford had made him acquire of his affairs, became really puzzled and harassed. Finally, he saw that a delay of a week would be inevitable; and the solicitor, having gained the day so far, relented, and allowed him to hope that after a week's application to business, he would be in a position to please himself.

Next day Maurice was left alone at Hunsdon. He wrote his last letter to his father, and being determined to follow it himself so shortly, he sent no message to the Costellos. Then he set to work hard and steadily to clear the way for his departure.

CHAPTER III.

One day Maurice rode over to Dighton, and told his cousin he was come to say good-bye. She was not, of course, surprised to hear that he was really going, but she could not help expressing her wonder at the lightness with which he spoke of a journey of so many thousand miles.

"You talk of going to Canada," she said, "just as I should talk of going to Paris---as if it were an affair of a few hours."

"If it were six times as far," he answered, "it would make no difference to me, except that I should be more impatient to start; and yet most likely when I get there I shall find my journey useless."

Somehow or other there had come to be a tolerably clear understanding, on Lady Dighton's part, of the state of affairs between Maurice and Lucia---she knew that Maurice was intent upon finding his old playfellow, and winning her if

possible at once. She naturally took the part of her new favourite; and believed that if Lucia were really what he described her, she would easily be persuaded to come to Hunsdon as its mistress; for, of course, she knew of no other barrier between the young people than that of Maurice's newly acquired importance. She thought Mrs. Costello had acted in a prudent and dignified manner in wishing to separate them; but she also thought, in rather a contradictory fashion, that since Maurice was intent upon the marriage, he ought to have his own way. So she was quite disposed to encourage him with auguries of success.

"They are not likely to be in any hurry to begin a sea-voyage such weather as this," she said, shivering. "Two ladies, even if they are Canadians, can't make quite so light of it as you do."

"I wish you may be right," he answered; "but if I should not find them there, I shall bring my father to England and then go off in search of them. A pretty prospect! They may lead me all over Europe before I find them."

Lady Dighton laughed outright.

"One would suppose that telegraphs and railways were not in existence," she said, "and that you had to set out, like a knight-errant, with nothing but a horse and a sword to recover your runaway lady-love."

Maurice felt slightly offended, but thought better of it, and laughed too.

"I shall find them, no fear," he answered; "but when? and where?"

Next morning he left Hunsdon, and went to London. The moment he was really moving, his spirits rose, and his temper, which had been considerably disturbed lately, recovered itself. He scarcely stopped at all, till he found himself that afternoon at the door of the solicitor's office, where he had some affairs to attend to.

He got out of his cab and to the lawyer's door, as if everything depended on his own personal speed; but just as he went up the steps, the door opened, and a clerk appeared, showing a gentleman out. Even in the midst of Maurice's hurry, something familiar in the figure struck him; he looked again--it was Percy. They recognized each other; at the same moment, by a common impulse, they saluted each other ceremoniously and passed on their different ways.

Maurice was expected, and he found Mr. Payne ready to receive him. Instead, however, of plunging at once into business as, a minute ago, he was prepared to do, he asked abruptly. "Is Mr. Percy a client of yours?"

"I can hardly say that," the lawyer answered, surprised by the question.

"I met him going out," Maurice went on.

Mr. Payne rubbed his hands.

"It is no secret," he said; "I may tell you, I suppose. He called about some points in a marriage settlement."

Maurice felt his heart give a great leap.

"Whose?" he asked sharply.

Mr. Payne again looked surprised.

"His own, certainly. He is going to marry a daughter of the Earl of C-----, and I had the honour of being employed by the late Countess's family, from whom her ladyship derives what fortune she has. It is not very large," he added, dropping from his dignified tone into a more confidential one.

Maurice was silent for a minute. His sensations were curious; divided between joy that Lucia was certainly free in *this* quarter, and a vehement desire to knock down, horsewhip, or otherwise ill-use the Honourable Edward Percy. Of course, this was a savage impulse, only worthy of a half-civilized backwoodsman, but happily he kept it down out of sight, and his companion filled up the pause.

"The marriage is to take place in a week. The engagement has been hastily got up, they say, at last; though there was some talk of it a year ago. He does not seem particularly eager about it now."

"What is he marrying her for?" was Maurice's next question, put with an utter disregard of all possibilities of sentiment in the matter--the man whom Lucia *might* have loved could not but be indifferent to all other women.

"It's not a bad match," Mr. Payne answered, putting his head on one side as if to consider it critically. "Not much money, but a good connection---excellent."

Whereupon they dismissed Percy and his affairs, and went to work.

Late that night, for no reason but because he could not rest in London, Maurice started for Liverpool. The steamer did not sail till afternoon, and there would have been plenty of time for him to go down in the morning; but he chose do otherwise, and consequently found himself in the streets of Liverpool in the miserable cold darkness of the winter dawn. Of course, there was nothing to be done then, but go to a hotel and get some breakfast and such warmth as was to be had. He felt cross and miserable, and half wished he had stayed in London.

However the fire burnt up, breakfast came, and the dingy fog began to roll away a little from before the windows. He went out and walked about the city. He stared at the public buildings without seeing them; then at the shop-windows, till he suddenly found himself in front of a jeweller's, and it occurred to him that he would go in and buy a ring which would fit a slender finger in case of need. He went in accordingly, and after looking at some dozens, at last fixed upon one. He knew the exact size, for he had once taken a ring of Lucia's and tried to put it on his little finger; it would not go over the middle joint, but persisted in sticking fast just where the one he bought stopped. It was a magnificent little affair---almost enough to bribe a girl to say "Yes" for the pleasure of wearing it, and Maurice congratulated himself on the happy inspiration. Being in a tempting shop, he also bethought himself of carrying out with him some trifling gifts for his old friends; and by the time he had finished his selection, he found to his great satisfaction that he might return to the hotel for his luggage, and go on board ship at once.

The small steamer which was to carry the passengers out to the 'India' was already beginning to take on her load when Maurice arrived. The fog, which had partially cleared away in the town, lay heavy and brown over the river; the wet dirty deck, the piles of luggage, and groups of people were all muffled in it, and looked shapeless and miserable in the gloom. Hurry and apparent confusion were to be seen everywhere, but only for a short time. The loading was soon completed, and they moved away into the river.

Then came another transfer---passengers, trunks, mail-bags all poured on to the 'India's' deck. Last farewells were said---friends parted, some for a few weeks, some for ever---the great paddles began to move, and the voyage was begun.

As they went down the river, snow began to fall. It filled the air and covered the deck with wet, slowly moving flakes, and the water which swallowed it up all round the ship looked duller and darker by contrast. Everybody went below, most people occupied themselves with arranging their possessions so as to be most comfortable during the voyage; Maurice, who had few possessions to arrange, took out that morning's *Times*, and sat down to read.

The first two or three days of a voyage are generally nearly a blank to landsmen. Maurice was no exception to the rule. Even Lucia commanded only a moderate share of his thoughts till England and Ireland were fairly out of sight, and the 'India' making her steady course over the open ocean. Then he began to watch the weather as eagerly as if the ship's speed and safety had depended on his care. Every day he went, the moment the notice was put up, to see what progress they had made since the day before, and, according as their rate of movement was slower or faster, his day and night were serene or disturbed.

The number of passengers was small. With what there were he soon formed the kind of acquaintance which people shut up together for a certain time generally make with each other. Everybody was eager for the conclusion of the voyage, for the weather, though on the whole fine, was intensely cold, and only the bravest or hardiest could venture to spend much time on deck. Down below every device for killing time was in requisition; but in spite of all, the question, "When shall we reach New York?" was discussed over and over again; and each indication of their voyage being by a few hours shorter than they had a right to expect, was hailed with the greatest delight.

One day when they were really near the end of their voyage, Maurice and a fellow-passenger, a young man of about his own age, were walking briskly up and down the deck, trying to keep themselves warm, and talking of Canada, to which they were both bound. A sailor who had come for some purpose to the part of the deck where they were, suddenly called their attention to a curl of smoke far off on the horizon; it was something homeward bound, he said---he could not tell what, but they would most likely pass near each other.

The two young men had been thinking of going down, but the idea of meeting a ship of any kind was sufficient excitement to keep them on deck. They continued their walk, stopping every now and then to watch the smoke as it grew more and more distinct. Presently the steamer itself became visible, and other persons began to assemble and guess what steamer it could be and how long it would be before they passed each other. Meanwhile the stranger came nearer and nearer; at last it could be recognized---the 'Atalanta,' from New York to Havre. Maurice borrowed a glass from one of the officers, and, going a little apart from the group on the deck of the 'India,' set himself to examine that of the 'Atalanta.' A sudden feeling of dismay had seized upon him. He had no more reason to suppose that Lucia was on board this steamer than he had to believe that she had sailed a week ago, or that she was still at Cacouna, and yet a horrible certainty took possession of him that, if he could only get on board that ship, so tantalizingly close at hand and yet so utterly inaccessible, he should find her there. He strained his eyes in the vain effort to distinguish her figure. He almost stamped with disappointment when he found that the distance was too great, or his glass not sufficiently powerful, for the forms he could just see, to be recognizable; and as the two steamers passed on, and the distance between them grew every moment greater, he hurried down to his cabin, not caring that any one should see how disturbed he was. He threw himself upon his little sofa, thinking.

"I wonder if she suspected I was so near her. I wonder whether she looked for me as I looked for her. Not *as* I did, of course, for she is everything to me, and I am only an old friend to her; but yet I think she would have been sorry to miss me by so little.

"What an idiot I am! when I have not even the smallest notion whether she could be on board or not. Very likely I shall find them still at the dear old Cottage."

But after his soliloquy he shook his head in a disconsolate manner, and betook himself to a novel by way of distraction.

Two more days and they reached New York. They got in early in the morning, and Maurice, the moment he found himself on shore, hurried to the railway station. On inquiry there, however, he found that to start immediately would be, in fact, rather to lose, than to gain time. A train starting that evening would be his speediest conveyance; and for that he resolved to wait. He then turned to a telegraph office, intending to send a message to his father, but on second thoughts abandoned that idea also, considering that Mr. Leigh already expected him, and that further warning could do no good and might do harm.

He spent the day, he scarcely knew how. He dined somewhere, and read the newspapers. He found himself out in the middle of reading with the greatest appearance of interest an article copied from the *Times* which he had read in England weeks before. He looked perpetually at his watch, and when, at last, he found that his train would be due in half an hour, he started up in the greatest haste, and drove to the station as if he had not a moment to spare.

What a Babel the car seemed when he did get into it! There were numbers of women and children, not a few babies. It was bitterly cold, and everybody was anxious to settle themselves at once for the night. Everybody was talking, sitting down, and getting up again, turning the seats backwards and forwards to suit their parties, or their fancies, soothing the shivering, crying children, or discussing the probability of being impeded by the snow. But when the train was fairly in motion, when the conductor had made his progress through the cars, when everybody had got their tickets, and there was no more to be done, all subsided gradually into a dull sleepy quiet, broken occasionally by a child's cry, but still undisturbed enough to let those passengers who did not care to sleep, think in peace.

Maurice thought, uselessly, but persistently. He thought of the past, when he had been quite happy, looking forward to a laborious life with Lucia to brighten it. He thought of the future which must now have one of two aspects---either cold, matter-of-fact and solitary, in the great empty house at Hunsdon without Lucia, or bright and perfect beyond even his former dreams, in that same great old house with her. He meant to win her, however, sooner or later, and the real trouble which he feared at present was nothing worse than delay.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Costello and Lucia found their journey from Cacouna to New York a very melancholy one. They had gone through so much already, that change and travel had no power to stimulate their overstrained nerves to any further excitement; the time of reaction had begun, and a sort of languid indifference, which was in itself a misery, seemed to have taken possession of them. Even Lucia's spirits, generally strong both for enjoyment or for suffering, were completely subdued; she sat by the window of the car looking out at the wintry landscape all day long, yet saw nothing, or remembered nothing that she had seen. Once or twice she thought, "Perhaps in a few days more, Maurice will be passing over this very line; he will be disappointed when he reaches home and finds that we are gone;" but all her meditations were dreamy and unreal---her mind acted mechanically. A kind of moral catalepsy benumbed her. Afterwards when she remembered this time, she wondered at herself; she could not comprehend the absence of sensation with which she had left the dear home and all the familiar objects of her whole life, the incapability of feeling either keen sorrow at the parting, or hope in the unknown future. The days they spent in hurrying hour by hour further away from Canada, always remained in her recollection little more than a blank, and she scarcely seemed to recover herself until Mr. Strafford touched her gently on the shoulder, late in the evening and said,

"New York at last, Lucia."

She got up then, in a hurried, confused way, and looked at her mother helplessly.

Mrs. Costello, though to some degree she had shared Lucia's stunned feeling during their journey, had watched her child with considerable anxiety, and was glad of any change in her manner. She hastened to leave the train, thinking that the

few hours' rest they would have before going on board the steamer would be the best remedy for this strange torpor. They found, however, when they reached the Hotel and went to bed, that weary as they were, they could not sleep. The unaccustomed noise of the city---the mere sensation of being in a strange place, kept them both waking, and they were glad to get up early, and go down to the vast empty drawing-room where Mr. Stafford could join them for the last time, and talk of the subjects which were near the hearts of all three. And yet, after all, they did not talk much. Those last hours which are so precious, and in which we seem to have so much to say, are often silent ones.

The great house, like a city in itself, with its wide passages and halls, and groups of strangers passing constantly to and fro, had something dismal and desert like about it. Even the drawing-room was so large and so destitute of anything like a snug corner where people could be comfortable, that there was little chance of forgetting that they were mere wayfarers. When the gong had sounded, and everybody assembled for breakfast, the vast dining-room, coldly magnificent in white and gold, and all astir with white jacketed waiters, seemed stranger and more unhomelike still. Everything was novel, but for once novelty only wearied instead of charming.

By noon they were on board the steamer. Mr. Stafford went on board with them and stayed till the last minute. But that soon came. The final good-bye was said; the last link to Canada and Canadian life was broken. They stood on deck and strained their eyes to watch the fast disappearing figure till it was gone, and they felt themselves alone. Then the vessel began to move out of the harbour, and night seemed to come on all at once.

They went down together to their cabin, and seated themselves side by side in a desolate companionship. After a minute Lucia put her arms tightly round her mother, and laying her head upon her shoulder, cried, not passionately, but with a complete abandonment of all self-restraint. Mrs. Costello did not try to check those natural and restoring tears. She soothed her child by fond motherly touches, kissed her cheek or smoothed her hair, but said not a word until the whole dull weight that had been pressing on her had melted away. There was something strangely forlorn in their circumstances which both felt, and neither liked to speak of to the other. Leaving behind all the friends, all the associations of so many years, they were going alone---a feeble and perhaps dying woman, and a young girl---into a strange world, where every face would be new, and even their own language would grow unfamiliar to their ears. Even the hope which had brightened this prospect to Lucia's eyes, looked very dim, now that the time for proving it was at hand; and of all others, the person who occupied her tenderest if not her most frequent thoughts was the one who best deserved that she should think of him---Maurice Leigh.

Two days of their voyage passed without events. They began to feel accustomed to their ship-life, and to make some little acquaintance with other passengers. In spite of the cold, Lucia spent a good many hours on deck. She used to go with Mrs. Costello every morning for a few quick turns up and down, and then, when her mother was tired, she would wrap herself up in the warmest cloaks and shawls that she could find, and take her seat in a quiet corner, where she could lose sight of all that went on about her and, with her face turned towards Canada, see nothing but the boundless sea and sky. On the third day she was sitting in this manner. There were a good many persons on deck but she was left tolerably undisturbed. Occasionally a lady would stop and speak to her---the men, who were not altogether blind to her beauty, would have liked perhaps to do the same, if her preoccupied air had not made a kind of barrier about her, too great to be broken through without more warrant than a two days' chance association; but she was thinking or dreaming, and never troubled herself about them.

The day was very bright, and there was a ceaseless pleasure in watching the ripples of the sea as they rose into the cold silvery sunlight and then passed on into the shadow of the ship; or in tracing far away, the broad even track marked by edges of tiny bubbles, where the vessel's course had been. Gradually she became aware through her abstraction of a greater stir and buzz of conversation on the deck behind her; she turned, and seeing everybody looking in one direction, rose and looked too. A lady standing beside her said,

"It is the Cunard steamer for New York. We think there are some friends of ours on board, but I am afraid we shall not pass near enough to find out."

"Oh, how I wish we could!" Lucia answered, now thoroughly roused, for the idea that Maurice also might be on board suddenly flashed into her mind.

She leaned forward over the railing of the deck, and caught sight of the 'India' coming quickly in the opposite direction, and could even distinguish the black mass of her passengers assembled like those of the 'Atalanta' to watch the passing vessel. But that was all. Telescopes and even opera-glasses were being handed from one to another, but she was too shy to ask for the loan of one, though she longed for it, just for a moment. Certainly it would have been useless. At that very time Maurice, standing on the 'India's' deck, was straining his eyes to catch but one glimpse of her, and all in vain. Fate had decided that they were to pass each other unseen.

But this little incident made Lucia sadder and more dreamy---more unlike herself---than before. The voyage was utterly monotonous. In spite of the season, the weather was calm and generally fine; and they made good progress. The days when an unbroken expanse of sea lay round them were not many, and on the second Sunday afternoon land was already in sight. That day was unusually mild. Mrs. Costello and Lucia came up together about two o'clock, and, after walking up and down for some time, they sat down to watch the distant misty line which they might have thought a cloud on the horizon, but which was gradually growing nearer and more distinct.

While they sat, a single bird came flying from the land. Its wings gleamed like silver in the sunlight, and as it came, flying now higher, now lower, but always towards the ship, they saw that it was no sea-bird, but a white pigeon---pure white, without spot or tinge of colour, like the glittering snow of Canada. It came quite near---it flew slowly and gracefully round the ship---two or three times, it circled round and round, and at last alighted on the rigging. There it rested, till, as the sunlight quite faded away and the distant line of land disappeared, it took flight again and vanished in the darkness.

Perhaps the strong elasticity of youth and hope in Lucia's nature had only waited for some chance touch to set it free, and make it spring up vigorously after its repression. At any rate she found a fanciful omen in the visit of the snow-white bird; and began to believe that in the new country and the new life, there might be as much that was good and happy as in the old one. The last hours, full of excitement and impatience as the voyage drew to a close, were not unpleasant ones. Very early one morning a great commotion and a babel of unusual sounds on deck awoke the travellers, and the stewardess going from room to room brought the welcome news,

"We are at Havre."

Lucia was up in a moment. The stillness of the vessel, after its perpetual motion, gave her an odd sensation, not unlike what she had felt when it first began to move; but she was quickly dressed and on deck. There were a good many people there, and the water all round was alive with boats and shipping of every description, but Lucia's eyes naturally turned from the more familiar objects to the unfamiliar and welcome sight of land.

A strange land, truly! The solid quays, the masses of building, older than anything (except forest-trees) which she had ever seen, the quaint dresses of the peasants already moving about in the early morning, all struck her with pleased and vivid interest. For the wider features of the scene she had at first no thought. Nature is everywhere the same, through all her changes. To those who love her she is never wholly unrecognizable, and when we meet her in company with new phases of human life, we are apt to treat her as the older friend, and let her wait until we have greeted the stranger. At least, Lucia did so. She had indeed only time for a hurried survey, for their packing had to be completed by her hands; and she knew that the arrival of the ship would soon be known, and that if Mr. Wynter had kept his promise of meeting

them, he might appear at any moment. She went down, therefore, and found Mrs. Costello dressing with hurried and trembling fingers, too much agitated by the prospect of meeting her cousin, after so long and strange a separation, to be capable of attending to anything.

All was done, however, before they were interrupted. They wrapped themselves up warmly, for the morning was intensely cold through all its brightness, and went up on deck together. Lucia found a seat in a sheltered place for Mrs. Costello, and stood near her watching the constant stream of coming and going between the ship and the shore. They had nothing to do for the present but wait, and when they had satisfied themselves that, as yet, there was no sign of Mr. Wynter's arrival, they had plenty of time to grow better acquainted with the view around them.

The long low point of land beside which they lay; the town in front, with a flood of cold sunlight resting on its low round tower, and the white sugar-loaf shaped monument, which was once the sailor's landmark---the lofty chapel piously dedicated to Notre Dame de Bons Secours now superseding it---the broad mouth of the Seine and the Norman shore, bending away to the right---all these photographed themselves on Lucia's memory as the first-seen features of that new world where her life was henceforth to be passed.

At last, when nearly all their fellow-passengers had bidden them good-bye and left the ship, they saw a gentleman coming on board whom they both felt by some instinct to be Mr. Wynter. He was a portly, white-bearded man, as strange to Mrs. Costello as to Lucia, for the last twenty years had totally changed him from the aspect she remembered and had described to her daughter. Perhaps his nature as well as his looks had grown more genial; at any rate, he had a warm and affectionate greeting for the strangers, and if he had any painful or embarrassing recollection such as agitated his cousin, he knew how perfectly to conceal them. He had arrived the day before, but on arriving had heard that the 'Atalanta' was not expected for twenty-four hours, so that the news of her being in port came to him quite unexpectedly. He explained all this as they stood on deck, and then hurried to see their luggage brought up, and to transfer them to the carriage he had brought from his hotel.

Lucia felt herself happily released from her cares. She had no inclination to like, or depend upon, her future guardian; but without thinking about it, she allowed him to take the management of their affairs, and to fall into the same place as Mr. Strafford had occupied during their American journey.

Only there was a difference; she was awake now, and hopeful, naturally pleased with all that was new and curious, and only kept from thorough light-heartedness by her mother's feeble and fatigued condition.

CHAPTER V.

Mrs. Costello seemed to grow stronger from the moment of their landing. Mr. Wynter decided without any hesitation that they should remain at Havre, at least until the next day. In the evening, therefore, they were sitting quietly together when the important question of a future residence for the mother and daughter came to be discussed.

"I should like Lucia to see something of Paris," Mrs. Costello said, "and to do that we should be obliged to stay a considerable time; for, as you perceive, I am not strong enough to do much sight-seeing at present."

"I see," Mr. Wynter answered, nodding gravely. "We might get you a nice little apartment there, and settle you for the winter; that would be the best plan. I suppose you don't mind cold?"

"That depends entirely on the sort of cold. Yes; I think we should settle in Paris for a time, and then move into the country. Only I have a great fancy not to be more than a day's journey from England."

"In which I sympathize with you. It will be very much more satisfactory to me to know that you are within a reasonable distance of us."

Lucia sat and listened very contentedly to the talk of the elder people. To her, whose only experience of relationship, beyond her mother, was painful and mortifying, there was something she had not anticipated of novelty and comfort in this new state of affairs. Her cousin's tone of kinsmanship and friendliness was so genuine and unforced that she and her mother both accepted it naturally, and forgot for the moment that, to a little-minded man, such friendliness might have been difficult and perhaps impossible.

They decided to start for Paris next morning, Mr. Wynter saying that he had arranged for a week's absence from England, and therefore would have plenty of time to see them fixed in their new residence before he left. Then the conversation glided to other subjects, and Lucia losing her interest in it, began to wonder where Percy was---whether they were again on the same continent---whether he would hear, through the Bellairs, of their movements---whether he thought of her. And from that point she went off in some indescribable maze of dreams, recollections, and wishes, through which there came, as if from a distance, the sound of voices talking about England---about Chester---about her mother's old home and old friends---and about her young cousins, the Wynters, and a visit they were to make to France when spring should have set in.

In the midst of all, the sound of a great clock striking broke the stillness of the snowy streets, and, just after, a party of men passed, singing a clamorous French song, and stamping an accompaniment with their heavy shoes. Lucia smiled as she listened, and then sighed. In truth this was a new life, into which nothing of the old one could come except love and memory.

Of course, they could not sleep that night. They missed the motion of the ship, which had lately lulled them; they could not shake off the impression of strangeness and feel sufficiently at home to forget themselves; and to Lucia, used to the healthy sleep of eighteen, this was a much more serious matter than to one who had kept as many vigils as Mrs. Costello. They appeared, therefore, in the morning to have changed characters; Lucia was pale and tired, Mrs. Costello seemed bright and refreshed.

The rapid and uneventful journey to Paris ended, for the present, their wanderings. When, on the following day, they started out in search of apartments, Mrs. Costello looked round her in astonishment. More than twenty years ago she had really known something of the city; now there only seemed to be, here and there, an old landmark left to prove that it was not altogether a new and strange place. Lucia was delighted with everything. She no sooner saw the long line of the Champs Elysees than she declared that there, and nowhere else, their rooms must be found.

"In the city, mamma," she said, "you could not breathe; and as for sleeping, you know what it was last night; and if we went further out, we should see nothing."

Mrs. Costello was too pleased to see her daughter looking and speaking with something of her old liveliness to be inclined to oppose her fancies, only she said with a smile,

"The Champs Elysees is expensive---remember that, Lucia---and I am going to make you keeper of the purse."

"Very well, mamma, if it is too dear, of course there is no more to be said; but you don't object to our trying to get something here, do you?"

"Decidedly not. Let us try by all means."

They found apartments readily enough; but to find any suited to their means was, as Mrs. Costello anticipated, anything but an easy matter. Lucia began, before the morning was over, to realize the fact that their L400 a year, which had been a perfectly comfortable income in Canada, would require very careful management to afford them at all a suitable living in Paris.

"It is only for a little while, though," she consoled herself. "In summer we shall be able to go into the country and find something much cheaper."

So they continued their search, and at last found just what they wanted; though to do so, they had to mount so many stairs that Lucia was afraid her mother would be exhausted.

"I do not think this will do, mamma," she said. "I should never dare to ask you to go out, because when you came in tired, you would have all this fatigue."

But the rooms were comfortable and airy, and the difficulties of living "au cinquieme" were considered on the whole to be surmountable; so the affair was settled. Then came the minor considerations of a new housekeeping, and Margery was heartily regretted; though what the good woman would have been able to do where she could neither understand nor make herself understood, would not have been easy to say. Even Mrs. Costello, who, in her youth, had had considerable practice in speaking French, found herself now and then at a loss; and as for Lucia, having only a sort of school-girl knowledge of the language, she instantly found her comprehension swept away in the flood of words poured upon her by every person she ventured to speak to. "Never mind, I shall soon learn," she said in the most valiant manner; but, alas! for the present, she was almost helpless, and Mrs. Costello had to arrange, bargain, and interpret for both.

They wound up their day's business by a little shopping, which, like everything else, was new to Lucia. The splendid shops, lighted up in the early dusk of the winter afternoon, were as different as anything could be from the stores at Cacouna. A sudden desire to be possessed of a purse full of money, which she might empty in these enchanted palaces, was the immediate and natural effect of the occasion on the mind of such an unsophisticated visitor. She became, indeed, so completely lost in admiration, that her mother made her small purchases without being able to obtain anything but the vaguest and most unsatisfactory opinions on such trifling affairs.

Mr. Wynter derived considerable amusement from watching his young cousin and future ward. He told his wife afterwards that he had begun the day's work entirely from a sense of duty towards poor Mary; but that for once he had found that kind of thing almost as amusing as women seemed to do. The young girl with her half-Indian nature, and wholly Canadian--ultra Canadian--bringing up, was so bright, simple, and naive, that she was worth watching. Her wonderful beauty, and the unconscious grace of her father's people, kept her from ever appearing countrified or awkward; her simplicity was that of a lovely child, and was in no way discordant with the higher nature she had shown in the bitter troubles and perplexities of the past year. She felt safe now and hopeful, inconceivably, absurdly hopeful--yet there was this difference between the happiness of long ago and the happiness to-day, that then she *could* not believe in sorrow, and now she only *would* not.

They went back to their hotel for another night. Next day they moved to the apartment they had taken, and submitted themselves to the ministrations of Claudine, their French version of Margery. Submitted is exactly the right word for Lucia's behaviour, at any rate. Claudine appeared to her to have an even greater than common facility of speech; it only needed a single hesitating phrase to open the floodgates, and let out a torrent. Accordingly, until her stock of available French should increase, Lucia decided to take everything with the utmost possible quietness. She would devote herself to her mother, and to becoming a little acquainted with Paris, and give Claudine the fewest possible occasions for eloquence.

Before the two days which Mr. Wynter spent with them in their new dwelling were over, they had begun to feel tolerably settled. In fact, Lucia's spirits, raised by excitement, were beginning to droop a little, and her thoughts to make more and more frequent excursions in search of the friends from whom she was so widely separated. She thought most, it is true, of Percy, and her fancies about him were rose-coloured; but she thought, also, a little sadly, of the dear old home, and the Bellairs and Bella, and even Magdalen Scott, who had been an old acquaintance, if never a very dear friend. She had many wondering thoughts, too, about Maurice. Was he still in England? or was he in Canada? was he at sea? would he come over to see them? would he even know where to find them if he came? Of these last subjects she spoke freely to her mother, only she kept utter silence as to Percy. So it happened that Mrs. Costello, knowing her own estimate of her daughter's lover, and strangely forgetting not only how different Lucia's had been, but that in a nature essentially faithful, love increases instead of dying, through time and absence, comforted herself, and believed that all was now settled for the best. Neither Percy nor Maurice, it was evident, would ever be Lucia's husband. Nothing could be more satisfactory, therefore, than that she should have become indifferent to the one, and have only a sisterly affection for the other. And yet, with unconscious perversity, she was not satisfied. She allowed to herself that Maurice's conduct had been reasonable enough. He had accepted the common belief that Christian was the murderer of Dr. Morton; and the conclusion which naturally followed, that Christian's daughter, beautiful and good though she might be, was not a fit mistress for Hunsdon; to have done otherwise, would have been Quixotic. Yet in her heart she was bitterly disappointed. If he had but loved Lucia well enough to dare to take her with all her inherited shame, how richly he would have been rewarded when the cloud cleared away! Where would he find another like her? And now, since Maurice could change, who might ever be trusted?

No doubt these meditations were romantic. If Mrs. Costello had been the mother of half-a-dozen children---a woman living in the midst of a busy, lively household, where motherly cares and castle-buildings had to be shared among three or four daughters---she would not have had time to occupy herself so intensely with the affairs of any one. As it was, however, this one girl was her life of life; she threw into her interests the hopes of youth and the experience of middle age. As Lucia grew up, she had watched with anxiety, with hope, and with fear, for the coming of that inevitable time when, either for good or evil, she must love. It had been her fancy that, if Lucia loved Maurice, all would be well; if she loved any other, all would be ill. But time had passed on, and brought change; not one thing had happened according to her anticipations. And she tried to believe that she was glad that it was so, while a shadow of dissatisfaction lay at the bottom of her heart.

When Mr. Wynter left Paris, he did so with the comfortable conviction that his cousins were happily settled; and with the persuasion that, as they both appeared to have a fair share of common sense, they would soon forget their past troubles, and be just like other people.

"I don't like Mary's state of health at present," he said to his wife; "and, if I am not mistaken, she thinks even worse of it than I do; but still, rest of mind and body may do a great deal; and now she is really a widow, and quite safe from any further annoyances, I dare say she will come round."

"And her daughter?" asked Mrs. Wynter rather anxiously. "Do you think she would get on with the girls?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, my dear. She is not much like them, certainly, or, indeed, like any English girl. She is wonderfully pretty, but quite Indian in looks."

"Poor child! what a pity!"

"I am not sure about that. She seems a good girl, and Mary says is the greatest comfort to her, so I suppose she is English at heart; and as for her black eyes, there is something very attractive about them."

Mrs. Wynter sighed again. Lucia's beauty, of which it cannot be said that Mr. Wynter's account was overdrawn, lost all its advantages in her eyes by being of an Indian type. She could never quite persuade herself that her husband had not been walking about the streets of Paris with a handsome young squaw in skins and porcupine quills.

CHAPTER VI.

Poor Maurice! He came up the river early one glorious morning, and standing on the steamboat's deck watched for the first glimpse of the Cottage. His heart was beating so that he could scarcely see, but he knew just where to look, and what to look for. At this time of year there was no hope of seeing the fair figure watching on the verandah as it had done when he went away, but the curl of smoke from the chimney would satisfy him and prove that his darling was still in her old home. He watched eagerly, breathlessly. Everything was so bright, that his spirits had risen, and he felt almost certain he was in time. There, the last bend of the river was turned, and now the trees that grew about the Cottage and his father's house were visible---now the Cottage itself. But suddenly his heart seemed to grow still---there was the house, there was the garden where he and Lucia had worked, there was the slope where they had walked together that last evening---but all was desolate. No smoke rose from the chimney; and on the verandah, and on every ledge of the windows snow lay deep and undisturbed; the path to the river was choked and hidden, and by the little gate the drift had piled itself up in a high smooth mound. Desolate!

When the boat stopped at the wharf, there were happily few people about. Maurice left his portmanteau, and taking the least public way hurried off homewards. It was too late---that was his only thought; to see his father, to know when they went, and if possible whither---his only desire. He strode along the road, seeing and thinking of nothing but Lucia. There was one chance, they might not yet have left Canada. But then that ship, and the curious sense of Lucia's nearness which he had felt when they passed it; she must have been on board! He felt as if he should go mad when he came to his father's gate and saw all looking just as usual, quite calm and peaceful under the broad wintry sunshine. He had only just sense enough at the very last minute to remember that his father was an invalid to whom the joy of his coming might be a dangerous shock. As he thought of this he turned round the corner of the house, and in a moment walked into the kitchen where Mrs. George, the old housekeeper, was busy washing up the breakfast-things.

"Law, Mr. Maurice!" cried Mrs. George, and dropped her teacup and her cloth together---happily both on the table.

Coming into the familiar room, and seeing the familiar face, brought the young man a little to himself. He held his impatience in check while he received Mrs. George's welcome, answered her questions, and asked some in return. Then he sent her in to tell his father of his arrival, and began to walk up and down the kitchen while she was away.

In a minute or two she came out of the sitting-room, and he went in. Mr. Leigh had had his own troubled thoughts lately, but he forgot them all when he saw his son. Just at first there was only the sudden agitating joy of the meeting---the happiness of seeing Maurice so well---so thoroughly himself and yet improved---of seeing him at home again; but then came trouble.

"So they are gone?" he said almost interrupting the first greetings, and the old man instantly knew that all his fancies had been a mistake, and that Maurice had come back to find Lucia.

And they were gone; and he himself had been a coward and a traitor, and had distrusted his own son and let them go away distrusting him! He saw it now too late. A painful embarrassment seized him.

"Yes," he said hesitatingly. "They went a week ago."

"By New York?"

"Yes."

"In the 'Atalanta' for Havre?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"I did not know. I only guessed. Where are they gone?"

"I do not know. Mrs. Costello said their plans were so uncertain that she could not tell me."

"Yet I should have thought, sir, that so old a friend as you might have had a right to be told what her plans were?"

"She told no one--except that they would not stay long in any one place at present."

Maurice walked to the window and sighed impatiently.

"A pleasant prospect!" he said, "They may be at the other end of Europe before I can get back."

He stood for a minute looking out, and tapping impatiently with his fingers on the window-sill, while Mr. Leigh watched him, troubled, and a little inclined to be angry. When he turned round again he had made up his mind that it was no use to get out of temper, a pretty sure proof that he was so already, and that the first thing to do was to find out exactly what his father and everybody else knew about the Costellos. He sat down, accordingly, with a sort of desperate impatient patience, and began a cross-examination.

"Did they leave no message for me?"

"Nothing in particular. All sorts of kind remembrances; Lucia said you would be sure to meet some day."

"Did they never speak of seeing you in England?"

"Never. On the contrary, my impression is that they had no intention of going to England."

"That is strange; yet if they had they would scarcely have gone by Havre, unless to avoid all chance of meeting me."

"Why should they do that?"

Maurice said nothing, he only changed his position and looked at his father. Mr. Leigh had asked the question suddenly, with the first dawn of a new idea in his mind, but at his son's silent answer he shrank back in his chair breathless with dismay. So after all he *had* been a traitor! With his mistaken fancies about change and absence, he had been doing all he could to destroy the very scheme that was dearest to him, and which he now saw was dearest to Maurice also. And he knew now that there had been something in Mrs. Costello's manner lately less friendly to Maurice than was usual. He had done mischief which might be irreparable. Guilty and miserable, he naturally began to defend himself.

"If you had only told me!" he said feebly.

"I had nothing to tell, sir. I went away, as you remember, almost at a moment's notice, to please you and my grandfather. I could not speak to Lucia then, because--for various reasons; but I know that Mrs. Costello was my friend. Afterwards she wrote to me when poor Morton was killed, and told me some story I could not very well make

out, but which of course made no difference to me. Then came another letter with all the truth about her marriage, which she seemed to think conclusive, and which wound up by saying that she meant to take Lucia away---hide her from me in fact. My grandfather was very ill then, and I had no time to write to her, but my message just after his death was plain enough, I thought---what did she say to it?"

Mr. Leigh dropped his eyes slowly from his son's face, and put his hand confusedly to his head.

"What was it?" he said. "I can't remember."

"Only two or three words. Just that all she could say did not alter the case, or alter me."

This was rather a free rendering of the original message, but it was near enough and significant enough for Mr. Leigh to be quite sure he had never heard such words before. They would have given him just that key to his son's heart which he had longed for.

"You must be mistaken," he answered. "I never received such a message as that."

"It was a postscript. I had meant to write to her and had not time."

"You must have forgotten. You meant to send it."

"I sent it, I am certain. Have you my letters?"

"Yes. They are in that drawer."

Maurice opened the drawer where all his letters had been lovingly arranged in order. He remembered the look of the one he wanted and picked it out instantly.

"There it is, sir," he said, and held out to his father those two important lines, still unread. Mr. Leigh looked at the paper and then at Maurice.

"I never saw it," he replied. "How could I have missed it?"

"Heaven knows! It is plain enough. And my note, which came in the letter before that; it was never answered. *That* may have miscarried too?"

"There was no note, Maurice, my dear boy; there was no note. I wondered there was not."

"And yet I wrote one."

Maurice was looking at his father in grievous perplexity and vexation, when he suddenly became aware of the nervous tremor the old man was in. He went up to him hastily, with a quick impulse of shame and tenderness.

"Forgive me, father," he said. "I forgot myself and you. Only you cannot know the miserable anxiety I have been in lately. Now tell me whether it is true that you are stronger than when I left?"

He sat down by the easy-chair and tried to talk to his father as if Mrs. Costello and Lucia had no existence; but Mr. Leigh, though he outwardly took courage to enjoy all the gladness of their union, was troubled at heart. It was a grievous

disappointment, this coming home of which so much had been said and thought. No one could have guessed that the young man had been out into the world to seek his fortune, and had come back laden with gold, or that the older had just won back again the very light of his eyes.

Anxious as Maurice had been to avoid notice at the moment of his arrival at Cacouna, he had been seen and recognized on the wharf, and the news of his coming carried to Mr. Bellairs before he had been an hour at home. So it happened that while the father and son sat together in the afternoon, and were already discussing the first arrangements for their return to England, a sleigh drove briskly up to the door, and Mr. and Mrs. Bellairs came in full of welcomes and congratulations.

"I knew we might come to-day," Mrs. Bellairs said, still holding her favourite's hand and scanning his face with her bright eyes. "We shall not stay long, but it is pleasant to see you home again, Maurice."

"Don't say too many kind things, Mrs. Bellairs," he answered, "or you will make me want to stay when I ought to be going."

"Going! You are surely not talking of that yet?"

"Indeed I am. We hope to be away in a fortnight."

"Oh! if you *hope* it, there is no more to be said."

"If you knew how I have hoped to be here, and how disappointed I have been to-day, you would not be so hard on me."

They had both sat down now and were a little apart, for the moment, from the others. Mrs. Bellairs was surprised at Maurice's words, though she understood instantly what he meant. He had never before given her a single hint in words of his love for Lucia, though she had been perfectly aware of it. She guessed now that his grandfather's death had changed his wishes into intentions, and that since he was in a position to offer Lucia a share of his own good fortune, he no longer cared to make any secret of his feelings towards her.

"You did not expect that our friends would be gone," she asked in a tone which expressed the sympathy she felt and yet could not be taken as inquisitive. As for Maurice, he wanted to speak out his trouble to somebody, and was glad of this result of his little impetuous speech.

"I was altogether uncertain," he answered; "I wanted to start from England a week sooner, and if I had done so, it seems, I should have found them here; but I was hindered, and for some reason or other, they chose to keep me in the dark as to their intentions."

"Lucia often talked of you and of her regret at going away just when you were expected."

"She did? Do you know where they are?"

"No; and that is the strangest thing. I believe their plans were not quite fixed; but still Mrs. Costello was not a woman to start away into the world without plans of some kind, and yet no one in Cacouna knows more than that they sailed from New York to Havre."

"It is incomprehensible, except on one supposition. Did you ever hear Mrs. Costello speak of my return?"

"Not particularly. Don't be offended, Maurice, either with her or with me, but I did fancy once or twice that she wished to be away before you came. Only, mind, that is simply my fancy."

"I have no doubt you fancied right; but I have a thousand questions to ask you. Tell me first---"

"Maurice," interrupted Mr. Bellairs from the other side of the room, "what is this your father says about going away immediately? You can't be in earnest in such a scheme!"

"I am afraid I am," Maurice answered, getting up and standing with his arm resting on the mantelpiece, "at least, if my father can stand the journey."

Mr. Leigh, full of self-reproach and secret disturbance, vowed that the journey would do him good; that he was eager to see the old country once again. He had resolved, as the penance for his blunder, that he would not be the means of hindering his boy one day in his quest for Lucia. Nevertheless, the discussion grew warm, for Mr. Bellairs having vainly protested against a winter voyage for the Costellos, had his arguments all ready and in order, and had no scruple in bringing them to bear upon Maurice. Of course, they were thrown away, just so many wasted words; the angry impatient longing that was in the young man's heart would have been strong enough to overthrow all the arguments in the universe. Only one reason would have been strong enough to keep him---his father's unfitness for travel; and that could not fairly be urged, for Mr. Leigh was actually in better health than he had been for years, and would not himself listen to a word on the subject.

Just before the visitors left, Maurice found an opportunity of asking Mrs. Bellairs one of his "thousand questions."

"Mr. Strafford, of Moose Island, was Mrs. Costello's great adviser, does not he know?"

"No; I wrote to him, and got his answer this morning. He only knew they would probably stay some time in France."

She was just going out to get into the sleigh as she spoke. Suddenly with her foot on the step she stopped,

"Stay! I have the address of a friend, a cousin, I think, of Mrs. Costello's in England. Mr. Strafford sent it to me."

"Thanks, thanks. I shall see you in the morning."

Maurice went back joyfully into the house. Here was a clue. Now, oh, to be off and able to make use of it!

CHAPTER VII.

Before going to bed on the very night of his arrival, Maurice found the list of steamers, and with his father's approbation fixed upon one which was advertised to sail in a few days over a fortnight from that time. It happened to be a vessel the comfortable accommodation of which had been specially praised by some experienced travellers, his fellow-passengers in the 'India,' and the advantages of going by it being quite evident, served to satisfy what small scruples of conscience Mr. Bellairs had been able to awaken. He wrote, therefore, to secure berths and put his letter ready to be taken into Cacouna next morning, when he should go to pay his promised visit to Mrs. Bellairs.

It was early when Maurice awoke; he did so with a sense of having much to do, but the aspect of his own old room, so strange now and yet so familiar, kept him dreaming for a few minutes before that important day's work could be begun. How bare and angular it seemed, how shabby and poor the furniture! It never had been anything but a boy's room of the simplest sort, and yet it had many happy and some few sad associations, such as no other room could ever have for him.

He recalled the long ago days when his brother and he had shared it together, and their mother used to come in softly at night to look that her two sons were safe and well,---the later years, when mother and brother were both gone, and he himself sat there alone reading or writing far into the night. He thought of the many summer mornings when he had opened his window to watch for the movement of Lucia's curtain, or for the glimpse of her girlish figure moving about under the light shadows of the acacias in the Cottage garden.

But when he came to that point in his meditation, he sprang up impatiently, and the uncomfortable irritating feeling that he had been unfairly dealt with, tricked, in fact, began to take possession of him again. However, it only acted as a stimulant. He began to feel that he had entered into the lists with Mrs. Costello, and, regarding her as a faithless ally, was not a little disposed to do battle with her *a l'outrance*, and carry off Lucia for revenge as well as for love.

Directly after breakfast he had out the little red sleigh in which last winter he had so often driven his old playfellow to and from Cacouna, and started alone. He had many visits of friendship or business to pay, but he could not resist going first to Mrs. Bellairs.

After all, now that the first sharpness of his disappointment was over, it was pleasant to be at home and to meet friendly faces at every turn. He had to stop again and again to exchange greetings with people on the road, and even sometimes to receive congratulations on being a "rich man now," "a lucky fellow"---congratulations which were both spoken and listened to as much as if the lands of Hunsdon were a fairy penny, in the virtues of which neither speaker nor hearer had any very serious belief. In fact, there was something odd and incredible in the idea that this was no longer plain Maurice Leigh, the most popular and one of the poorest members of this small Backwoods world, but Maurice Leigh Beresford, of Hunsdon, an English country gentleman rich enough, if he chose, to buy up the whole settlement.

Maurice went on his way, however, little troubled by his new dignity, and found Mrs. Bellairs and Bella expecting him. They had guessed that he would not delay coming for the promised address, and Mr. Strafford's note containing it lay ready on the table; but when he came into the room their visitor did actually for the moment forget his errand in seeing the sombre black-robed figure which had taken the place of the gay Bella Latour. He had gone away just before her wedding, he had left her happy, bright, mischievous,---a girl whom sorrow had never touched, who seemed incapable of understanding what trouble meant; he came back, full of his own perplexities and disappointments, and found her one so seized upon by grief that it had grown into her nature, and clothed and crowned her with its sad pre-eminence. There was no ostentation of mourning about the young widow, it is true, but none the less Maurice in looking at her first forgot himself utterly, and then remembered his impatience and ill-humour with more shame than was at all agreeable.

To Bella also the meeting was a painful one. Of all her friends, Maurice was the only one who was associated with her girlish happiness, and quite dissociated from her married life and its tragic ending. The sight of him, therefore, renewed for the moment the recollections which she had taught herself to keep as much as possible for her solitary hours, and almost disturbed the calm she had forced upon herself in the presence of others.

Mrs. Bellairs, however, used to her sister's calamity and ignorant of Maurice's feelings, did not long delay referring to the Costellos.

"Here is Mr. Strafford's note," she said. "I wrote and begged of him to tell me by what means a letter would be likely to reach them, and this is his answer."

It was only a few lines, saying that Mrs. Costello had told him expressly that she should remain for some time in France, and would write to her Canadian friends as soon as she had any settled home, but that in the meantime he believed her movements would be known by her relative, Mr. Wynter, whose address he enclosed.

Maurice, whose anxiety was revived by the sight of this missive, examined it with as much care as if he expected to extract more information from it than in reality the writer possessed, but he was obliged to content himself with copying the address and giving the warmest thanks to Mrs. Bellairs for the help he thus gained.

"I suppose," she asked smiling, "that I may entrust you with a message for Lucia?"

Maurice looked rather foolish. He certainly did mean to follow up the clue in person, but he had not said so, and he fancied Mrs. Bellairs was inclined to laugh at him for his romance.

"I will carry it if you do," he answered, "but I do not promise when it will be delivered."

"You are really going to England at the time you spoke of last night?"

"Yes."

"And from England to France is not much of a journey?"

"No; and I have not seen Paris yet."

"Ah! well, you will go over and meet with them, and rejoice poor Lucia's heart with the sight of a home face."

"Shall I? Will they be homesick, do you think?"

"*They?* I don't know. *She* will, I think---do not you, Bella?"

"At all events, she went away with her mind full of the idea that she would be sure to see you before long."

Perhaps this speech was not absolutely true, but Maurice liked Bella better than ever as she said it. He got up soon after, and went his way with a lighter heart about those various calls which must be made, and which were pleasant enough now that he saw his way tolerably clear before him with regard to that other and always most important piece of business.

When he got home he set himself to consider whether it were better to write boldly to Mr. Wynter and ask for news of the travellers, or whether to wait, and after taking his father to Hunsdon run over himself to Chester, and make his request in person. There was little to be gained by writing, for Mr. Wynter's answer, even if it were satisfactory, would have to be sent to Hunsdon, and there wait his arrival, while Mrs. Costello would have plenty of time to hear of his application, and to baffle him if she wished to do so. He quickly decided, therefore, to do nothing until he could go himself to Chester, and from thence direct to the place, wherever that might be, where Lucia was to be found.

Mr. Leigh's day, meanwhile, had been far less comfortable than Maurice's. He had made a pretence of looking over papers, and arranging various small affairs in readiness for their voyage, but his mind all the while had been occupied with two or three questions. Had Maurice really sent to him a note for Mrs. Costello which by any carelessness of his had been lost? Had the change he remembered in her manner been connected with the loss? Had Lucia cared for Maurice? Had either mother or daughter thought so ill of Maurice as he, his own father, had done? The poor old man tormented himself, much as a woman might have done, with these speculations, but he dared not breathe a word of them. He even went so far in his self-accusations and self-disgust as to imagine that if he had been his son's faithful helper, he might have prevented that flight from the Cottage which had caused so much trouble and vexation.

Still, when Maurice came home full of energy and hope, and anxious to atone for his unreasonableness of the previous day, the aspect of affairs brightened a good deal, and the evening passed happily with both.

But after that first day a certain amount of disturbance began to be felt in the household. People came and went perpetually. There was so much to be done, and so little time to do it in; and there was not only the actual business of moving, but innumerable claims from old friends were made upon Maurice, all of which had to be satisfied one way or other.

And the days flew by so quickly. Maurice congratulated himself again and again on having provided so good a reason for leaving Cacouna at a certain time. "Our berths are taken," was a conclusive answer to all proposals of delay; and if it had not been for that, he often thought it would have been impossible to have held to his purpose. But as it was, all engagements, whatever they might be, had to be pressed into the short space of a fortnight, and under the double impulse of Maurice's own energies, and of that irrevocable *must*, things went on fast and prosperously.

It was well for Mr. Leigh that these last weeks in his old home were so full of hurry and excitement, and that he was supported by the presence of his son, and by the thought that he was fulfilling what would have been the desire of his much-beloved and long-lost wife; for the pain of parting for ever from the places where so many years of happiness and of sorrow had been spent---from the birthplace of his children, and the graves which were sacred to his heart, grew at times very bitter, and needed all his absorbing love for his last remaining child, to make it endurable. It is quite true, however, that at other times, the idea of meeting his old neighbour of the Cottage in that far-away and half-forgotten England, and of seeing Maurice and Lucia once more together, as he could not help but hope they would be, cheered him into positive hopefulness and eagerness to be gone.

Two days before their actual leaving, it was necessary for the household to be broken up. Maurice wished to go for the interval to a hotel. Cacouna had two,---long gaunt wooden buildings supposed to be possessed of "every accommodation,"---but so many voices were instantly raised against this plan, that it had to be given up, and Mrs. Bellairs, with great rejoicing, carried off both father and son from half-a-dozen other claimants. Literally, she only carried off Mr. Leigh, for Maurice, who had entirely resumed his Canadian habits, was still deep in the business of packing and of seeing to the arrangements for the morrow's sale; but he had promised to have his work finished before evening, and to join them in good time in Cacouna.

As Mrs. Bellairs drove Mr. Leigh home in her own sleigh, flourishing the whip harmlessly over Bob's ears and making him clash all his silver bells at once with the tossing of his head, she could not help saying,

"Don't you think now Maurice is such a rich man he ought to marry soon?"

Her companion looked at her doubtfully.

"Perhaps he is thinking of it," he answered.

"When he is married," she went on with a little laugh, "he has promised to invite us to England."

But Mr. Leigh did not smile.

"I hope you will come soon, then," he said.

"You think there is a chance?"

"I think it will not be his fault if there is not."

"And I think he is not likely to find the lady very obstinate."

"What lady? *Any* one or one in particular?"

"I thought of one, certainly."

"Lucia Costello?"

"Yes."

"You think she would marry him?"

"Why not? Yes, I think so."

"And her mother?"

"Ah! I don't know; Mrs. Costello has a will of her own."

CHAPTER VIII.

In the old days there had been a sort of antagonism between Bella Latour and Maurice Leigh. They had necessarily seen a great deal of each other, and liked each other after a certain fashion; but Maurice had thought Bella too flighty, and inclined to fastness; and Bella had been half-seriously, half-playfully disposed to resent his judgment of her. But now, either because of the complete change in her character which the last few months had wrought, or from some other cause, Mrs. Morton and Maurice fell into a kind of confidential intimacy quite new to their intercourse. It was only for two days, certainly, but during those two days, and in spite of Maurice's occupations, they had time for several long and very interesting conversations.

In the first of these, which had begun upon some indifferent subject, Bella surprised Maurice by alluding, quite calmly and simply, to the imprisonment of the unfortunate Indian, Lucia's father. He had naturally supposed that a subject so closely connected with her own misfortunes would have been too deeply painful to be a permitted one, and had, therefore, with care, avoided all allusion to it. In this, however, he did not do her full justice. The truth was, that in her deep interest in the Costellos, she had quietly forced herself to think and speak of the whole train of events which affected them, without dwelling on its connection with her own story. She never spoke of her husband--her self-command was not yet strong enough for that--nor of Clarkson; but of Christian, as the victim of a false accusation, she talked to Maurice without hesitation.

Up to that time there had been no very vivid idea in his mind either of Christian himself, or of the way in which he had spent the months of his imprisonment, and finally died. Indeed, in the constant change and current of nearer interests, he had thought little, after the first, about this unknown father of his beloved. He had considered the matter until it led him just so far as to make up his mind, quite easily and without evidence, that Clarkson was probably the murderer, and that Christian, whether innocent or guilty, was not to be allowed to separate him from Lucia, and then, after that point, he ceased to think of Christian at all. But now, he received from Bella the little details, such as no letters could have told him, of the weeks since her husband's death--chiefly of the later ones, and there were many reasons why these details had a charm for him which made him want to hear more, the more he heard. In the first place she spoke constantly of Lucia, and it scarcely needed a lover's fancy to enable him to perceive how in this time of trial she had been loving,

helpful, wise even, beyond what seemed to belong to the sweet but wilful girl of his recollection. He listened with new thoughts of her, and a love which had more of respect, as Bella described those bitter days of which Lucia had told her later, when neither mother nor daughter dared to believe in the innocence of the accused man, and when, the one for love, the other for obedience, they kept their secret safe in their trembling hearts, and tried to go in and out before the world as if they had no secret to keep.

"Lucia used to come to me every day. I was ill, and her visits were my great pleasure; she came and talked or read to me, with her mind full all the while of that horrible idea."

"She knew that it was her father?" asked Maurice. "I wonder Mrs. Costello, after having kept the truth from Lucia so long, should have told her all just then."

Bella looked at him inquiringly.

"She had told her before anything of this happened," she answered. "I believe Lucia herself was the first to suspect that the prisoner was her father."

"And how did they find out?"

"Mr. Strafford went and visited him."

"Did you ever see him?"

"No. Elise did for a few minutes just before his death; but I have heard so much about him that I can scarcely persuade myself I never did see him."

"They were both with him at last?"

"Yes. Poor Lucia never saw him till then."

"Tell me about it, please."

She obeyed, and told all that had happened both within her own knowledge and at the jail, on the night of Christian's death and the day preceding it. Her calmness was a little shaken when she had to refer to Clarkson's confession, though she did so very slightly, but she recovered herself and went on with her story, simply repeating for the most part what Lucia and Mrs. Bellairs had told her at the time. When she had finished, Maurice remained silent. He had shaded his eyes with his hand, and when, after a minute's pause, he looked up again to ask her another question, she saw that he had been deeply touched by the picture she had drawn.

But Bella was really doing her friends a double service by thus talking to Maurice. It was not only that Lucia grew if possible dearer than ever to him from these conversations, but there was something---though Maurice himself would not have admitted it---in making Lucia's father an object of interest and sympathy, instead of leaving him a kind of dark but inevitable blot on the history of the future bride.

On the evening before Mr. Leigh and his son were to start for England, as many as possible of their old friends were gathered together at Mr. Bellairs' for a farewell meeting. Every one there had known the Costellos; every one remembered how Maurice and Lucia had been perpetually associated together at all Cacouna parties; every one, therefore, naturally thought of Lucia, and she was more frequently spoken of than she had been at all since she left. It

seemed also to be taken for granted that Maurice would see her somewhere before long, and he was entrusted with innumerable messages both to her and her mother.

"But," he remonstrated, "you forget that I am going to England, and that they are in France---at least, that it is supposed so."

"Oh! yes," he was answered, "but you will be sure to see them; don't forget the message when you do."

At last he gave up making any objection, and determined to believe what everybody said. It was a pleasant augury, at any rate, and he was glad to accept it for a true one.

When all the visitors were gone, and the household had retired for the night, Mr. Bellairs and his former pupil sat together over the drawing-room fire for one last chat. Their talk wandered over all sorts of subjects---small incidents of law business---the prospects of some Cacouna men who had gone to British Columbia---the voyage to England---the position of Hunsdon---and Maurice had been persuading his host to come over next summer for a holiday, when by some chance Percy was alluded to.

"You have not seen or heard anything of him, I suppose?" Mr. Bellairs asked.

"Yes, indeed, I have," Maurice answered, slowly stirring the poker about in the ashes as he spoke. "I met him only the other day in London."

"Met him? Where?"

"On a doorstep----," and he proceeded to describe their meeting.

"I suppose you have heard of his marriage by this time."

"No. I heard from Edward Graham, an old friend of mine, that he was going to be married, but that is the latest news I have of him."

"Oh, well, Payne may have made a mistake. He told me it was coming off in a day or two."

"As likely as not. He might not think it worth while to send us any notice."

"The puppy! I beg your pardon, I forgot he was your cousin."

"You need not apologise on that score. There is not much love lost between us; and as for Elise, I never knew her inclined to be inhospitable to anybody but him."

"Was she to him?"

"She was heartily glad to see the last of him, and so I suspect were some other people."

"What people?"

"Mrs. Costello for one. He was more at the Cottage than she seemed to like."

Maurice hesitated, but could not resist asking a question.

"Was he as much there afterwards as he was before the time I left?"

"More, I think. Look here, Maurice; Elise first put it into my head that he was running after Lucia, but I saw it plainly enough myself afterwards, and I know you saw it too. I think we are old enough friends for me to speak to you on such a subject. Well, my belief is, that before Percy went away, he proposed to Lucia."

"Proposed? Impossible!"

"I don't know about that. He was really in love with her in his fashion---which is not yours, or mine."

"And she?"

"Must have refused him, for he went away in a kind of amazed ruefulness, which even you would have pitied."

Maurice looked the reverse of pitiful for a moment.

"But that is all supposition," he said.

"Granted. But a supposition founded on pretty close observation. Only mind, I do not say Lucia might not be a little sorry herself. You were away, and a girl does not lose a handsome fellow like Percy, who has been following her about everywhere as if he were her pet dog, without feeling the loss more or less. At least that is my idea."

"He has soon consoled himself."

"My dear fellow, everybody can't step into possession of £10,000 a year all at once. Most people have to do something for a living, and the only thing Percy could do was to marry."

They said good-night soon after this, and went upstairs, Maurice blessing the Fates which seemed determined to give him all possible hope and encouragement. Only he could not quite understand this idea of Mr. Bellairs'. He could imagine anybody, even Percy, being so far carried away by Lucia's beauty as to forget prudence for the moment; but he could not help but feel that it was improbable that Percy would have gone so far as to propose to Lucia unless he were sure she would say yes. Why, then, had she not said yes?

Next morning the last farewells had to be said---the last look taken at the old home. Night found father and son far on their way to New York, and Maurice's eagerness all renewed by this fresh start upon his quest.

There was little of novelty in the journey or the voyage. There were the usual incidents of winter travelling---the hot, stifling car---the snowy country stretching out mile after mile from morning till night---the hotels, which seemed strangely comfortless for an invalid---and then the great city with its noise and bustle, and the steamer where they had nothing to do but to wait.

And, at last, there was England. There was the Mersey and Liverpool, looking, as they came in, much as if the accumulated dirt of the three kingdoms had been bestowed there, but brightening up into a different aspect when they had fairly landed and left the docks behind them. For it was a lovely March day---only the second or third of the month it is true,---and winter, which they had left in full possession in Canada, seemed to be over here, and the warm sunny air so invigorated Mr. Leigh that he would not hear Maurice's proposal to rest until next day, but insisted on setting out at

once for Norfolk.

As they drove to the railway they passed the jeweller's shop where Maurice had bought Lucia's ring. Alas! it still lay in his pocket, where he had carried it ever since that day---when would it find its destination? He was not going to be disheartened now, however. He was glad of the little disturbance to his thoughts of having to take tickets and see his father comfortably placed, and at the very last moment he was just able to seize upon a *Times*, and set himself to reading it as if he had never been out of England.

CHAPTER IX.

Maurice had telegraphed from Liverpool, and the old-fashioned carriage from Hunsdon met them at the last railway station. It was near sunset, and under a clear sky the soft rich green of the grass gleamed out with the brightness of spring. They soon turned into the park, and the house itself began to be visible through the budding, but still leafless, trees. Both father and son were silent. To the one, every foot of the road they traversed was haunted by the memories of thirty years ago; to the other, this coming home was a step towards the fulfilment of his hopes. They followed their own meditations, glad or sorrowful, until the last curve was turned, and they stopped before the great white pillars of the portico. Then Maurice remembered that this was his first coming home as master, and felt a momentary shyness take possession of him before his own new importance. He had been able during his absence to keep Hunsdon so much in the background, and to be so thoroughly the natural, portionless, Maurice Leigh. He jumped out of the carriage, however, and was too much occupied in helping his father, to think, for the next few minutes, of his own sensations at all. Then he discovered what he had not before thought about---that there were still two or three of the old servants who remembered his mother and her marriage, and who were eager to be recognised by "the Captain."

And so the coming home was got over, and Mr. Leigh was fairly settled in the house from which so long ago he had stolen away his wife. After he had once taken possession of his rooms---the very ones which had been hers,---he seemed to think no more about Canada, but to be quite content with the new link to the past which supplied the place of his accustomed associations. And, perhaps, he felt the change all the less because of that inclination to return to the recollections of youth rather than of middle age, which seems so universal with the old.

Maurice sent over a messenger to Dighton to announce their arrival, and to tell his cousin that he intended leaving home again after one day's interval. That one day was fully occupied, but, as he had half expected, in the afternoon Lady Dighton came over.

She knew already of his disappointment, and had sympathised with it. She came now with the kind intention of establishing such friendly relations with Mr. Leigh as would make Maurice more comfortable in leaving his father alone. She even proposed to carry the old man off to Dighton, but that was decided against.

"And you really start to-morrow?" she asked Maurice.

"Early to-morrow morning. I cannot imagine what the railway-makers have been thinking about; it will take me the whole day to get to Chester."

"How is that?"

"Oh! there are about a dozen changes of line, and, of course, an hour to wait each time."

"Cut off the exaggeration, and it is provoking enough. Is it in Chester this gentleman lives?"

"No, three or four miles away, I fancy. I shall have to inquire when I get there."

"And after you find him what will you do?"

"If I get their address, I shall go straight from Mr. Wynter to them, wherever they are."

"At St. Petersburg, perhaps, or Constantinople?"

"Don't, Louisa, please. I thought you had some pity for one's perplexities."

"So I have. And I believe, myself, that they are in Paris."

"I wish they may be---that is, if I get any satisfaction from my inquiries. Otherwise, Paris is not exactly a place where one would choose to set about seeking for a lost friend, especially with about half-a-dozen sentences of available French."

"Never fear. But if you should not find them, I would not mind going over for a week or two to help you; I should be of some use as an interpreter."

"Will you come? Not for that; but if I do find them, I should so like to introduce Lucia to you."

"To tell the truth, I am rather afraid of this paragon of yours; and you will be bringing her to see me."

"I am afraid I am making too sure of that without your telling me so. After all, I may have my search for nothing. I do wish very much you would come over."

"Well, at Easter we will see. Perhaps I may coax Sir John over for a week or two."

"Thank you. I shall depend on that."

"But remember you must send me word how you fare."

"I will write the moment I have anything to tell."

"Impress upon your father, Maurice, that we wish to do all we can for his comfort. I wish he would have come to us."

"I think he is better here. Everything here reminds him of my mother, and he feels at home. But I shall feel that I leave him in your hands, my kind cousin."

Maurice bade his father good-bye that night, and early next morning he started on his journey to Chester. What a journey it was! His account to Lady Dighton had been exaggerated certainly, but was not without foundation. Again and again he found himself left behind, chafing and restless, by some train which had carried him for, perhaps, an hour, and obliged to amuse himself as best he could until a fresh one came, in which he would travel another equally short stage. It was a windy, rainy day, with gleams of sunshine, but more of cloud and shower, and grew more and more stormy as it drew towards night. Before he reached Chester the wind had risen to a storm, and sheets of rain were being dashed fiercely against the carriage windows. At last they did roll into the station with as much noise and importance as if delay had been a thing undreamt of, on *that* line at any rate; and Maurice hurried off to make his inquiries, and find a carriage to take him to Mr. Wynter's.

So far, certainly, he prospered. He found that his destination was between four and five miles from the city, but it was perfectly well known, and a carriage was soon ready to take him on.

The road seemed very long, as an unknown road travelled in darkness and in haste generally does. The wind howled, and rattled the carriage windows, the rain still dashed against the glass with every gust, and at times the horses seemed scarcely able to keep on through the storm. At last, however, they came to a stop, and Maurice, looking out, found himself close to a lodge, from the window of which a bright gleam of light shone out across the rainy darkness. In a minute a second light came from the opening door, the great gates rolled back, and the carriage passed on into the grounds. There were large trees on both sides of the drive, just faintly visible as they swayed backwards and forwards, and then came an open space and the house itself. There was a cheerful brightness there, showing a wide old-fashioned porch, and, within, a large hall where a lamp was burning. Maurice hurried in to the porch, and had waited but a minute when a servant in a plain, sober-coloured livery came leisurely across the hall and opened the glass door, through which the visitor had been trying to get his first idea of the place and its inhabitants.

"Was Mr. Wynter in?"

"No."

"Was he expected?"

"Not to-night, certainly---perhaps not to-morrow."

"Mrs. Wynter?" That was a guess. Maurice had never troubled himself till then to think whether there *was* a Mrs. Wynter.

"She was at home, but engaged."

Maurice hesitated a moment. "I must see her," he thought to himself, and took heart again.

"I have made a long journey," he said, "to see Mr. Wynter; will you give my card to your mistress, and beg of her to see me for a moment?"

The man took the card and led the visitor into a small room at one side of the hall, where books and work were lying about as if it had been occupied earlier in the day, but which was empty now. Then he shut the door and carried the card into the drawing-room.

Mrs. Wynter had friends staying with her. There was a widow and her son and daughter, and one or two young people besides, as well as all the younger members of the Wynter family. The two elder ladies were having a little comfortable chat over their work, and the others were gathered round the piano, when Maurice's arrival was heard.

"Who can it be?" Mrs. Wynter said doubtfully. "It is not possible Mr. Wynter can be back to-night."

The eldest daughter came to the back of her mother's chair.

"Listen, mamma," she said; "or shall I look if it is papa?"

"No indeed, my dear. It can't be. Walter!" for one of the boys was cautiously unlatching the door, "come away, I beg."

Meanwhile all listened, so very extraordinary did it seem that anybody should come unannounced, so late, and on such a night.

Presently the door opened, and everybody's eyes, as well as ears, were in requisition, though there was only a card to exercise them on.

"A gentleman, ma'am, who says he has come a long way to see master, and would you speak to him for a moment?"

Mrs. Wynter took up the card, and her daughter read it over her shoulder.

"Leigh Beresford?" she said. "I do not know the name at all. You said Mr. Wynter was from home?"

"Yes, ma'am. The gentleman seemed very much put out, and then said could he see you?"

"I suppose he must;" and Mrs. Wynter began, rather reluctantly, to put aside her embroidery, and draw up her lace shawl around her shoulders.

"But what a pretty name! Mamma, who can he be?"

"And, mamma, if he is nice bring him in and let us all see him."

"No, don't; we don't want any strangers. What *do* people come after dinner for?"

Mrs. Wynter paid no attention to her daughters, but having made up her mind to it, walked composedly out of the room, and into the one where Maurice waited. She came in, a fair motherly woman, in satin and lace, with a certain soft *comfortableness* about her aspect which seemed an odd contrast to his impatience. He took pains to speak without hurry or excitement, but did not, perhaps, altogether succeed.

"I must beg you to pardon me this intrusion," he said. "I hoped to have found Mr. Wynter at home, and I wished to ask him a question which I have no doubt you can answer equally well if you will be so good."

"If it relates to business," Mrs. Wynter began, but Maurice interrupted,

"It is only about an address. I have just arrived in England from Canada; I am an old friend and neighbour of Mrs. Costello, and have something of importance to communicate to her, will you tell me where she is?"

Poor Maurice! he had been getting his little speech ready beforehand, and had made up his mind to speak quite coolly, but somehow the last few words seemed very much in earnest, and struck Mrs. Wynter as being so. She looked more closely at her guest.

"Mrs. Costello is in France. Did I understand that you had known her in Canada?"

"I have known her all my life. I spent the last summer and autumn in England, and did not return to Canada until after she had left, but she knew that I should have occasion to see her, or write to her as soon as I could reach home again, and I am anxious to do so now."

"You are aware that Mrs. Costello wishes to live very quietly? Her health is much broken."

"I know all. Mrs. Costello has herself told me. Pray trust me---you may, indeed."

"You will excuse my hesitation if you do know all; but, certainly, I have no authority to refuse their address."

She got up and opened a desk which stood on a table in the room. She had considered the matter while they were talking, and come to the conclusion that the address ought to be given, while at the same time she wished to know more of the person to whom she gave it.

"I wish Mr. Wynter had been at home," she said after a minute's pause, during which she was turning over the papers in the desk, and Maurice was watching her eagerly. "He would have been able to tell you something of your friends, for he only returned home a week or two ago from meeting them."

"Are they in Paris?"

"Yes. Are you returning to Canada?"

"No. Perhaps, Mrs. Wynter, you would like to have my address? My coming to you as I have done, without credentials of any sort, must certainly seem strange."

"Thank you; you will understand that I feel in some little difficulty."

"I understand perfectly." He wrote his name and address in full and gave it to her. "Mrs. Costello was a dear friend of my mother's," he said; "she has always treated me almost as a son, and I cannot help hoping that what I have to say to her may be welcome news."

"Do you expect to see her, then, or only to write?"

"I am on my way to Paris. I hope to see them."

"Here is the address. You have had a long journey, the servant told me."

"From Hunsdon. And the journey out of Norfolk into Cheshire is a tiresome one. Thank you very much. Can I take any message to Mrs. Costello?"

"None, thank you, except our kindest remembrances. But you will let me offer you something---at least a glass of wine?"

But Maurice had now got all he wanted. He just glanced at the precious paper, put it away safely, declined Mrs. Wynter's offers, and was out of the house and on his way back to Chester in a very short space of time.

"What an odd thing!" Mrs. Wynter said as she settled herself comfortably in the easy-chair again.

"Who was he, mamma? What did he want?"

"He was a Canadian friend of your cousin Mary's wanting her address."

"What! come over from Canada on purpose?"

"It almost seemed like it, though that could not be, I suppose, for here is his address---'Maurice Leigh Beresford, Hunsdon, Norfolk."

"Beresford?" said the widow, "Why the Beresfords of Hunsdon are great people---very grand people, indeed. I used to know something of them."

"Did he look like a grand person, mamma?"

"He seemed a gentleman, certainly. I know no more."

"Was he young or old?"

"Young."

"Handsome or ugly?"

"Need he be either?"

"Of course. Which, mamma?"

"Not ugly, decidedly. Tall, and rather dark, with a very frank, honest-looking face."

"Young, handsome, tall, dark, and honest-looking! Mamma, he's a hero of romance, especially coming as he did, in the rain and the night."

"Don't be silly, Tiny. Mamma, is not my cousin Lucia a great beauty?"

CHAPTER X.

Mrs. Costello and Lucia had grown, to some degree, accustomed to their Paris life. Its novelty had at first prevented them from feeling its loneliness; but as time went on, there began to be something dreary in the absence of every friendly face, every familiar voice. Mrs. Costello would not even write to Canada until she could feel tolerably sure that her letters would only arrive after the Leighs had left; she had taken pains to find out all Mr. Leigh could tell her of Maurice's intentions, and she guessed that, for one reason or another, he would not be likely to stay longer in Cacouna than was necessary. Even when she wrote to Mrs. Bellairs she did not give her own address, but that of the banker through whom her money was transmitted.

She felt sore and angry whenever she thought of Maurice. She had perceived Mr. Leigh's embarrassed manner, and guessed, by a half-conscious reasoning of her own, that he believed his son changed towards them, but she did not guess on how very small a foundation this belief rested. She had thought it right to give up, on Lucia's behalf, any claim she had on the young man's fidelity; but to find him so very ready to accept the sacrifice, was quite another thing. It was so unlike Maurice, she said to herself; and then it occurred to her that Mr. Beresford might have planned some marriage for his grandson as a condition of his inheritance. Certainly she had heard no hint of such a thing, and up to a short time ago she was pretty sure Maurice himself could have had no idea of it; yet it was perfectly possible, and Mr. Leigh might have been warned to say nothing to her about it. All these thoughts, though Maurice might, if he had known, have been inclined to resent them, had the effect of keeping him constantly in Mrs. Costello's mind; and she puzzled over his conduct until she came to have her wishes pretty equally divided; on one hand, desiring to keep to her plan of a total separation between Lucia and him; and on the other, longing to see or hear of him, in order to know whether her former

or her present opinion of him was the correct one.

It happened, therefore, that Maurice was much more frequently spoken of between the mother and daughter than should have been the case if Mrs. Costello had carried out her theories. If Lucia had been ever so little "in love" with him when she reached Paris, she would have had plenty of opportunity for increasing her fancy by dwelling on the object of it; but Mrs. Costello's wishes were forwarded by the very last means she would have chosen as her auxiliary. Lucia talked of Maurice because she thought of him as a friend, or rather as a dear brother. She said nothing of Percy, but she dreamt of him, and longed inexpressibly to hear even his name mentioned. She had heard nothing of him, except some slight casual mention, since he went away. He had said then that, perhaps in a year, she might change her mind; and she had said to herself, "Surely he will not forget me in a year." And now spring was coming round again, and all that had separated them was removed; there was not even the obstacle of distance; no Atlantic rolled between them; nay, they might be even in the same city. But how would he know? She could do nothing. She had done all in her power to make their parting final. How could she undo it now? She did not dare even to speak to her mother of him, for she knew that on that one subject alone there had never been sympathy between them. And she said to herself, too, deep in her own heart, that it must be a great love indeed which would be willing to take her---a poor, simple, half-Indian girl---and brave the world, and, above all, that terrible old earl and his pride, for her sake.

Still she dreamed and hoped, and set herself, meanwhile, all the more vigorously because of that hope, to "improve her mind." She picked up French wonderfully fast, having a tolerable foundation to go upon and a very quick ear, and she read and practised daily; beside learning various secrets of housekeeping, and attending her mother with the tenderest care. But it was very lonely. Lucia had never known what loneliness meant until those days when she sat by the window in the Champs Elysees and watched the busy perpetual stream of passers up and down---the movements of a world which was close round about, yet with which she had no one link of acquaintance or affection. It was very lonely; and because she could not speak out her thoughts, and say, "Is Percy here? Shall I see him some day passing, and thinking nothing of my being near him?" she said the thing that lay next in her mind, "I wish Maurice were here! Don't you, mamma?"

They had been more than a month in their new home. The routine of life had grown familiar to them; they knew the outsides, at least, of all the neighbouring shops; they had walked together to the Arc de Triomphe on the one side, and to the Rond Point on the other; they had driven to the Bois de Boulogne, and done some little sight-seeing beside. They had done all, in short, to which Mrs. Costello's strength was at present equal, and had come to a little pause, waiting for warmer weather, and for the renewal of health, which they hoped sunshine would bring her.

One afternoon Claudine had been obliged to go out, and the little apartment was unusually quiet. Mrs. Costello, tired with a morning walk, had dropped into a doze; and Lucia sat by the window, her work on her lap, and her eyes idly following the constant succession of carriages down below. To tell the truth, she constantly outraged Claudine's sense of propriety, by insisting on having one little crevice uncurtained, where she could look out into the free air; and to-day she was making use of the privilege, for want of anything more interesting indoors. She had no fear of being disturbed, for they had no visitors; in all Paris, there was not one person they knew, unless--. Percy had been there a great deal formerly, she knew, and might be there now, but he would not know where to find them if he wished it; no one could possibly come to-day. And yet the first interruption that came in the midst of the drowsy, sunny silence, was a ring at the door-bell. Lucia raised her head in surprise, and listened. Mrs. Costello slept on. Who could it be? not Claudine, for she had the key. Must she go and open the door? It seemed so, since there was no one else; and while she hesitated there was another ring, a little louder than the first.

She got up, put down her work, and went towards the door. "I wish Claudine would come," she said to herself; but Claudine was not likely to come yet, and meanwhile somebody was waiting.

"I suppose I shall have a flood of French poured over me," she thought dolorously; but there was clearly no help.

She went to the door, and opened it; a gentleman stood there---a gentleman! She uttered one little cry---

"Maurice!"

And then they were both standing inside the closed door; and he held her two hands in his, and they were looking at each other with eyes too full of joy to see well.

"Lucia!" he said; "just yourself." But somehow his voice was not quite steady, and he dare not trust it any further.

"We wanted you so, and you are come. Oh, Maurice! you are good to find us so soon!"

"Did you think I should not?"

"I cannot tell. How could you know where we were?"

"I went to Chester, and asked."

"To Chester? To my cousin's? Just to find us out?"

"Why not? Did not you know perfectly well that my first thought when I was free would be to find you?"

He spoke half laughing, but there was no mistaking his earnestness in the matter; was not he here to prove it? Tears came very fast to Lucia's eyes. This was really like the old happy days coming back.

"Come in," she said, "mamma is here." But mamma still slept undisturbed, for their tones had been low in the greatness of their joy; and Maurice drew Lucia back, and would not let her awake her.

"She looks very tired," he said rather hypocritically; "and it will be time enough to see me when she awakes. Don't disturb her."

Lucia looked at her mother anxiously. She knew this sleep was good for the invalid, and yet it might last an hour, and how could she wait all that time for the thousand things she wanted to hear from Maurice? The door of their tiny salle a manger stood a little open.

"Come in here, then," she said, "we shall be able to see when she wakes---and *I must* talk to you."

Maurice followed obediently---this was better than his hopes, to have Lucia all to himself for the first half hour. She made him sit down in such a manner that he could not be seen by Mrs. Costello, while she herself could see through the open door and watch for her mother's waking.

"And now tell me," she asked, "have you been back to Canada?"

"I started the moment I could leave England after my grandfather's death, but when I reached Cacouna you were gone."

"Dear old home! I suppose all looked just as usual?"

"Nothing looked as usual to me. As I came up the river I saw that the cottage was deserted, and that changed all the rest. But indeed I had had a tolerable certainty before that you were gone."

"How?"

"Do you remember meeting a Cunard steamer two days out at sea?"

"You were on board? How I strained my eyes to see if I could distinguish you!"

"Did you? And I too. But though I could not see you, I felt that you were on board the ship we met."

"I was sitting on deck, longing for a telescope. Well, it is all right now. Did you bring Mr. Leigh home?"

"Yes; he is at Hunsdon, safe and well."

"Hunsdon is your house now, is not it? Tell me what it is like?"

"A great square place, with a huge white portico in front---very ugly, to tell the truth; but you would like the park, Lucia, and the trees."

"It must be very grand. Does it feel very nice to be rich?"

"That depends on circumstances. But now do you think you are to ask all the questions and answer none?"

"No, indeed. There is one answer."

"Do you like Paris?"

"Well enough. It is very lonely here without anybody."

"Are you going to stay here?"

"For a month or two, I think."

"You will not be quite so lonely then in future---at least if I may come to see you."

"May come? That is a new idea. But are you going to stay in Paris, too?"

"I must stay for a few weeks. And I expect my cousin Lady Dighton over soon, and she wants to know you."

"To know *us*? Oh, Maurice! you forget what a little country girl I am, and mamma, poor mamma is not well enough to go out at all, scarcely."

"Is she such an invalid, really? Have you had advice for her?"

"It is disease of the heart," Lucia said in a very low sorrowful tone, all her gaiety disappearing before the terrible idea---"the only thing that is good for her is to be quiet and happy---and the last few months have been so dreadful, she has suffered so."

"And you? But I have heard all. Lucia, I would have given all I am worth in the world to have been able to help you."

"I often wished for you, especially when I used to fear that our old friends would desert us. I never thought *you* would."

"There is some comfort in that. Promise that whatever may come, you will always trust me."

He held out his hand, and Lucia put hers frankly in it.

Just at that moment there was a stir, and Mrs. Costello called "Lucia."

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. Costello woke up gradually from her doze. She had been dreaming of Cacouna, and that Maurice and Lucia were sitting near her talking of his journey to England. She opened her eyes and found herself in a strange room which she soon recognized, but still it seemed as if part of her dream continued, for she could hear the murmur of two voices, very low, and could see Lucia sitting in the adjoining room and talking to somebody. Lucia, in fact, had forgotten to keep watch.

Mrs. Costello listened for a minute. It was strangely like Maurice's voice. She sat up, and called her daughter.

Lucia started up and came into the salon. She bent down over her mother, and kissed her to hide her flushed face and happy eyes for a moment.

"Are you rested, dear mamma?" she asked.

"Yes, darling. Who is there?"

"A visitor, mother, from England."

"From England? Not your cousin?"

"No, indeed. Guess again."

"Tell me. Quickly, Lucia."

"What do you say to Maurice?"

"Impossible!"

But Maurice, hearing his own name, came forward boldly.

"I have but just arrived, Mrs. Costello. I told you I should find you out."

They looked at each other with something not unlike defiance, but nevertheless Mrs. Costello shook hands with her guest cordially enough. Certainly he *had* kept his word---there might be a mistake somewhere, and at all events, for the present moment he was here, and it was very pleasant to see him.

So the three sat together and talked, and it seemed so natural that they should be doing it, that what did begin to be strange and incredible was the separation, and the various events of the past six months. But after Claudine had come in, and Lucia had been obliged to go away "on hospitable cares intent," to arrange with her some little addition to the dinner which Maurice was to share with them, the newcomer took advantage of her absence, and resolved to get as many as possible of his difficulties over at once. He had not yet quite forgiven his faithless ally, and he meant to make a new treaty, now that he was on the spot to see it carried out.

"I am afraid," he began, "that my coming so unexpectedly must have startled you a little, but I thought it was best not to write."

Mrs. Costello could not help smiling---she was quite conscious of her tactics having been surpassed by Maurice's.

"I am glad to see you, at any rate," she said, "now you *are* here; but" she added seriously, "you must not forget, nor try to tempt me to forget, that we are all changed since we met last."

"I do not wish it. I don't wish to forget anything that is true and real, and I wish to remind you that when I left Canada I did so with a promise---an implied promise at any rate---from you, which has not been kept."

"Maurice! Have you a right to speak to me so?"

"I think I have. Dear Mrs. Costello, have some consideration for me. Was it right when I was kept a fast prisoner by my poor grandfather's sick-bed, when I was trusting to you, and doing all I could to make you to trust me---was it fair to break faith with me, and try to deprive me of all the hopes I had in the world? Just think of it---was it fair?"

"I broke no faith with you. I felt that I had let you pledge yourself in the dark; that in my care for Lucia, and confidence in you, I had to some extent bound you to a discreditable engagement. I released you from it; I told you the truth of the story I had hidden from everybody---I wrote to you when my husband lay in jail waiting his trial for murder, and I heard no more from you. It was natural, prudent, right that you should accept the separation I desired---you did so, and I have only taken means to make it effectual."

"I did so! I accepted the separation?"

"I supposed, at least, from your silence that you did so. Was not I right therefore in desiring that you and Lucia should not meet again?"

"*That* was it, then? Listen, Mrs. Costello. My last note to you seems by some means to have been lost. There was nothing new in it; but my father has told me that he was surprised on receiving my letter which ought to have contained it, to find nothing for you, not even a message; perhaps you wondered too. I can only tell you the note was written. Then, in my next letter, written when my grandfather was actually dying, and when I was, I confess, very angry that you should persist in trying to shake me off, there was a message to you in a postscript which my father overlooked, and which I myself showed to him for the first time when I reached home and found you gone. What he had been thinking, Heaven knows. I had rather not inquire too closely; but I will say that it is rather hard to find that the people who ought to know one best, cannot trust one for six months."

Mrs. Costello listened attentively while Maurice made his explanation with no little warmth and indignation.

"Do you mean to say that you did not perceive how foolish and wrong it had become for you to think of marrying Lucia?"

"How in the world could it be either foolish or wrong for me to wish to marry the girl I have loved all my life? Unless, indeed, she preferred somebody else."

"Remember who she is."

"I am not likely to forget that after all I have lately heard about her from Mrs. Morton."

"And that you have a family and a position to think of now."

"And a home fit to offer to Lucia."

"Obstinate boy!"

"Call me what you will, but let it be understood that I have done nothing to forfeit your promise. I am to take no further answers except from Lucia."

"But you know, at least, that our worst fears were unfounded?"

"Of course they were. I always knew that would come right. But you have suffered terribly; I am ashamed of my own selfishness when I think of it."

"We have suffered. And my poor child so innocently, and so bravely. Maurice, she is worth caring for."

"You shall see whether I value her or not. Here she comes!"

Lucia came in, the glow of pleasure still on her face which Maurice's arrival had brought there. It was no wonder that both mother and lover looked at her with delight as she moved about, too restlessly happy to sit still, yet pausing every minute to ask some question or to listen to what the others were saying. Indeed not one of the three could well have been happier than they were that afternoon. Mrs. Costello felt that she had done all she could in the cause of prudence, and therefore rejoiced without compunction in seeing her favourite scheme for her darling restored to her more perfect than ever. Maurice, without having more than the minimum quantity of masculine vanity, had great faith in the virtues of perseverance and fidelity, and took the full benefit of Lucia's delight at seeing him; while Lucia herself was just simply glad---so glad that for an hour or two she quite forgot to think of Percy.

Maurice declared he had business which would keep him in Paris for some weeks. He claimed permission therefore to come every day, and to take Lucia to all the places where Mrs. Costello was not able to go.

"Oh, how charming!" Lucia cried. "I shall get some walks now. Do you know, Maurice, mamma will not let me go anywhere by myself, and I can't bear to make her walk; but you will go, won't you?"

"Indeed I will," Maurice said; but after that he went away back to his hotel, with his first uncomfortable sensation. Was Lucia still really such a child? Would she always persist in thinking of him as an elder brother---a dear brother, certainly, which was something, but not at all what he wanted? How should he make her understand the difference? That very day, her warm frank affection had been a perfect shield to her. The words that had risen to his lips had been stopped there, as absolutely as if he had been struck dumb. 'But I need not speak just yet,' he consoled himself. 'I must try to make her feel that I am of use to her, and that she would miss me if she sent me away. My darling! I must not risk anything by being too hasty.'

He wrote two notes that night; one to his father, the other to Lady Dighton, which said,

"Do come over. I am impatient to show Lucia to you. She is more beautiful and sweeter than ever. Of course, you will think all I say exaggerated, so do come and judge for yourself. I want an ally. All is right with Mrs. Costello, but I own I want courage with Lucia to "put it to the test." Suppose after all I should lose? But I dare not think of that."

Mrs. Costello slept little that night. A second time within a year she saw all her plans destroyed, her anticipations proved mistaken; the brighter destiny she had formerly hoped for, was now within her child's grasp. Wealth, honour, and steadfast love were laid together at her feet. Would she gather them up? Would she be willing to give herself into the keeping of this faithful heart which had learnt so well "to love one maiden and to cleave to her?" The doubt seemed absurd, yet it came and haunted the mother's meditations. She knew perfectly that Lucia had no thought of Maurice but as a friend or brother. She could not quite understand how it had always continued so, but she knew it had. She had never been willing to think of her child's regard for Percy as likely to be a lasting feeling, and at most times she really did consider it only as a thing of the past; yet to-night it came before her tiresomely, and she remembered what Mrs. Bellairs had told her lately about his marriage. She resolved once to ask Maurice whether he had heard anything of it, but, on second thoughts, she decided that it was better to leave the matter alone.

There was yet another person on whom Maurice's coming had made a most lively impression. Claudine, as soon after her first sight of him as she could get hold of Lucia, had a dozen questions to ask. "Was he Mademoiselle's brother? Her cousin then? Only a friend? What a charming young man! How tall he was! and what magnifiques yeux bruns! Now, surely, Mademoiselle would not be so *triste*? She would go out a little? and everybody would remark them, Mademoiselle being so graceful, and monsieur so *very* tall."

Lucia told her mother, laughing, that she and Maurice were going to walk up the Champs Elysees next day, with placards, saying that they were two North Americans newly caught; and when Maurice came next morning, she repeated Claudine's comments to him with a perfect enjoyment of the good little woman's admiration for "ce beau Monsieur Canadien."

CHAPTER XII.

After that day, Paris became quite a different place to Lucia. Maurice was with them most of every day, and every day they saw something new, or made some little country excursion. The weather, though still rather cold, was fine and bright; winter had fairly given place to spring, and all externally was so gay, sunny and hopeful, that it was quite impossible to give way either to sad recollections of the past, or to melancholy thoughts of the future.

Mrs. Costello's health seemed steadily, though slowly improving; she had now no anxiety, except that one shadowy doubt of Lucia's decision with regard to Maurice, and that she was glad to leave for the present in uncertainty. She felt no hesitation in letting the two young people go where they would together; they had always been like brother and sister, and, at the worst, they would still be that.

When this pleasant life had lasted about ten days, Maurice came in one morning and said,

"What do you say to a visitor to-day, Lucia?"

Lucia looked up eagerly with clasped hands,

"Who?" she cried. "Not your cousin?"

"Why not?"

"Oh, Maurice! I am afraid of her--I am indeed. I am sure she is a *grande dame*, and will annihilate me."

"Silly child! She is a tiny woman, with a fair little face and not a bit of grandeur about her. You yourself will look like a queen beside her."

"She is your very good friend, is not she?"

"Indeed she is. Promise me to try to like her."

"Of course, I will try. Is she really coming here?"

"She wishes to call this afternoon."

Lucia looked round the room. It was nice enough, and pretty in its way with its mirrors, gilt ornaments, and imposing clock on the mantelpiece; but it was so small! Three people quite filled it up. But she finished her survey with a laugh.

"If they would only let us have less furniture!" she said. "It was all very well as long as we had nothing better than tables and chairs to fill up the room with; but at present--"

She finished her sentence with a little shrug, in imitation of Claudine, which made Maurice laugh also. He proceeded, however, to warn her that worse was in reserve.

"Louisa will come alone, to-day," he said, "because I told her Mrs. Costello was an invalid, but you must expect that next time she will bring her husband, and Sir John is no small person I assure you."

"When did they arrive?"

"Last night."

"How long will they stay, do you think?"

"Two or three weeks I imagine, but I know nothing positively of their plans."

"And Maurice, tell me when you must go back to England? I do not want our pleasant life to end just as suddenly as it began."

"Nor do I. I am not going just yet."

"But have not you quantities of affairs to attend to, you important person?"

"My most serious affair at present is in Paris. Don't be afraid, I am not forgetting my duties."

"Then we cannot go out to-day?"

"Put on your bonnet and come now for a walk."

"I must ask mamma, and tell her your news. She is late this morning."

Mrs. Costello had risen late since she came to Paris. Lucia found her dressed and discussing some household affair with Claudine.

"Only think, mamma," she began. "Lady Dighton came over yesterday and is coming to see you to-day."

But the news was no surprise to Mrs. Costello, who had received a hint from Maurice that he wished to see his cousin and Lucia friends, before he ventured on that decisive question to which they all, except Lucia, were looking forward so anxiously. But she was keenly alive to the desire that her child should make a favourable impression on this lady, who had evidently some influence with Maurice, and who, if the wished-for marriage took place, would become Lucia's near relative and neighbour. She said nothing at all about this, however, and was perfectly content that the young people should take one of those long walks which brought such a lovely colour into her daughter's pale cheeks, and so gave the last perfecting touch to her beauty.

Maurice left Lucia at the door, and went back to the hotel where he had promised Lady Dighton to lunch with her. She was waiting for him, looking more than usually fair and pretty in the mourning she wore for her grandfather. He could not help thinking, as he came in, how rich and handsome everything about her seemed, in contrast to the bare simplicity of his poorer friends---yet certainly nature had intended Lucia for a much more stately and magnificent person than this little lady.

"Well?" she said smiling. "Have you persuaded your friends to receive me? I can assure you my curiosity has nearly overpowered me this morning."

"You will be disappointed, of course. You are imagining a heroine, and you will see only a young country girl."

"For shame, Maurice! If I am imagining a heroine, I wonder whose fault it is?"

"I wish you would not form your judgment for a week. You are enough of a fine lady, Louisa, to be a little affected by externals, and my pearl has no fine setting at present; it will need looking at closely to find out its value."

"And you think, oh most philosophical of lovers! that I am not capable of distinguishing a real pearl unless it is set in gold, and has its price ticketed?"

"I think, at least, that I am so anxious to see you the same kind friend to her as you have been to me, that I am troubling myself uselessly about the first impressions."

"On both sides? Well, trust me, Maurice I will like your Lucia for your sake, and try to make her like me."

"Thank you; I know you will. And after the first, you will not be able to help loving her."

"Sir John is not to go with us?"

"Not unless you particularly wish it. Where is he?"

"Gone out shopping. Don't laugh. I suspect his shopping is of a different kind to mine, and quite as expensive."

"Can anything be as expensive as the charming bonnets I heard you talking of this morning?"

"Take care. Only hint that I am extravagant, and I will devote myself to corrupting Lucia, and avenge myself by making your pocket suffer."

"I wish my pocket had anything to do with it. Pray be careful, Louisa, and remember that I have not dared to speak to her yet."

"I shall remember. Come to lunch now. Sir John will not be in."

Maurice tried in vain to talk as they drove slowly along to Mrs. Costello's. The street was full of people, and Lady Dighton amused herself by looking out for acquaintances, and saluting those they met. A good many English were in Paris; and she had also a pretty large circle of French people with whom she was on friendly terms; so that she had quite enough occupation to prevent her noticing her cousin's silence. But the moment the carriage stopped, she was ready to give her whole attention to him and his affairs; she gave him a little nod and smile full of sympathy as she went up the staircase, and the moment Claudine opened the door he perceived that he might leave everything in her hands with the most perfect confidence in her management.

There had been a little flutter of expectation in Lucia's mind for the last half-hour, in which she wondered her mother did not express more sympathy; and when, at last, the door opened, she was seized with a sudden tremor, and for an instant felt herself deaf and blind. The moment passed, however, and there came sweeping softly into the room a little figure with golden hair and widely flowing draperies; a fair face with a pleasant smile, and a clear musical voice; these were the things that first impressed her as belonging to Maurice's formidable cousin.

Lady Dighton's first words were of course addressed to Mrs. Costello---they seemed to Lucia to be a plea for a welcome, as Maurice's near relation---and then the two young women stood face to face and exchanged one quick glance. Lady Dighton held out her hand.

"Miss Costello," she said, "you and I are so totally unlike each other, that I am certain we were meant to be friends---will you try?"

The suddenness and oddity of the address struck Lucia dumb. She gave her hand, however, to her new friend with a smile, and as she did so, her eye caught the reflection of their two figures in a glass opposite.

Truly, they were unlike each other---very opposites---but either because, or in spite of the difference, they seemed to suit each other.

Half an hour spent in calling upon or receiving a call from an entire stranger, is generally a very heavy tax on one's good humour; but occasionally, when the visit is clearly the beginning of a pleasant acquaintance---perhaps a valuable friendship---things are entirely different. Lady Dighton had come with the intention of making herself agreeable, and few people knew better how to do it; but she found no effort necessary, and time slipped away more quickly than she thought possible. She stayed, in fact, until she felt quite sure her husband would have been waiting so long as to be growing uneasy, and when she did get up to go away, she begged Mrs. Costello and Lucia to dine with her next day.

"And Maurice," she said, "you must persuade Miss Costello to join us in an excursion somewhere. It is quite the weather for long drives, and our holiday will not be very long, you know."

"I am entirely at your command," Maurice said, "and Lucia must do as she is bid, so pray settle your plans with Mrs. Costello."

But Mrs. Costello said decidedly that to dine out for herself was out of the question---she had not done so for years.

"Oh! I am so sorry," Lady Dighton said. "But of course we must not ask you in that case---Miss Costello may come to us, may she not? I will take good care of her."

Lucia had many scruples about leaving her mother; but, however, it was finally settled that the Dightons should call for her next day---that they should have a long drive to some place not yet fixed upon---and that she should afterwards spend the evening with them.

Mrs. Costello was pleased that her child should go out a little after her long seclusion from all society; and the whole plan was arranged with little reference to Lucia, who vainly tried to avoid this long absence from her mother.

The two cousins were scarcely on their road when Lady Dighton asked---

"Well, Maurice, am I to reserve my opinion?"

"As you please," he answered smiling. "I am sure it is not very unfavourable."

"She is wonderfully beautiful; and, what is most strange, she knows it without being vain."

"Vain? I should think she was not!"

"What grace she has! With her small head and magnificent hair and eyes, she would have had quite beauty enough for one girl without being so erect and stately. You never gave me the idea that she was so excessively handsome, Maurice."

"Is she? I don't believe I knew it. You see I have known her all her life---I know every one of her qualities, I believe, good and bad; and all her ways. I knew she had the purest nature and the warmest, bravest heart a woman could have; but I have thought very little about her beauty by itself."

"Well, then, let me tell you, she only needs to be seen---she is quite lovely; and as for the rest, I do not know yet, but I am very much inclined to think you may be right. At all events, we are going to be good friends, and by-and-by I shall know all about her."

CHAPTER XIII.

Lucia came home late in the evening. Mrs. Costello, resuming her old habits, had sent the servant to bed, and herself admitted her daughter. They went into the drawing-room together to talk over the day's doings.

"You look very bright," Mrs. Costello said with her hand on Lucia's shoulder. "You have enjoyed yourself?"

"Yes, mamma, *so* much. You know I was a little afraid of Lady Dighton, and dreadfully afraid of Sir John. But they have both been so good to me; just like people at Cacouna who had known me all my life."

Mrs. Costello smiled. She was very glad this friendship seemed likely to prosper. Yet it was not very wonderful that any one should like Lucia.

"What have you been doing?"

"We went to Versailles, and saw the gardens. We had no time for the Palace; but Maurice is going to take me there another day. Then we came home and had dinner; and where do you think we have been since?"

"Where?"

"To the theatre! Oh, mamma, it was so nice! You know, I never was in one before."

Lucia clasped her hands, and looked up at her mother with such a perfectly innocent, childish, face of delight, that it was impossible not to laugh.

"What a day of dissipation!"

"Yes; but just for once, you know. And I could not help it."

"I do not see why you should have wished to help it. How about your French? Could you understand the play?"

"Pretty well. It was very shocking, you know. Lady Dighton says the best French plays always are. I cried a little, and I was so ashamed of myself; only I saw some other people crying too, so then I did not mind so much."

"You did not really see much of Lady Dighton, then, if you were driving all afternoon and at the theatre all evening?"

"Oh! yes; we had a long talk before dinner. When we came in, she said, 'Now, Maurice, you must just amuse yourself how you can for an hour. Sir John has English papers to read, and Miss Costello and I are going to my room to have a chat.' So she took me off to her dressing-room, and we were by ourselves there for quite an hour."

"In which time, I suppose, you talked about everything in heaven and earth."

"I don't know. No, indeed; I believe we talked most about Maurice."

"He is a favourite of hers."

"She says she liked him from the first. She is so funny in her way of describing things. She said, 'We English are horribly benighted with regard to you colonists; and my notions of geography are elementary. When grandpapa told me he had sent for his heir from Canada, I went to Sir John and asked him where Canada was. He got a big map and began to show me; but all I could understand was, that it was in North America. I saw an American once. I suppose I must have seen others, but I remember one particularly, for being an American; he was dreadfully thin and had straight black hair, and a queer little pointed black beard, and I *think* he spoke through his nose; and really I began to be haunted by a recollection of this man, and to think I was going to have a cousin just like him.' Then she told me about going over to Hunsdon and finding he had arrived. She said that before the end of the day they were fast friends."

"He was not like what she expected, then?"

"Just the opposite. She made me laugh about that. She said, 'I like handsome people, and I like an English style of beauty for men. My poor dear Sir John is not handsome, though he has a good face; but really when a man is good-looking *and* looks good, I can't resist him.'"

"You seem to have been much occupied with this question of looks. Did you spend the whole hour talking about them?"

"Mamma! Why that was only the beginning."

"What was the rest, then? or some of it, at least?"

"She told me how good Maurice was to his grandfather, and how fond Mr. Beresford grew of him. Do you know that Maurice was just going to try to get away to Canada at the very time Mr. Beresford had his last attack? Lady Dighton says he was excessively anxious to go, and yet he never showed the least impatience or disappointment when he found he could not be spared."

"He must have felt that he was bound to his grandfather."

"He nursed him just like a woman, Lady Dighton says, and one could fancy it. Could not you, mamma?"

"I don't find it difficult to believe anything good of Maurice."

"Oh! and then she told me about Hunsdon. She was born there, and lived there till she was married. She told me all about why Mr. Beresford left it to Maurice, and not to her. But, mamma, I cannot understand how Maurice can be so long away from home. I should think he must have quantities of things to attend to; and she told me Sir John was always busy, though his estate is not so large as Hunsdon. Only think, mamma, of Maurice, our Maurice, having more than ten thousand a year!"

"Well, dear, since we have come to talking of our neighbour's fortunes, I think we had better go to bed."

"Oh! yes; how thoughtless I am, keeping you up so. And I must be early to-morrow, for Lady Dighton is coming to see you, and Maurice wants me to go with him for a walk first. Not to see anything, but just for a walk."

Mrs. Costello lay down that night with a great feeling of content with regard to her daughter's future.

"Certainly," she thought, "Maurice may be satisfied with the affection she has for him; if it is not just the kind of love he wishes for, that is only because it has never entered her mind that he could be anything but a brother to her. She is so excessively childish in some things! I shall be glad now when she really does begin to understand. Only, must I part with her? Better that than that I should leave her alone; better even than that she should have to go among strange relatives."

Maurice had asked Lucia to walk with him for the sake of having her quite to himself for an hour, and perhaps of asking that much meditated question. He had specially bargained that they were not to "go anywhere;" but simply to choose a tolerably quiet road and go straight along it. Accordingly they started, and went slowly up the sunny slope towards the great arch, talking of yesterday, and of the trifles which always seemed interesting when they spoke of them together. After they had passed the barrier, they hesitated a little which road to take---they had already made several expeditions in this direction, and Lucia wanted novelty. Finally they took the road to Neuilly, and went on for a time very contentedly. But Maurice, after a while, fell into little fits of silence, thinking how he should first speak of the subject most important to him. He felt that there could be no better opportunity than this, and he was not cool enough to reflect that it was waste of trouble to try to choose his words, since if Lucia accepted him she would for ever think them eloquent; and if she refused him, would be certain to consider them stupid. She, on the other hand, was in unusually high spirits. It had occurred to her that Lady Dighton, who seemed to know everybody, would probably know Percy. She had begun already to lay deep plans for finding out if this was the case, and after that, where he was at present. She had thought of him so much lately, and so tenderly; she had remembered so often his earnestness and her own harshness in that last interview, that she felt as if she owed him some reparation, and as if his love were far more ardent than hers, and

must needs be more stable also. The idea that she had advanced a step towards the happiness of meeting him again, added the last ingredient to her content. She could have danced for joy.

They walked a considerable distance, and Maurice had not yet found courage for what he wanted to say. Lucia began to think of her mother's loneliness, and proposed to return; he would have tempted her further, but a strange shyness and embarrassment seemed to have taken possession of him. They had actually turned round and begun to walk towards home before he had found a reason for not doing it.

"Lucia," he said abruptly, after one of the pauses which had been growing more and more frequent, "don't you wish to go over to England?"

"Of course I do," she answered with some surprise; "I wish we *could* go. You know I always used to wish it."

"Why don't you try now you are so near?"

"Surely, Maurice, you know mamma cannot go."

"I remember hearing something about your grandfather having wished her not to do so. Forgive me if it is a painful subject; but do not you see that things are quite changed now?"

"Do you think she could, then? But I *don't* see."

"Her father, I suppose, wished to avoid the chance of her marriage being gossiped about. His idea of her going back to England was naturally that she would go among her own relations and old acquaintance who knew the story. Now, I believe that she might go to any other part of the island---say Norfolk, for instance---and obey his wishes just as much as by staying in Paris."

"To Norfolk? Why, then, we should be near you? Oh! do try to persuade her."

"I must have you decidedly on my side then. I must be enabled to offer her a great inducement. If, for instance, I could tell her that you had made up your mind to come and live in Norfolk, she might say yes."

"Ah! but she would have to make up her mind first. See Maurice," she broke in abruptly, "what is that little building on the other side the road? There are some people who look like English going in."

"Don't mind that now, I want to talk to you."

"We have been talking. Only tell me what it is?"

"It is a chapel built on the place where the Duke of Orleans was killed some years ago."

"I remember now somebody told me about it; his monument is there."

"Very likely. I know nothing about it."

"Oh, Maurice! to speak in that tone, when it was such a sad thing."

"There are so many sad things---one cannot pity everybody."

"You are cross this morning. What is the matter?"

"Nothing. What do you want me to do?"

"Just now I want you to take me in there. I see it is open."

There was no help; the moment was gone. Lucia's head was full of the unhappy Duke of Orleans, and it would, have been very bad policy, Maurice thought, to oppose her whim. He rang the bell, and they were admitted without difficulty into the open space in front of the chapel. The old man who let them in pointed to the half-open door, and, saying that his wife was in there with a party, retreated, and left them to find their own way into the building itself. They passed quietly through the entrance and into the soft grey light of the chapel. Lucia stopped only to take one glance of the tiny interior, so coldly mournful with its black draperies and chill white and grey marble, and then passed round to examine more closely the monument which marks the very spot where the fatal accident occurred. Maurice followed her. They stood half concealed by the monument, and speaking low, while the tones of other voices could be distinctly heard from the recess behind the altar where the English visitors were examining the picture of the Duke's death. There was one rather high-pitched female voice which broke the solemn stillness unpleasantly, and as it became more audible, Lucia laid her hand softly on Maurice's arm to make him listen, and looked up in his face with eyes full of laughter. The lady was talking French to the guide with a strong English accent and in a peculiar drawl, which had a very droll effect. It was a manner new to them both, though Maurice could not help thinking, as he listened, of Percy in his worst moods.

"I am glad to have seen it," the voice said, "and quite by chance, too; it is excessively interesting, so melancholy. Ah! you say that they laid him just there? It makes one shudder! No, I will not go near the place; it is too shocking."

At the last words Maurice and Lucia saw the speaker emerge from behind the altar on the side furthest from where they stood. She was a tall woman, neither young nor pretty, but very fashionable--distinguished, Lucia supposed she should be called; and but for the peculiarity of her voice, would have made a favourable rather than an unfavourable impression on a stranger. She stopped just at the top of the steps, and turned round to speak again to some one behind her who was still concealed by the altar. This time she spoke English in a lower tone, and with a greater drawl.

"Really, Edward," she said, "it is very small. Pray don't give the woman much; you know how heavy our expenses are. I think I ought to carry the purse."

"As you please, my dear; it would save me trouble, certainly."

At the sound of that second voice Maurice started and looked at Lucia. She had suddenly grasped at the stonework before her, and stood looking with passionate eagerness over the carved figure of the dying Duke towards the altar. He almost shuddered at the intensity of that gaze--the rigidity of intolerable suspense in her whole figure; but he could only be still and watch her.

The unconscious Englishwoman moved on; close behind her, following her with his old languid manner, came the man Lucia was watching for--Edward Percy.

Still she never stirred. They passed down the chapel with her eyes upon them, but they never saw her, and she made no sound or movement. Only when they were no longer in sight, everything seemed to grow suddenly black and confused about her--her hold upon the marble relaxed, and she would have fallen if Maurice had not gently supported her, and drawn her to a seat close by.

She did not faint, though she was cold and white and powerless. After a minute Maurice, bending over her, saw that she was trying to speak. Her lips seemed stiff and hardly able to form the words, but he made out,

"Who is she?"

He hesitated a moment; but she saw that he *could* answer, and her eyes insisted on her question.

"She is his wife," he answered; "they were married, I believe, a month or six weeks ago."

Suddenly, at his words, the blood seemed to rise with one quick rush to her very temples.

"You knew," she said, "and would not tell me!"

Then after her momentary anger came shame, bitter and intolerable, for her self-betrayal. She bent down her face on her hands, but her whole figure shook with violent agitation. Maurice suffered scarcely less. His love for her gave him a comprehension of all, and a sympathy unspeakable with her pain. He laid his hand lightly on her shoulder as he had often done in her childish troubles, but one word escaped him which he had never spoken to her before,

"My darling! my darling!"

Perhaps she did not hear it; but at least she understood that through all the pang of her loss, there remained with her one faithful and perfect affection; and even at that moment she was unconsciously comforted.

But the Percys were gone, and the guide was coming back into the chapel after a word or two at the door with her husband; Maurice had to decide instantly what to do. He said to Lucia,

"Wait here for me," and then going forward to meet the woman, he contrived to make her comprehend that the lady was ill; and that he was going for a carriage. He then hurried out, and Lucia was left alone in the chapel with the good-natured Frenchwoman, who looked at her compassionately and troubled her with no questions.

For a few minutes the poor child remained too bewildered to notice anything; but when at last she raised her head, and saw that Maurice was not there, she grew frightened. Had she been so childish and uncontrolled as to have disgusted even him? Had he left her, too? She tried to get up from her seat, but she could not stand. The guide saw her attempt, and thought it time to interfere.

"Monsieur would be back immediately," she said. "He was gone for a carriage. It was unfortunate madame should be taken ill so suddenly."

Lucia smiled a very miserable kind of smile.

"Yes," she answered, "it was unfortunate, but it was only a little giddiness."

And there she broke off to listen to the sound of wheels which stopped at the gate.

It was Maurice; and at the sight of him Lucia felt strong again. She rose and met him as he came towards her.

"I have got a carriage," he said. "We had walked too far. Can you go to it?"

She could find nothing to say in answer. He made her lean on his arm, and took her across the court and put her into the vehicle.

"Would you rather go alone?" he asked her.

"Oh! no, no," she cried nervously, and in a minute afterwards they were on their way homewards.

When they had started, she put her hand to her head confusedly.

"Is not it strange?" she said half to herself. "I was sure we should meet in Paris; only I never guessed it would be to-day. Across a grave, that was right."

Maurice shuddered at her tone; it sounded as if she were talking in her sleep.

"Dear Lucia," he said, "scold me, be angry with me. I should have told you."

She seemed to wake at the sound of his voice, and again that burning, painful flush covered her face and neck.

"Oh! Maurice," she cried, "it is you who should scold me. What must you think? But, indeed, I am not so bad as I seem."

"It is I who have been blind. I thought you had forgotten him."

"Forgotten him? So soon? I thought he could not even have forgotten me!"

Maurice clenched his hand. The very simplicity of her words stirred his anger more deeply against his successful rival. For *her* he had still nothing but the most pitiful tenderness.

"Some men, Lucia, love themselves too well to have any great love for another."

"But he did care for me. I want to tell you. I want you to see that I am not quite so bad---he did care for me very much, and I sent him away."

"You refused him?"

"Not just that. At first, you know, I thought everything could be made to come right in time---and then mamma told me all that terrible story about her marriage, and about the constant fear she was in; and then---I could not tell that to him---so I said he must go away. And he did; but he told me perhaps in a year I should change my mind. And the year is not over yet."

Maurice was silent. He would not, if he could help it, say one word of evil to Lucia about this man whom she still loved; and at first he could not trust himself to speak.

"How did you know?" she asked.

And he understood instinctively what she meant, and told her shortly when and where he had seen Percy, and what he had heard from the solicitor.

"It is the same lady, then," she said, "that I remember hearing of."

"Yes, no doubt. I recollect some story being told of him and her, even in Cacouna."

Lucia sighed heavily. She had now got over the difficulty of speaking on the subject to Maurice. She knew so well that he was trustworthy, and for the rest, was he not just the same as a brother?

"He might have waited a year," she murmured. "You cannot imagine how happy I have been lately, thinking I must see him soon!"

"Cannot I?" Maurice cried desperately. "Listen to me, Lucia! I, too, have been happy lately. I have been living on a false hope. I have been deceived, and placed all my trust in a shadow. Don't you think we ought to be able to feel for each other?"

His vehemence and the bitterness of his tone terrified her. She laid her little trembling hand on his appealingly.

"What do you mean?" she whispered.

But he had controlled himself instantly. He took hold of her hand and put it to his lips.

"I mean nothing," he said, "at least nothing I can tell you about at present. Are you feeling strong enough to meet Mrs. Costello? You must not frighten her, you know, as you did me."

"Did I frighten you? I am so sorry and ashamed---only, you know---Yes, I can behave well now."

He saw that she could. Her self-command had entirely returned now. Her grieving would be silent or kept for solitude henceforward. They had already passed the barrier, and in a minute would stop at the door.

"I am not coming in with you," Maurice said, "I must go on now; but I shall see you this evening."

He saw her inside the house and then drove away, while she little guessed how sore a heart he took with him.

CHAPTER XIV.

As Lucia went up the staircase, the slight stimulus of excitement which Maurice's presence had supplied, died out, and she began to be conscious of a horrible depression and sense of vacancy. She went up with a step that grew more tired and languid at every movement, till she reached the door where Claudine was having a little gossip with the concierge.

She was glad even to be saved the trouble of ringing, and glided past the two "like a ghaist," and came into her mother's presence with that same weary gait and white face. It was not even until Mrs. Costello rose in alarm and surprise with anxious questions on her lips that the poor child became aware of the change in herself.

"I am tired," she said. "I have such a headache, mamma," and she tried to wake herself out of her bewilderment and look natural.

"Where is Maurice?"

"He is gone---he is coming back this evening, I think he said."

Mrs. Costello guessed instantly that Maurice was the cause of Lucia's disturbance.

"Poor child!" she thought; "it could not help but be a surprise to her. I wonder if all is going well?" But she dared not speak of that subject just yet.

"You must have walked much too far," she said aloud. "Go and lie down, darling---I will come with you."

Lucia obeyed. She was actually physically tired, as she said, and her head did ache with a dull heavy pain. Mrs. Costello arranged the pillows, drew warm coverings over her, and left her without one further question; for she was completely persuaded of the truth of her own surmise, and feared to endanger Maurice's hopes and her own favourite plan by an injudicious word. She did not go far away, however, and Lucia, still conscious of her nearness, dared not move or sigh. With her face pressed close to the pillow, she could let the hot tears which seemed to scald her eyes drop from under the half-closed lids; but after a little while, the warmth and stillness and her fatigue began to have their effect. The tears ceased to drop, the one hand which had grasped the edge of the covering relaxed, and she dropped asleep.

By-and-by Mrs. Costello came in softly, and stood looking at her. She lay just like a child with her pale cheeks still wet, and the long black lashes glistening. Her little hand, so slender and finely shaped, rested lightly against the pillow; her soft regular breathing just broke the complete stillness enough to give the aspect of sleep, instead of that of death. She was fair enough, in her sweet girlish beauty and innocence, to have been a poet's or an artist's inspiration. The mother's eyes grew very dim as she looked at her child, but she never guessed that there had been more than the stir of surprise in her heart that day---that she was "sleeping for sorrow."

It was twilight in the room when Lucia woke. She came slowly to the recollection of the past, and the consciousness of the present, and without moving began to gather up her thoughts and understand what had happened to her, and why she had slept. The door was ajar, and voices could be faintly heard talking in the salon. She even distinguished her mother's tones, and Lady Dighton's, but there were no others. It was a relief to her. She thought she ought to get up and go to them, but if Maurice had been there, or even Sir John, she felt that her courage would have failed. She raised herself up, and pushed back her disordered hair; with a hand pressed to each temple, she tried to realize how she had awoke that very morning, hopeful and happy, and that she had had a dreadful loss which was *her own*---only hers, and could meet with no sympathy from others. But then she remembered that it had met with sympathy already---not much in words, but in tone and look and action---from the one unfailing friend of her whole life. Maurice knew---Maurice did not condemn her---there was a little humiliation in the thought, but more sweetness. She went over the whole scene in the chapel, and for the first time there came into her mind a sense of the inexpressible tenderness which had soothed her as she sat there half stupefied.

"Dear Maurice!" she said to herself, and then as her recollection grew more vivid, a sudden shame seized her---neck and arms and brow were crimson in a moment, with the shock of the new idea---and she sprang up and began to dress, in hopes to escape from it by motion.

But before she was ready to leave the room her sorrow had come back, too strong and bitter to leave place for other thoughts. The vivid hope of Percy's faithful recollection enduring at least for a year, had come to give her strength and courage in the very time when her youthful energies had almost broken down under the weight of so many troubles; it had been a kind of prop on which she leaned through her last partings and anxieties, and which seemed to be the very foundation of her recent content. To have it struck away from her suddenly, left her helpless and confused; her own natural forces, or the support of others, might presently supply its place, but for the moment she did not know where to look to satisfy the terrible want.

She went out, however, to face her small world, with what resolution she could muster, and was not a little glad that the dim light would save her looks from any close scrutiny.

Lady Dighton had been paying a long visit to Mrs. Costello, and the two perfectly understood each other. They both thought, also, that they understood what had occurred that morning, and why Lucia had a headache. Maurice had not made his appearance at his cousin's luncheon, as she expected, but that was not wonderful. Lady Dighton, however, had said to Mrs. Costello,

"It is quite extraordinary to me how Lucia can have seen Maurice's perfect devotion to her, and not perceived that it was more than brotherly."

Mrs. Costello did not feel bound to explain that Lucia's thoughts, as far as they had ever been occupied at all with love, had been drawn away in quite a different direction, so she contented herself with answering,

"She is very childish in some things, and she has been all her life accustomed to think of him as a brother. I knew he would have some difficulty at first in persuading her to think otherwise."

"He can't have failed?"

"I hope not. She has not told me anything, and therefore I do not suppose there is anything decisive to tell."

After their conversation the two naturally looked with interest for Lucia's coming. They heard her stirring, and exchanged a few more words,

"Perhaps we shall know now?"

"At any rate, Maurice will enlighten us when he arrives."

Lucia came in, gliding silently through the dim light. Her quiet movement was unconscious---she would have chosen to appear more, rather than less, animated than usual. Lady Dighton came forward to meet her.

"So you walked too far this morning?" she said. "I think it was a little too bad when you knew I was coming to see you to-day."

"I did not think I should be so tired," Lucia answered, and the friendly dusk hid her blush at her own disingenuousness.

"Are you quite rested, my child?" Mrs. Costello asked anxiously.

"Yes, mamma. My head aches a little still, but it will soon be better, I dare say. I am ashamed of being so lazy."

"Where is Maurice?" said Lady Dighton. "I expected to have found him here, as he did not come in for lunch."

"Has he not been with you then? He left me at the door, and said he would come back this evening."

"He has not been with me, certainly, though he promised to be. I thought you were answerable for his absence."

Lucia did not reply. Her heart beat fast, and the last words kept ringing in her ears, "you were answerable for his absence." Was she answerable for *any* doings of Maurice's? Had that morning's meeting, so strange and sudden for her,

disturbed him too? She could only be silent and feel as if she had been accused, justly accused---but of what?

Meanwhile, her silence, which was not that of indifference, seemed to prove that the conjectures of the other two were right. They even ventured to exchange glances of intelligence, but Mrs. Costello hastened to fill up the break in the conversation.

"Is it true," she inquired of her visitor, "that you talk of going home next week?"

"Yes; we only came for a fortnight at the longest; and as the affair which brought us over seems to be happily progressing, there is no reason for delay."

"Oh! I am sorry," Lucia said impulsively. "Maurice goes with you, does not he?"

"*Cela depend*---he is not obliged to go just then, I suppose?"

"But surely he ought. We must make him go."

"And yet you would be sorry to lose him?"

"Of course; only---"

Another of those unexplained pauses! It was certainly a tantalizing state of affairs, though, in fact, this last one did but mean, "only he must be neglecting his affairs while he stops here." Lucia merely broke off because she felt as if Lady Dighton might think the words an impertinence.

Soon after this they parted. Something was said about to-morrow, but they finally left all arrangements to be made when Maurice should appear, which it was supposed he would do at dinner to the Dightons, and after it to the Costellos.

Dinner had been long over in the little apartment in the Champs Elysees when Maurice arrived there. The mother and daughter were sitting together as usual, but in unusual silence---Lucia absorbed in thought, Mrs. Costello watching and wondering, but still refraining from asking questions. Maurice came in, looking pale and tired. Lucia got up, and drew a chair for him near her mother. It was done with a double object; she wanted to express her grateful affection, and she wanted to manage so as to be herself out of his sight. He neither resisted her man[oe]uvre nor even saw it, but sat down wearily and began to reply to her mother's questions.

"I have been out of town. I had seen nothing of the country round Paris, so I thought I would make an excursion."

"An excursion all alone?"

"Yes; I have been to St. Denis."

"How did you go?"

"By rail. I started to come back by an omnibus I saw out there, but I did not much care about that mode of conveyance, so I got out and walked."

"Have you seen Lady Dighton?"

"I have seen no one. I am but just come back."

"Maurice! Have you not dined, then?"

"No. Never mind that. I will have some tea with you, please, by-and-by."

But Lucia had received a glance from her mother, and was gone already to try what Claudine's resources could produce. Mrs. Costello leaned forward, and laid her hand entreatingly on Maurice's arm,

"Tell me what all this means?" she said.

He tried to smile as he returned her look, but his eyes fell before the earnestness of hers.

"What what means?" he asked.

"Both you and Lucia know something I don't know," she answered. "I would rather question you than her. Has she troubled you?"

"Not in the way you think," he answered quickly. "I have partly changed my plans. I shall be obliged to go back to England with my cousin. Don't question Lucia, dear Mrs. Costello, let her be in peace for awhile."

"In peace? But she has been in peace---happy as the day was long, lately."

"She is disturbed now---yes, it is my fault---and I will do penance for it. You understand I do not give up my hopes---I only defer them."

"But, Maurice, I *don't* understand. You are neither changeable, nor likely to give Lucia any excuse for being foolish. Why should you go away? She exclaimed how sorry she was when your cousin spoke of it."

"Did she? But I am only a brother to her yet. Don't try to win more just now for me, lest she should give me less."

"Well, of course, you know your own affairs best. But it is totally incomprehensible to me."

Maurice leaned his head upon his hands. He had had a miserable day, and was feeling broken down and wretched. He spoke hopefully, but in his heart he doubted whether it would not be better to give Lucia up at once and altogether, only he had a strong suspicion that to give her up was not a thing within the power of his will.

CHAPTER XV.

The evening passed in constraint and embarrassment. Mrs. Costello was both puzzled and annoyed; Maurice, worn out in mind and body, and only resolute to shield Lucia at his own expense; Lucia herself more thoroughly uncomfortable than she had ever been in her life. She partly understood Maurice's conduct, but doubted its motives. Sometimes she thought he was influenced by his old dislike to Percy, and that even his kindness to herself was mixed with disapproval or contempt. Sometimes a suspicion of the truth, so faint and so unreasonable in her own eyes, that she would not acknowledge it for a moment, flashed across her mind; and this suspicion had its keenly humiliating as well as its comforting side. Besides the confusion of thoughts regarding these things, her mind was burdened with an entirely new trouble---the sense that she was concealing something from her mother; and this alone would have been quite sufficient to disturb and distress her.

So the three who had been so happy for the last few weeks sat together, with all their content destroyed. Maurice thought bitterly of the old Canadian days, which had been happy, too, and to which Percy's coming had brought trouble.

"It is the same thing over again," he said to himself; "but why such a fellow as that should be allowed to do so much mischief is a problem *I* can't solve. A tall idiot, who could not even care for her like a man!"

But he would not allow himself any hard thoughts of Lucia. Perhaps he had had some during his solitary day, but he had no real cause for them, and he was too loyal to find any consolation in blaming her. And it never would have come into his head to solace himself with the "having known *me*." He valued his own honest, unaltering love at a reasonable but not an excessive, price---himself at a very low one; and as Lucia understood nothing of the one, he did not wonder that she should slight the other. And yet he was very miserable.

Ten o'clock came at last, and he went away. After he was gone, Lucia came to her mother's knee, and sat down, resting her aching head against the arm of the chair. The old attitude, and the soft clinging touch, completely thawed the slight displeasure in Mrs. Costello's heart.

"Something is wrong, darling," she said. "If you do not want to tell me, or think you ought not, remember I do not ask any questions; but you have never had a secret from me."

Lucia raised her mother's hand, and laid it on her forehead.

"I ought to tell you, mamma," she said, "and I want to; but yet I don't like."

"Why?"

"You will be so angry; no, not that, perhaps, but you will be shocked, and yet I could not help it."

"Help what? Do you know, Lucia, that you are really trying me now?"

"Oh, mamma, no! I am not worth caring so much about."

"Have you and Maurice quarrelled?"

"Maurice! No, indeed. He is the best friend anybody ever had."

"What is it, then?"

"Mamma, do you remember what happened that first night at Cacouna?"

"What first night?" Mrs. Costello pressed her hand upon her heart, which began to beat painfully.

"The night when you told me about my father."

"Yes; I remember. Go on."

"And the next day?"

"Yes. Don't tell me that you still regret it."

"Mamma, I have seen him again."

"To-day?"

"To-day. At the chapel of St. Ferdinand."

"Did he know you? Did you speak to him?"

"No. He did not see us. He was thinking nothing of me."

"He ought not to think of you."

"Nor I of him. He is married."

"I knew that he either was, or was about to be."

"You have heard of him, then, since?" Lucia raised her head sharply, and looked at her mother.

"Mrs. Bellairs told me. They had heard it indirectly."

"If you had only told me!" Her head sank lower than before.

"My darling, I may have been mistaken. I have been so, many times; but I wished to avoid mentioning him to you. I hoped you were forgetting."

"Never; never for an hour," she said, half to herself. "No, mamma, for I thought he had not forgotten."

"But you sent him away yourself, my child. Remember, you would not even let me see him. He could not have supposed that you meant your answer to be anything but decisive."

"I did mean it to be decisive; but he refused to take it so. He said, 'Perhaps in a year;' and it is not a year yet."

Mrs. Costello listened in utter surprise. Lucia had much to say now. Broken words and sentences, which showed, by degrees, how her mind, as it recovered from the shock of other troubles, had gone back to dwell upon the hope of Percy's return, and which explained more fully why she had been so utterly blind to the schemes which were formed around her. In one point only she failed. She did not, with all her own faith in it, convey to her mother the impression of Percy's real earnestness in their last interview. That he had really loved her, she still believed; but she did not at all understand his shallow and easily-influenced character. Mrs. Costello, on the other hand, was predisposed to take the worst view, and to congratulate herself upon it, since it had helped to leave Lucia free. But not believing that the poor girl had been the object of a genuine, though transient passion, she for once was ready to judge her hardly, and to accuse her of having been wilfully and foolishly deceived.

There was a bitter pang to the mother's heart in thinking this; but the recollections of her own youth made the idea the less improbable to her, and made her also the gentler, even in her injustice. She said not a word of blame, but coaxed from her child the story of the meeting that morning, that she might find out how much Maurice had seen or heard of the truth. He understood *all*. Lucia said so frankly, though she blushed at the confession; he had not needed to be told, and he had been so good!

Mrs. Costello could have groaned aloud. It needed an effort to keep still, and not express the anger and impatience she felt. Maurice! Maurice, who was worth fifty Percys! Maurice, who was devoted heart and soul to this girl; who had been content to love her and wait for her, through good and evil fortune, through change and absence and silence, and, after all, she had no feeling for him but this heartless kind of gratitude! Because at the very last, when he had thought her certainly his own, he had endured, out of his great love, to see all his hopes swept away, and her grieving for his rival; therefore he had just so much claim upon her---"He was so good!"

There was little more said. When once Lucia had told her story, and when Mrs. Costello had discovered that Maurice understood all, neither of them cared to talk on the subject. They went to bed with a cloud between them, after all. Mrs. Costello kept her secret still, and pondered over the question whether there might yet possibly be hope, since Maurice had said he had only deferred his wishes, not relinquished them. Lucia was aware that her trouble was still her own exclusively---not shared by any one, even her mother. She thought of Percy---she longed to know how long he had thought of her---how, and why he had changed; and deep down in her heart there was a little disturbed wondering at Maurice's tenderness---that very tenderness which Mrs. Costello marvelled she did not see.

Maurice did not see his cousin that night. He went straight to his room, and without thinking, locked the door, put out the candles except one, and sat down in the gloom. His eyes and head ached---he felt weary and utterly dispirited. He had rushed away that morning after leaving Lucia at home, and found himself by the merest chance at St. Denis. He had got out there because his fellow-passengers did so, though at the railway station he had taken a ticket for a place much further on along the line. He had looked about the little town, and seen, in a blind blundering kind of way, the Cathedral. He had come out, with about half-a-dozen more visitors, and seeing an omnibus starting for Paris, had got into it, because it would take longer than the train---then after a while had got out again, because he could not bear the slow motion and perpetual babble of talk inside. But through all, and still more in his solitary walk, he had been thinking---thinking perpetually; and, after all, his thinking seemed yet to do. He would go back to England---that was necessary and right, whatever else might be. He was wanted there, as the pile of letters on his writing-table could testify. His father, too, was solitary at Hunsdon---and his business in Paris was over. But the Dightons would not go for some days, and he could not very well leave them after they had come over for his sake. He would have to stay, therefore, till they went; he would have to go on seeing the Costellos. He tried to fancy he was sorry for this, but the attempt was a very poor one. For a few days he would have to go on just as usual, and after that he would go home, and do what? That was just the question.

Ought he to go on hoping now? Had not he done all he could do? Was it probable that a girl who had loved another man---and that man, Percy---faithfully for a whole year on the mere possibility that he might have remained faithful to her, and who had been throughout blind and insensible to a regard deeper and purer than his had ever been, would be able to transfer her heart whole and undivided as he must have it if he had it at all? He dared not think it. "No, I have lost her at last!" he said to himself, "and she is the one only woman in the world."

Then he remembered, as if the reminder had been whispered in his ear, a promise he had made. It was one day during Mr. Beresford's illness, when his mind was a little clearer than usual. He had been trying feebly to return to his old interests, and speaking in his weak broken tones, about the future. He grew very tired after awhile, and Maurice persuaded him to try to sleep, but there was yet another thing to be said.

"You must marry soon, Maurice."

"I am young, sir, there is no hurry."

"No---only let it be soon."

"I must first find the lady."

"I thought I could have helped you---but it is too late." Maurice was silent.

"You *will* marry?" and the old man tried to raise himself in his earnestness.

"I hope to do so."

"Don't talk of hoping---it is a duty, positive duty."

"I mean to do so, then, grandfather."

"Say 'I will'---promise me."

"If I both hope and intend it, sir, is that not enough?"

"No, no. Promise."

"Well then, I promise."

The invalid was satisfied, and in a few minutes dropped asleep, and the conversation almost passed from his grandson's mind.

Now, however, he remembered it, as having bound him to something which might be a lifelong misery. He was young still; as he had said, there was time enough. But would any time make Lucia other than the first with him?

At last he got up and began to pace up and down the room, pushing first one, and then another article of furniture aside to make room for his walk.

"There is at least no further reason why she should not know all" he meditated. "Since my chance is gone, I cannot make matters worse by speaking, and it will be a relief to tell her." He paused, dwelling on the idea of his speaking and her listening---how differently from what he had thought of before---and then went on---"To-morrow is as good as any other time. To-morrow I will ask her to go out with me again---our last walk together."

He stopped again. At last he grew tired even of his own thoughts. He lighted his candles again, and sat down to write letters. First to his father, to say that he was coming home, to give him all the news, to speak just as usual of the Costellos---even specially of Lucia; then to his agent, and to other people, till the streets began to grow noisy and the candles to burn dim in the dawn.

Then he lay down, and fell into a deep, heavy sleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

Maurice was scarcely awake next morning when a little note was brought him from his cousin. It was only two or three lines written late the night before, when she found that he did not come to their common sitting-room. It said, "What has come to all the world? I go to Mrs. Costello's, and find Lucia with a violent headache, and with her ideas apparently much confused. I come home, and hear and see nothing of you till night, when I am told you have gone to your room without stopping for a moment to satisfy my curiosity. You will be at breakfast? I want to see you. LOUISA."

He twisted the dainty sheet of paper round his fingers, while he slowly recalled the events of yesterday up to the point of his last decision, to see Lucia to-day and tell her how grievously he had been disappointed, and what she had been and still was to him. But then came the natural consequence of this; he would still, afterwards, have to meet both Lucia and her mother constantly for some days, and to behave to them just as usual. It had seemed to him already that to do so would be difficult; now he began to think it impossible. What to do then? To keep silence now and always, or to speak and then go away home, where he was needed? He must lose her sweet company---sweet to him still. He *must* lose it, and what matter whether a few days sooner or later? It was better to see her once again, and go.

He dressed hastily and went to the breakfast-room. Sir John always took an early stroll, and might not yet be back; was not, in fact, and Lady Dighton was there alone. Maurice only saw so much before he began to speak.

"I am sorry," he said, "that you expected me last night. I came in very tired, and went straight to bed."

"We waited dinner some time for you," Lady Dighton answered, "and you know how punctual Sir John is; but never mind now. You are looking ill, Maurice."

"I am quite well. I am afraid I must go back to England though. Should you think me a barbarian if I started to-night and left you behind?"

"Is something wrong? Your father is well?"

"Quite well. But---I had letters last night. I am not certain that I must go, only I thought you ought to know at once that I might have to do so."

"And Lucia? What will she say?"

"I don't know. You will not tell her, please?"

"Certainly not. I do not like carrying bad news. But you will see her no doubt before I do."

Maurice hesitated a moment, and then made boldly a request which had been in his mind.

"I want to see her. I should like to see her this morning if I could. Will you help me?"

"You don't generally require help for that. But I suppose the fact is, you want to see her alone?"

"Exactly."

"I own I fancied you had settled your affairs yesterday; however, I *can* help you, I think. Mrs. Costello half promised to go out with me some morning. I will go and try to carry her off to-day."

"You are always kind, Louisa. What should I do without you?"

"Ah! that is very pretty just now. By-and-by we shall see how much value you have for me."

"Yes, you shall see."

"But seriously, Maurice, you look wretched. One would say you had not slept for a week."

"On the contrary, I slept later than usual to-day. It is that, I suppose, which makes me look dull. Here is Sir John. What time will your drive be?"

They fixed the time, and as soon as breakfast was finished, Maurice went back to his room. He tore up the letters he had written last night, and wrote others announcing his return home, took them to the post himself, and then walked about in sheer inability to keep still, until it should be time to go to Mrs. Costello's.

He made a tolerably long round, choosing always the noisiest, busiest streets, and came back to the hotel just as his cousin drove away. He followed her carriage, and passed it as it stood at Mrs. Costello's door, went on to the barrier, and coming back, found that it had disappeared. Now, therefore, probably Mrs. Costello was gone, and now, if ever, was his opportunity.

When Claudine opened the door for "ce beau monsieur" she was aghast. He was positively "beau" no longer. He was pale and heavy-eyed. He actually seemed to have grown thinner. Even his frank smile and word of wonderfully English French had failed him. She went back to her kitchen in consternation. "Ce pauvre monsieur! C'est affreux! Something is wrong with him and mademoiselle. Ma foi, if I had such a lover!"

Mrs. Costello was gone, and Lucia sat alone, and very dreary. At Maurice's entrance she rose quickly; but kept her eyes averted so that his paleness did not strike her as it had done others. She coloured vividly, with a mixture of shame, pride, and gladness, at his coming; but she only said "Good morning," in a low undemonstrative tone, and they both sat down in silence.

She had some little piece of work in her hands, but she did not go on with it, only kept twisting the thread round her fingers, and wondering what he would say; whether now that they were alone, he would refer to Percy; whether he would use his old privilege of blaming her when she did wrong.

But she was not struck down helplessly now as she had been at first yesterday. She had begun to feel the stings of mortified pride, and was ready to turn fiercely upon anybody who should give her provocation.

Maurice spoke first.

"I came to say good-bye," he said. "I am obliged to go home."

His words sounded curt and dry, just because he had such difficulty in making them steady at all, and she looked at him in her surprise, for the first time.

"Not to-day? Is anything the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter there. I told you I had business in Paris. Well, it is finished."

"And you are going to-day?"

"I start this evening."

"We shall miss you."

She felt a strange constraint creeping over her. She could not even express naturally her sorrow and disappointment at his going. She began again to have the feeling of being guilty, and accused, and being eager to defend herself without

knowing how.

"I shall not be far off, and you will know where to find me. When you want me, for whatever reason, you have only to write and I will come."

"But I always want you," she answered half pettishly. "You said you would stay at least till Lady Dighton went away."

Maurice got up and walked to the window.

"I miscalculated," he said, coming back. "We all do sometimes, I suppose."

He stood in a favourite attitude, leaning with one arm on the mantelpiece, and watching Lucia with a mixture of love and bitterness. His last words seemed to her a taunt, and tears of anger filled her eyes. She remained silent, and he had to speak again.

"Do you care to know," he asked her, "what my business in Paris was?"

"If you wish to tell me!"

"Lucia! do not I wish to tell you everything? Could I have kept a secret which was always in my thoughts from you, do you suppose?"

Lucia half rose. "That is not generous," she said. "You have no right to speak so. Yesterday you were kinder."

"Yesterday I only thought of you. To-day I have had time to think a little of myself."

"No doubt you are right. Only you ought not to have come to Paris---at least not to us. It would have been better if everything that belonged to our old life had been lost together."

"Which means that you are quite willing to lose me?"

"Willing? No. But I can understand that it is better."

"Can you? You talk of losses---listen to what I have lost. You know what my life in Canada used to be---plenty of work, and not much money---but still reasonable hope of prosperity by-and-by. I used to make plans then, of having a home of my own, and I was not content that it should be just like other people's. I thought it would be the brightest, warmest, happiest home in the world. I *knew* it would be if I only got what I wanted. A man can't have a home without a wife. I knew where my wife was to be found if ever I had one at all; and she was so sweet and good, and let me see so frankly that she liked and trusted me, that I---it was all vanity, Lucia---I never much doubted that in time I should make her love me."

He stopped. Lucia was looking at him eagerly. Even yet she did not quite understand. "Go on," she said.

"There was my mistake," he continued. "I might have won her then perhaps. But there came a visitor to the neighbourhood. He was handsome---at least women said so---and could make himself agreeable. He knew all about what people call the world---he had plenty of talk about all sorts of small topics. He was a very fine gentleman in fact, and you know what I was. Well, naturally enough, he wanted amusement. He looked about for it, I suppose, and was attracted by what had attracted me---no---I do not believe even that, for I loved her goodness, and he must have been

caught by her beauty. At any rate, I had to go away and leave him near her; and I heard after a while that he was gone. That was late in autumn. Very early this year, I heard of his marriage; and I thought she had been unharmed.

"My grandfather died, and I was rich enough to make that home I dreamed of, fit for its mistress. I went to find her. I found her, as I thought, lovelier and sweeter than ever. She seemed to feel more than ever that I was of some use and value to her---she made me believe that, next to her mother, she loved me best in the world. I delayed asking her to be my wife, only because our days were so happy, that I feared to disturb them---but I thought she was certainly mine.

"Then, all at once, this man, this Percy, who had left her in her trouble---who was married---made his appearance, and I knew that she had loved him all the while---that she had never cared for me!"

Long ago, Lucia had clasped her hands before her face. She sat trembling and cowering before this accuser. Involuntarily she said in her heart, "This is the true love. I have been blind---blind!"---but her words were frozen up---she bent forward as if under a blow---but made no sound.

Maurice himself remained silent for a few minutes. He had spoken under a strong impulse of excitement, he hardly knew how. He, too, leaned his head upon his hand, but from under it he still watched the trembling girlish figure, which was the dearest thing in the world to him. Presently he saw a tear steal out from between her small fingers and fall glittering upon the black dress she wore. He moved uneasily---he had been surely very harsh. Another tear fell---tear of bitter humiliation, good for her to shed---then a third. He could not endure it. She might not love him, but that was no reason why he should turn her sisterly affection into hate. So he went to her, and laid his hand softly on one of hers, trying to draw it away. She let him do so after a moment, but her face remained just as much hidden.

"Lucia!" he said, full of distress, "Lucia! speak to me."

She could not---all her efforts were needed to keep down the painful swelling in her throat. She was fighting for power to say humbly, "Try to forgive me," but he did not give her time.

"If you would only say good-bye---only one word;" and he almost knelt beside her, raising her cold hand half-unconsciously to his lips.

She drew it away suddenly. His tenderness was the worst reproach of all. Her sobs burst out without control. She rose. "No; rather forgive me," she tried to say, but her voice was choked and hardly audible; and she fled from the room, hurrying into her own, and fell down on the floor at the bedside.

Maurice waited for awhile, thinking she might come back. He sat down near where her chair stood, and leaning both elbows on the table, tried to calm himself after the terrible excitement. Lucia's tears and her silence had utterly disarmed him---he called himself a brute for having distressed her. But as time went on, and she did not return, he remembered that he could not just then meet Mrs. Costello, and he got up and began to walk about the room uneasily. Still, time went on, and there was no sign of Lucia. He wished to knock at her door, but dared not. He must go then without one good-bye!

"That is my own fault at any rate," he said, and went away softly, without even seeing Claudine.

But, as it happened, Mrs. Costello was long coming back. Lady Dighton had confided to her Maurice's wish to see Lucia alone, and the two ladies, very happy and confidential over their schemes, both supposing that nothing but good could come of a long talk between the young people---prolonged their absence till more than two hours after Maurice had returned to the hotel. So that his preparations for leaving Paris were almost completed by the time that Lucia, hearing her

mother's entrance, came out of the solitude where she had hidden her tears and her repentance.

CHAPTER XVII.

Lucia tried to hide the traces of her tears, but the attempt was not particularly successful. Mrs. Costello saw at once that something was wrong; she asked whether Maurice had been there, and was told briefly yes, but she delayed any other questions for two reasons. One was, that merely saying that "Yes" had brought a quiver over Lucia's face, and the other, that she herself was tired and had got into a habit of dreading any kind of excitement. She felt a presentiment that there was nothing pleasant to hear, and at the same time was quite sure that whatever there was, her daughter would be unable to keep long from her.

She allowed Lucia to carry away her bonnet and shawl, and arrange her comfortably on the sofa for a rest. Then she began to describe her drive, and the shops at which Lady Dighton had been making various purchases. Lucia listened, and tried to be interested, and to lose the sense of shame and mortification mixed with real compunction, which was making her wretched. But her heart ached, and besides, she had cried, sitting all alone on her bedroom floor, till she was exhausted and half blind. All the while her mother talked, she kept thinking of Maurice---she neither called him "Poor Maurice," in her thoughts, nor "Dear Maurice"---but only "Maurice, Maurice," over and over again---her friend who was gone from her, whom she had justly lost.

But when she was growing more and more absorbed in her own regrets, and her mother's voice was beginning to sound to her like one in a dream, there came a sudden sharp ring at the door-bell. Could it be Maurice? She grew red as fire while she listened---but the door opened and shut, and there were no steps but Claudine's in the hall.

The maid came in. "A letter for madame, and a packet for mademoiselle,"---both directed by Maurice.

Lucia took hers to the window. She scarcely dared to open it, but she feared to appear to hesitate. Slowly she broke the seals, and found a tiny morocco case and a note. She hardly looked at the case, the note would be Maurice's farewell, and she did not know whether it would bring reproach or forgiveness with it. It was not long---even with her dazzled eyes, she was not more than a minute reading it.

"My dear old playfellow and pupil"---it began---"I cannot leave Paris without saying 'Good-bye,' and asking you to forgive me, not for what I said this morning, but for the way in which I said it. If you cannot love me (and I understand now that you cannot) it is not your fault; and I ought to have remembered that, even when it seemed hardest. I cannot stay here now; but you will recollect that if ever you *want* me---as a friend or brother, you know---a single line will be enough to bring me to your help. Finally, I beg of you, for the sake of old times, to wear the ring I send. I bought it for you---you ought to have no scruple in accepting a keepsake from your oldest friend, MAURICE LEIGH."

In the little box was the ring bought so long ago in Liverpool. It flashed, as if with the light of living eyes, as Lucia opened the lid. She regarded it for a moment almost with fear, then took it out and placed it on her finger---the third finger of her left hand. It fitted perfectly, and seemed to her like the embodiment of a watchful guardian who would keep her from wrong and from evil. She fancied this, though just then two or three drops fell heavily from her eyes, and one rested for a moment on the very diamonds themselves.

Mrs. Costello's note was longer than Lucia's, and she read it twice over, before she was sure that she comprehended it. Then she called sharply "Lucia!"

"Come here," she said, as the girl turned her face reluctantly; and there was nothing to do but to obey. Lucia came to the side of the sofa, where her mother had raised herself up against the cushions, but she trembled so, that to steady herself

she dropped down on her knees on a footstool. Her right arm rested on the table, but the other hand, where the ring was, lay hidden in the folds of her dress.

"What does this mean, Lucia?" Mrs. Costello asked in a tone which she had never in her life used to her daughter before. "Are you out of your senses?"

Lucia was silent. She could almost have said yes.

"You know of course that Maurice is gone?"

"Yes I know it," she answered just audibly.

"Gone, and not likely to return?"

"He tells me so."

"What have you said to him?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing! That is absurd. Why did he wish to see you alone to-day?"

"To tell *me* something," Lucia said with a little flash of opposition awakened by her mother's anger.

"Yes--I thought so. To tell you something which, to any girl in the world who was not inconceivably blind or inconceivably vain, would have been the best news she ever heard in her life. And you said *nothing*?"

"Mamma, it is over. I can't help it."

"So he says---he, who is not much in the habit of talking nonsense, says this to me. Just listen. 'We have both made the mistake of reasoning about a thing with which reason has nothing to do. I see the error now too late for myself, but not, I hope, too late to leave her in peace. Pray do not speak to her about it at all.' But it is my duty to speak."

"Mamma, Maurice is right. It is too late."

"It is not too late for him to get some little justice; and it is not too late for you to know what you have lost."

"Oh! I do know," she cried out. "But even if there had been no other reason, how could I have been different? He never told me till to-day." And she clasped her two hands together on the edge of the table and hid her face on them.

Mrs. Costello leaned a little more forward, and touched her daughter's arm.

"I must speak to you about this, Lucia," she said. "I do not want to be harsh, but you ought to know what you have done. And, good heavens! for what? A stranger, a mere coxcomb comes in your way, and you listen to his fine words, and straight begin to be able to see nothing but him, though the most faithful, generous heart a girl ever had offered to her is in your very hand! *I* was bad enough---but I had no such love as Maurice's to leave behind me."

Again Lucia moved, without speaking. As she did so, the ring on her hand flashed.

"What is that on your finger?" Mrs. Costello asked.

"Maurice's ring. *He* was not so hard on me."

"Hard?" Mrs. Costello was pressing her hand more and more tightly to her side. "Child, it is you that have been hard with your unconscious ways."

But Lucia had found power to speak at last.

"After all," she said obstinately, "I neither see why I should be supposed to have done wrong, nor why anybody else should be spoken of so. It is no harm, and no shame," she went on, raising her head, and showing her burning cheeks, "for a girl to like somebody who cares very much for her; and I think she would be a poor creature if she did not go on caring for him as long as she believed he was true to her."

The little spark of pride died out with the last words, and there was a faint quiver in her voice.

"Maurice would say so himself," she ended, triumphantly.

"Of course he would. But I don't see that Maurice would be a fair judge of the case. The question is, what does a girl deserve who has to choose between Maurice and Percy, and chooses Percy?"

Lucia recoiled. She could hardly yet bear to hear the name she had been dreaming over so long spoken in so harsh a way, and still less to hear it coupled in this way with Maurice's.

"Maurice will soon find somebody else," she said. "He is not a poor man, mamma, that he should mind so much."

Mrs. Costello half rose from the sofa. Pain and anger together overpowered her. She stood up for a moment, trying to speak, and then suddenly fell back, fainting.

Lucia sprang from her knees. Was her mother dead? It was possible, she knew. Had they parted for ever in anger? But the idea, from its very horror, did not affect her as a lighter fear might have done. She brought remedies, and called Claudine to help her, in a kind of calm. They tried all they could think of, and at last there came some feeble return of life. But the agitation and fatigue of the day had been too much for such strength as hers to rally from. One fainting fit succeeded another, with scarcely a moment's interval.

All evening it was the same. A doctor came, and stayed till the attacks ceased; but when he went away, his patient lay, white and almost unconscious even of Lucia's presence. It was terrible sitting there by the bedside, and watching for every slight movement---for the hope of a word or a smile. It was consolation unspeakable when, late at night, Mrs. Costello opened her eyes, free from the bewildered look of suffering, and, seeing her child's pale face beside her, put out her hand, and said softly, "My poor Lucia!"

After that she dropped asleep, and Lucia watched till early morning. It was the first of such watches she had ever kept, and the awful stillness made her tremble. Often she got up from her seat to see if her mother's breathing still really went on; it seemed difficult to believe that there was any stir whatever of life in the room. In those long hours, too, she had time to revert to the doings of the past day---to remember both Maurice's words and her mother's, and to separate, to some degree, the truth from all exaggeration. Her mind seemed to go back also, with singular clearness, to the time of Percy's coming to Cacouna, and even earlier. She began to comprehend the significance of trifles, which had seemed insignificant at the time, and to believe in the truth of what Maurice had told her, that even then he was building all his

hopes on the possibility of her loving him. She wondered at herself now, as others had wondered at her; but she still justified herself: "He was my brother---my dearest friend. *He*," and this time she did not mean Maurice, "was the first person who ever put any other ideas into my head. And I have lost them both." But already the true love had so far gained its rights, that it was Maurice, far more than Percy, of whose loss she thought. Once that night, when she had sat quite without moving for a long time, and when her meditations had grown more and more dreary, she suddenly raised her hand, and her ring flashed out in the gloom. By some instinct she put it to her lips; it seemed to her a symbol of regard and protecting care, which comforted her strangely.

When the night was past, and Claudine came early in the morning to take Lucia's place, Mrs. Costello still slept; and the poor child, quite worn out---pale and shivering in the cold dawn---was glad to creep away to bed, and to her heavy but troubled slumber.

All that day the house was kept silent and shut up. Mrs. Costello had been much tried, the doctor thought, and needed a complete calm in which to recover herself. With her old habit of self-command she understood this, and remained still, almost without speaking, till some degree of strength should return. Lucia tended her with the most anxious care, and kept her troubled thoughts wholly to herself.

About two o'clock Lady Dighton came. Hearing that Mrs. Costello was ill, she begged to see Lucia, who came to her, looking weary and worn, but longing to hear of Maurice.

It seemed, however, as if she were not to be gratified. Lady Dighton was full of concern and kind offers of assistance, but she said nothing of her cousin until just as she went away. Then she did say, "You know that Maurice left us yesterday evening? I miss him dreadfully; but I dare say he thinks much more of whether other people miss him."

She went, and they were alone again. So alone, as they had never been while Maurice was in Paris, when he might come in at any moment and bring a cheerful breath from the outer world into their narrow and feminine life,---as he would never come again! 'Oh,' Lucia thought, 'why could not he be our friend always---just our own Maurice as he used to be---and not have these miserable fancies? We might have been so happy!'

Towards night Mrs. Costello had greatly revived. She was able to sit up a little, and to talk much as usual. She did not allude at all to her last conversation with her daughter, and Lucia herself dared not renew so exciting a subject. But all anger seemed to have entirely passed away from between them. They were completely restored to their old natural confidence and tenderness; and that was a comfort which Lucia's terror of last night made exquisitely sweet to her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Two or three days passed before its former tranquillity was restored to the apartment in the Champs Elysees. Its "*former* tranquillity," indeed, did not seem to come back at all. There were new elements of discomfort and disturbance at work, even more than in the days before Maurice came, and when Mrs. Costello both feared and hoped for his coming. He was never mentioned now, except during Lady Dighton's daily visit. She, much mystified, and not sure whether Lucia was to be pitied or blamed, was too kind-hearted not to sympathize with her anxiety for her mother, and she therefore came constantly---first to inquire for, and then to sit with Mrs. Costello, insisting that Lucia should take that opportunity of going out in her carriage.

These drives gave the poor child not only fresh air, but also a short interval each day in which she could be natural, and permit herself the indulgence of the depression which had taken possession of her. She felt certain that her mother, though she treated her with her usual tenderness, still felt surprised and disappointed by her conduct. Maurice also, who had been always so patient, so indulgent, had gone away in trouble through her; he had reproached her, perhaps justly,

and had given up for ever their old intimacy. She was growing more and more miserable. If ever, for a moment, she forgot her burden, some little incident was sure to occur which brought naturally to her lips the words, 'I wish Maurice were here;' and she would turn sick with the thought, 'He never will be here again, and it is my fault.'

So the days went on till the Dightons left Paris. They did so without any clear understanding having reached Lady Dighton's mind of the state of affairs between Maurice and Lucia. All she actually knew was that Maurice had been obliged to go home unexpectedly, and that ever since he went Lucia had looked like a ghost. And as this conjunction of circumstances did not appear unfavourable to her cousin's wishes, and as she had no hint of those wishes having been given up, she was quite disposed to continue to regard Lucia as the future mistress of Hunsdon.

However, she was not sorry to leave Paris. Her visit there, with regard to its principal object, had been rather unsatisfactory; at all events it had had no visible results, and she liked results. She wanted to go home and see how Maurice reigned at Hunsdon, and tell her particular friends about the beautiful girl she hoped some day to have the pleasure of patronizing.

Mrs. Costello had regained nearly her usual health. One day, shortly after the Dightons left, she asked Lucia to bring her desk, saying that she must write to Mr. Wynter, and that it was time they should make some different arrangement, since, as they had long ago agreed, Paris was too expensive for them to stay there all the year.

Lucia remembered what Maurice had said to her about her mother returning to England, but the consciousness of what had really been in his mind at the moment stopped her just as she was about to speak. She brought the desk, and said only,

"Have you thought of any place, mamma?"

"I have thought of two or three, but none please me," Mrs. Costello answered. "We want a cheap place---one within easy reach of England, and one not too much visited by tourists. It is not very easy to find a place with all the requisites."

"No, indeed. But you are not able to travel yet."

"Yes I am. Indeed, it is necessary we should go soon, if not immediately."

Lucia sighed. She would be sorry to leave Paris. Meantime her mother had opened the desk, but before beginning to write she took out a small packet of letters, and handed them to Lucia. "I will give these to you," she said, "for you have the greatest concern with them, though they were not meant for your eyes."

Lucia looked at the packet and recognized Maurice's hand.

"Ought I to read them, then?" she said.

"Certainly. Nay, I desire that you will read them carefully. Yes, Lucia," she went on in a softer tone, "I wish you to know all that has been hidden from you. Take those notes and keep them. When you are an old woman you may be glad to remember that they were ever written."

Lucia could not answer. She carried the packet away to her own chair, and sitting down, opened it and began to read. It was only Maurice's notes, written to Mrs. Costello from England, and they were many of them very hasty, impetuous, and not particularly well-expressed missives. But if they had been eloquence itself, they could not have stirred the reader's heart as they did. It was the simple bare fact of a great love---so much greater than she could ever have

deserved, and yet passed by, disregarded, unperceived in her arrogant ignorance; this was what she seemed to see in them, and it wrung her heart with vain repentance and regret. And, as she bent over them there suddenly arose in her mind a doubt---a question which seemed to have very little to do with those letters, yet which they certainly helped to raise---had she ever loved Percy? Lucia was romantic. Like other romantic girls, she would formerly have said---indeed, she had said to herself many times---"I shall love him all my life---even if he forgets me I shall still love him." And yet now she was conscious---dimly, unwillingly conscious, that she thought very little of him, and that even that little was not at all in the strain she would have felt to be proper in a deserted heroine of fiction. She was not the least likely to die of a broken heart for him; she was much more inclined to die for grief and shame at what had befallen Maurice. So that question, which was in itself a mortifying one, rose rebelliously in her mind---had she ever loved Percy? or had she been wasting her thoughts on a mere lay-figure, dressed up by her own fancy in attributes not at all belonging to it? Poor child! had she known how many women---and perhaps men also---do the very same, the idea might not have seemed quite so horrible to her.

Horrible or not, she put it aside and went back to the letters. In the earlier ones there were many allusions which seemed almost to belong to a former existence, so utterly had her life changed since they were written. The bright days of last summer, before the first cloud came over her fortunes, seemed to return almost too vividly to her memory; she would have bargained away a year of her life to be able to regain the simple happiness of that time. It could never be done; she had suffered, and had done some good and much evil; the past was ended and put away for ever; she could not, for all she might give, again set herself

"To the same key
Of the remembered harmony."

She closed the last letter of the little pile and put them carefully away. Already they seemed to her one of her most valuable possessions.

Mrs. Costello had finished writing to her cousin. She was busy with Murray and a map of France; and when Lucia came back she called her.

"Come here, I have half decided."

"Yes, mamma. Where is it?"

"Of course, I cannot be sure. I must make some inquiries; but I think this will do---Bourg-Cailloux."

Lucia looked where her mother's finger pointed on the map.

"Is it a seaport?" she asked.

"Yes, with steamers sailing direct to England."

"But in that case, will it not be in the way of tourists?"

"I suspect not; I have looked what Murray says, and it is so little that it is pretty evident it is not much visited by the people who follow his guidance. Besides, I do not see what attraction the place can have except just the sea. It is an old fortified town, with a market and considerable maritime trade---sends supplies of various kinds to London, and has handsome docks; from all which I conclude that business, and not pleasure, is the thing which takes people there."

"Could you bear a noisy, busy town?"

"After this I do not think we need fear the noise of any provincial town. In a very quiet place we should not have the direct communication with England, which is an object with me."

"But, mamma, what need----?"

"Every need, for your sake as well as my own. We *must* be where, in case of emergency, you could quickly have help from England."

Lucia trembled at her mother's words. She dared not disregard them after what had lately happened, but she could not discuss this aspect of the question.

"I must find out about the journey," Mrs. Costello went on. "If it is not a very fatiguing one I believe I shall decide at once. We shall both be the better, in any case, for a little sea air."

"I shall like it at all events. I have never seen the sea except during our voyage."

"No. I used to be very fond of it. I believe now, if I could get out to sit on the beach I should grow much stronger."

"Oh, mamma, you must. What is the name of the place? Here it is--Bourg-Cailloux. When do you think we can go?"

"Not before next week, certainly. Do not make up your mind to that place, for perhaps it may not suit us yet to go there."

Lucia knelt down, and put her arms softly round her mother's waist.

"Dear mother," she said slowly, "I wish you would go back to England."

Mrs. Costello started. "To England?" she said, "you know quite well that it is impossible."

"You would be glad to go, mamma."

"Child, you do not know *how* glad I should be. To die and be buried among my own people!"

"To go and live among them rather, mamma; Maurice put it into my head that you might."

She spoke the last sentence timidly; after they had both so avoided Maurice's name, she half dreaded its effect on her mother. But Mrs. Costello only shook her head sadly.

"Maurice thought of a different return from any that would be possible now. Possibly, if all had been as we wished---both he and I---I might have gone over to a part of England so far from the place I left. Say no more of it, dear," she added quickly, "let us make the best of what we have, and try to forget what we have not."

She bent down and kissed her daughter as she spoke. But still these last few sentences had furnished a little fresh bitterness for Lucia's thoughts. Her mother's exile might have ended but for her.

Bourg-Cailloux was next day fully decided on for their new residence. From the time of the decision Lucia began to be very busy in preparation for their journey, and for leaving the place where she had been too happy, and too miserable, not

to have become attached to it. Claudine, too, had to be left behind with some regret, but they hoped to see Paris again the following year if all should be well. Early one morning they started off once again, a somewhat forlorn pair of travellers, and at three o'clock on a bright afternoon rattled over the rough pavements, on their way to the Hotel des Bains at Bourg-Cailloux.

CHAPTER XIX.

Summer came very early that year, and the narrow streets of Bourg-Cailloux were full of the glare and heat of the season. The pavements of white stones, always rough and painful to the feet, were burning hot in the middle of the day, and outside the walls, especially towards the sea, the light coloured, sandy roads were more scorching still. The Hotel des Bains, just waking up after its winter repose, had proved but a comfortless dwelling. After two or three days, therefore, Mrs. Costello had left it, and she and Lucia were now settled in a lodging in the city itself. Their windows looked out on the "Place," where a brave sea-captain, the hero of Bourg-Cailloux, stood in effigy, and still seemed to keep watch over the place he had once defended, and where, twice a week, the market-women came in their long black cloaks and dazzling caps, and brought heaps of fragrant flowers and early fruit. In the very early morning, the shadow of a quaint old tower fell transversely upon the pavement of the square, and reached almost to their door; and in the evening Lucia grew fond of watching for the fire which was nightly lighted on the same tower that it might be a guide to sailors far out at sea. The town was quiet and dull---there was no theatre, no concerts, at present even no balls---the only public amusement of the population seemed to be listening in the still evenings to the band which played in front of the guard-house in the Place. There they came in throngs, and promenaded slowly over the sharp-edged stones, with a keen and visible enjoyment of the fresh air, the music, and each other's company, which was in itself a pleasant thing to see.

The journey, the discomforts of the first few days, and the second moving, had tried Mrs. Costello extremely. She spent most of her time on the sofa now, and had as yet only been able once or twice to go down and sit for a while on the sunny beach, where children were playing and building sand castles, and where the sea breeze was sweet and reviving.

There was a small colony of English people settled in the town, mostly people with small incomes and many children, or widows of poor gentlemen; but there was also a large floating population of English sailors, and for their benefit an English consul and chaplain, who supplied a temporal and spiritual leader to the community. But the mother and daughter kept much apart from their country people, who were inclined to be sociable and friendly towards them. Mrs. Costello's illness, and Lucia's preoccupation, made them receive with indifference the visits of those who, after seeing them at the little English church, and by the sea, thought it "only neighbourly to call."

Their home arrangements were different to those they had made in Paris. Here they were really lodgers, and their landlady, Madame Everaert, waited on them. She was a fat, good natured, half Dutch widow, who took from the first a lively interest in the invalid mother, and in the daughter who would have been so handsome if she had been stouter and more rosy; and in a very little while she found that her new lodgers had one quality, which above all others gave them a claim on her good will, they were excellent listeners. Almost every evening in the twilight she would come herself to their sitting-room, with the lamp, or with some other errand for an excuse, and would stay chattering in her droll Flemish French for at least half an hour. This came to be one of the features of the day. Another was a daily walk, which Lucia had most frequently to take alone, but which always gave her either from the shore, or from the ramparts, a long sorrowful look over the sea towards England---towards Canada perhaps---or instead of either, to some far-away fairy country where there were no mistakes and no misunderstandings.

Between these two---between morning and evening---time was almost a blank. Lucia had completely given up her habits of study. She did not even read novels, except aloud; and when she was not in some way occupied in caring for her mother, she sat hour after hour by the window, with a piece of crochet, which seemed a second Penelope's web, for it never was visibly larger one day than it had been the day before. Mrs. Costello gradually grew anxious as she perceived

how dull and inanimate her daughter remained. She would almost have been glad of an excuse for giving her a gentle scolding, but Lucia's entire submission and sweetness of temper made it impossible. There seemed nothing to be done, but to try to force her into cheerful occupation, and to hope that time and her own good sense would do the rest. Hitherto they had had no piano; they got one, and for a day or two Lucia made a languid pretence of practising. But one day she was turning over her music, among which were a number of quaint old English songs and madrigals, which she and Maurice had jointly owned long ago at Cacouna, when she came upon one the words of which she had been used to laugh at, much to the annoyance of her fellow-singers. She had a half remembrance of them, and turned the pages to look if they were really so absurd. The music she knew well, and how the voices blended in the quaint pathetic harmony.

"Out alas! my faith is ever true,
Yet will she never rue,
Nor grant me any grace.
I sit and sigh, I weep, I faint, I die,
While she alone refuseth sympathy."

She shut the music up, and would have said, if anybody had asked her, that she had no patience with such foolish laments, even in poetry; but, nevertheless, the verse stayed in her memory, haunted her fancy perpetually, and seemed like a living voice in her ears---

"Out alas! my faith is ever true."

She cared no more for singing, for every song she liked was associated with Maurice, and each one seemed now to have the same burden; and when she played, it was no longer gay airs, or even the wonderful 'Morceaux de Salon,' of incredible noise and difficulty, which had been required of her as musical exhibitions, but always some melancholy andante or reverie which seemed to come to her fingers without choice or intention.

One day when she had gone for her solitary walk, and Mrs. Costello all alone was lying on the sofa, trying to read, but really considering with some uneasiness the condition of their affairs, Madame Everaert knocked at the door.

She brought with her a fresh bunch of flowers just bought in the market, but she was as usual overflowing with talk.

"It is extremely hot," she said, fanning herself with her pocket handkerchief, "and I met mademoiselle going out. It is excessively hot."

Mrs. Costello looked uneasy.

"Do you think it is too hot to be out?" she asked.

"No. Perhaps not. Certainly, mademoiselle has gone to the ramparts, and the walk there is not nearly so hot and fatiguing as down to the beach. Mademoiselle is very fond of the sea."

"Yes, she enjoys it greatly. It is new to her."

"One day, not long ago, I was coming along the top of the ramparts,---madame has not been there?"

"No."

"There is a broad space on the top, and it is covered with soft green turf quite pleasant to sit down upon. Very few people pass, and you can see a long way out to sea. Well, one day I came along there, because upon the grass it was pleasanter walking than on the stones in the street, and I saw Mademoiselle Lucia who was sitting quite quiet, looking out far away. I came very near, but she never saw me. I thought I would speak to her just to say how beautiful the day was, and the air so sweet, when I saw just in time madame, that she was crying. Great big tears were falling down on her hands, and she never seemed to feel them even. Mon Dieu, madame! I could hardly keep from crying myself, she looked so sad; but I went by softly, and she never saw me. Mademoiselle regrets England very much."

"She has never been in England. She was born in Canada, and that, you know, is very far away."

"In Canada! Is it possible? Does madame come from Canada?"

"Yes."

"And it is in Canada our good father Paul has suffered so much! Oh, the terrible country!"

"Why should it be terrible? I have seen Father Paul, and he does not look as if he had suffered much."

"Not now, Dieu merci. But long ago. Madame, he went to convert the savages---the Indians."

Mrs. Costello started. Father Paul was a Jesuit priest---an old venerable man---old enough, as it flashed into her mind, to have been one of the Moose Island missionaries. Yet such an idea was improbable---there had no doubt been many other Jesuit missions besides the one where Christian had been trained.

"Do you know where it was that he went?" she asked, after a moment's pause.

"It was in Canada," Madame Everaert repeated, "and he lived among the savages; if madame is from Canada, she would know where the savages live."

"There are very few savages now," Mrs. Costello answered with a smile. "I know where there used to be some---possibly that was the very place."

"No doubt. I shall tell the good father that madame knows it."

"Stay. Don't be quite sure that it is the place. Canada is a very large country."

"Still it is so singular that madame should come from there. Father Paul will be delighted."

Mrs. Costello thought a minute. She was greatly tempted to wish to see this priest who might have known her husband. She need not betray herself to him. For the rest, she had noticed him often, and thought what a good, pleasant face he had---a little too round and rosy perhaps, but very honest and not vulgar. He might be an agreeable visitor, even if he had no other claim on her.

"Do you think," she said, "that he would mind coming to see me? I should be very glad to receive him."

"I am sure he would be charmed. He likes so much to talk of Canada."

"Will you say to him then, please, that I have lived there many years and should be very pleased to have a chat with him about it. I might be able to give him news."

Madame Everaert was delighted. She went away quite satisfied to find Father Paul at the very earliest opportunity, and to deliver to him with *empressement* Mrs. Costello's invitation.

Lucia, meanwhile, took her usual walk. She went quickly along the stony streets and climbed up the grassy side of the rampart. It was all still and solitary, and she sat down where there lay before her a wide stretch of perfectly level country, only broken by the lines of the old fortifications, and bordered by the sea. In the clear morning sunshine, she could distinguish the white foam where the waves broke against the wooden pier, and out on the blue waters there were white shining specks of sails. Ships coming and going, and on the beach moving groups of people---everywhere something that had life and motion and looked on to a future, an object beyond this present moment---everywhere but here with her.

"Oh," she said to herself, "how wearisome life is! What good to myself or to anybody else is this existence of mine? Am I never either to be good or happy again? Happy, I suppose that does not so much matter---but good? If people are wrong once, can they never get right again? I used to think I should like to be a Sister of Mercy---and now that is all that is left for me, I do not feel any inclination for it. I don't think I have a vocation even for that."

And at this point she fell into a lower depth of melancholy---one of those sad moods which, at eighteen, have even a kind of charm in their exaggeration.

CHAPTER XX.

A day or two later there came, forwarded from Paris, an English letter for Mrs. Costello. It arrived in the evening, at a time when they had no expectation of receiving anything, and Madame Everaert brought it up, and delivered it into Mrs. Costello's own hand, so that Lucia was not near enough to see from whom it came. The general appearance of the letter made her think it was English, and she knew that Mr. Wynter had their present address and would not write to Paris. So she felt a half-joyful, half-frightened suspicion that it must be from Maurice, and her idea was confirmed by her mother's proceedings. For Mrs. Costello having looked at the address, put the letter quietly in her pocket, and went on talking about Father Paul, from whom they were expecting a visit.

Lucia could hardly restrain herself. It was clear that Mrs. Costello did not mean to open the letter before her, or to tell her whence it came; but her anxiety to know was only increased by this certainty. She had almost made up her mind to ask plainly whether it was from Maurice, when the door opened and the old priest came in.

He was a fine-looking, white-haired man of more than seventy, to whom the long black robe seemed exactly the most suitable dress possible, and he had a good manner too, which was neither that of a mere priest, nor of a mere gentleman, but belonged to both. The first few minutes of talk made Mrs. Costello sure that she did not repent having invited his acquaintance; a fact which had been in some little doubt before.

She had said to him, "Madame Everaert told me you knew Canada, and, as we are Canadians, I could not resist the wish to see one who might still feel an interest in our country," and this turned the conversation immediately to what she desired to hear.

He answered her with a smile, "Probably my knowledge of Canada is very different from yours; mine is almost entirely confined to the wilder and less settled parts---to the Indian lands, in fact."

"In Upper Canada?"

"Yes. And then it is many years since I returned."

"I have lived for twenty years in Upper Canada; and of some of the Indians, the Ojibways of Moose Island, I have heard a great deal; perhaps you know them?"

The priest's eye brightened, but next moment he sighed.

"The very place!" he said. "Unhappy people! But I am forgetting that you, madame, are not likely to share my feelings on the subject."

"I do not know," Mrs. Costello answered, "that we should be wholly disagreed. I have heard, I may almost say I know myself, much of your mission there."

"Is it possible? Can any good remain still?"

"One of your old pupils died lately, and in his last hours he remembered nothing so well as your teaching."

Her voice shook; this sudden mention of her husband, voluntary as it was, agitated her strongly. Father Paul saw it and wondered, but appeared to see nothing.

"Poor boys! You console me, madame, for many sad thoughts. I was a young man then, and, as you see, I am now a very old one, but I have known few more sorrowful days than the one when I left Moose Island."

"Yet it must have been a hard and wearisome life?"

"Hard?---Yes---but not wearisome. We were ready to bear the hardness as long as we hoped to see the fruit of our labours. I thought there had been no fruit, or very little; but you prove to me that I was too faithless."

Mrs. Costello remained a moment silent. She was much inclined to trust her guest with that part of her story which referred to Christian---no doubt he was in the habit of keeping stranger secrets than hers.

While she hesitated he spoke again.

"But the whole face of the country must have changed since I knew it. Did you live in that neighbourhood?"

"For several years---all the first years of my married life, I lived on Moose Island itself, and my daughter---come to me a moment, Lucia,---was born there."

She took Lucia's hand and drew her forward. The remaining daylight fell full upon her dark hair and showed the striking outlines of her face and graceful head.

Father Paul looked in amazement---looked from the daughter to the mother, and the mother to the daughter, not knowing what to think or say.

Mrs. Costello relieved his embarrassment.

"My marriage was a strange one," she said. "The old pupil of whom I spoke to you just now, was my husband."

"Your husband, madame? Do I understand you? Mademoiselle's father then was---"

"An Indian."

He remained dumb with astonishment, not willing to give vent to the exclamations of surprise and almost sorrow which he felt might be offensive to his hostess, while she told him in the fewest possible words of her marriage to Christian and separation from him.

There was one thought in the old priest's mind, which had never, at anytime, occurred to Mrs. Costello---Christian had been destined for the Church. He had taken no vows, certainly; but for years he had been trained with that object, and at one time his vocation had seemed remarkably clear and strong---his marriage, at all, therefore, seemed to add enormity to his other guilt.

And yet there was a sort of lurking tenderness for the boy who had been the favourite pupil of the mission---who had seemed to have such natural aptitude for good of all sorts, until suddenly the mask dropped off, and the good turned to evil. It might be that his misdoings were but the result of a temporary possession of the evil one himself, and that at last all might have been well.

Mrs. Costello spoke more fully as she saw how deep was the listener's interest in her story; yet, when she came near the end, she almost shrank from the task. The sacred tenderness which belongs to the dead, had fallen like a veil over all her last memories of her husband; and now she wanted to share them with this good old man, whose teaching had made them what they were.

More than once she had to stop, to wait till her voice was less unsteady, but she went on to the very end---even to that strange burial in the waters. When all was told, there was a silence in the room; Father Paul had wet eyes, unseen in the dusk, and he did not care to speak; Lucia, whose tears were very ready of late; was crying quietly, with her head lying against the end of the sofa, while Mrs. Costello, leaning back on her cushions, waited quietly till the painful throbbing of her heart should subside.

At last Lucia rose and stole out of the room. She went to her own, and lay down on her bed still crying, though she could hardly tell why. Her trouble about the letter still haunted and worried her, and her spirit was so broken that she was like a sick child, neither able nor anxious to command herself.

Meanwhile the lamp had been brought into the sitting-room, and the two elder people had recommenced their conversation. It was of a less agitating kind now, but the subject was not very different, and both were deeply interested, so that time passed on quickly, and the evening was gone before they were aware. When Father Paul rose to go, he said, "Madam, I thank you for all you have told me. Your secret is safe with me; but I beg your permission to share the rest of your intelligence with one of my brothers---the only survivor except myself of that mission. If you will permit me, I shall visit you again---I should like much to make friends with mademoiselle, your daughter. She recalls to me strongly the features of my once greatly loved pupil."

With this little speech he departed, and left Mrs. Costello to wonder over this last page in her husband's history. Only a year ago how little would she have believed it possible that a man respectable, nay, venerable, as this old priest, would have thought kindly of Lucia for her father's sake!

After a little while she got up and went to look for her daughter. She found her sitting at a window, looking forlornly out at the lights and movements in the place, and not very ready to meet the lamplight when she came back into the sitting-room. Still, however, she heard nothing of the letter, nor even when she bade her mother good night and lingered a little at the very last, hoping for one word, even though it might be a reproach, to tell her that it was from Maurice.

She had to go to her room disconsolate. She heard Mrs. Costello go to hers, and close the door.

'Now,' she thought, 'it will be opened. It cannot be from *him*, or mamma could not have waited so long. But I don't know; she has such self-command! I used to fancy I could be patient at great need---and I am not one bit.'

However, as waiting and listening for every sound brought her no nearer to the obtaining of her wishes, she undressed and lay down, and began to try to imagine what the letter could be. Gradually, from thinking, she fell into dreaming, and dropped into a doze.

But before she was sound asleep, the door opened, and Mrs. Costello shading her candle with her hand, came into the room. Lucia had been so excited that the smallest movement was sufficient to awake her. She started up and said, "What is it mamma?" in a frightened voice.

"It is late," Mrs. Costello said. "Quite time you were asleep, but I am glad you are not. Lie down. I shall sit here for a few minutes and tell you what I want to say."

Lucia obeyed. She saw that her mother had a paper in her hand---no doubt the letter. Now she should hear.

"I had a letter to-night," her mother went on. "I dare say you wondered I did not open it at once. The truth was, I saw that it was in Mr. Leigh's writing, and I had reason to feel a little anxious as to what he might say."

"Yes, mamma."

Lucia could say no more; but she waited eagerly for the news that must be coming---news of Maurice.

"I shall give you the letter to read. Bring it back to me in the morning; but before you do so, think well what you will do. I would never ask you to be untrue to yourself in such a matter; but I entreat you to see that you do know your own mind, and to use your power of saying yes or no, if you should ever have it, not like a foolish girl, but like a woman, who must abide all her life by the consequences of her decision."

Mrs. Costello kissed her daughter's forehead, lighted the candle which stood on a small table, and leaving the letter beside it, went softly away.

The moment the door closed, Lucia eagerly stretched out her arm and took the letter. Her hands trembled; the light seemed dim; and Mr. Leigh's cramped old-fashioned handwriting was more illegible than ever; but she read eagerly, devouring the words.

"My dear Mrs. Costello,---You may think, perhaps, that I ought not to interfere in a matter in which I have not been consulted; but you know that to us, who have in all the world nothing to care for but one only child, that child's affairs are apt to be much the same as our own.

"Maurice told me, just before we left Canada, what I might have been certain of long before if I had not been a stupid old man---that it was the hope of his life to marry your Lucia. He went to Paris, certainly, with the intention of asking her to

marry him; and he came back quite unexpectedly, and looking ten years older---so changed, not only in looks, but in all his ways of speaking and acting, that it was clear to me some great misfortune had happened. Still he said very little to me, and it appears incredible that Lucia can have refused him. Perhaps that seems an arrogant speech for his father to make---but you will understand that I mean if she knew how constantly faithful he has been to her ever since they were both children;---and if she has done so in some momentary displeasure with him (for you know they used to have little quarrels sometimes), or if they have parted in anger, I beg of you, dear Mrs. Costello, for the sake of his mother, to try to put things right between them.

"I must tell you plainly that I am writing without my son's knowledge. I would very much rather he should never know I have written; but I have been urged to do it by some things that have happened lately.

"Some time ago Maurice, speaking to me of Mr. Beresford's will, told me that there had been a little difficulty in tracing one of the persons named as legatees. This was a cousin of Mr. Beresford's, with whom he seems to have had very little acquaintance, and no recent intercourse whatever; although, except Lady Dighton, she was the nearest relative he had. The lawyers discovered, while Maurice was in Canada, that this lady herself was dead. Her marriage had been unfortunate, and she had a spendthrift son, to whom, as his mother's heir, the money left by Mr. Beresford passed; but it appeared that she had also a daughter, who was in unhappy circumstances, being dependent on some relation of her father. Maurice, very naturally and properly, thought that, as head of the family, it was his duty to arrange something for this lady's comfort; and accordingly, being in London, where she lives, he called on her. She has since then been in this neighbourhood, and I have seen her several times. She is a young lady of agreeable appearance and manners, and seems qualified to become popular, if she were in a position to do so. I should not have thought of this, however, if it had not been for a few words Maurice said to me one day. I asked him some question about marrying, hoping to hear some allusion to Lucia, but he said very gravely that he should certainly marry some time; he had promised his grandfather to do so. Then he said suddenly, 'What would you think of Emma Landor for a daughter-in-law?' 'Emma Landor?' I answered; 'what has put her into your head?' 'Just this, sir,' he said; 'if I am to marry as a duty, I had better find somebody to whom I shall do some good, and not all evil, by marrying them. Emma would enjoy being mistress here; she would do it well, too; and having Hunsdon, she would not miss anything else that might be wanting.' With that he went out of the room; and after awhile I persuaded myself that he meant nothing serious by what he had said. However, Lady Dighton has spoken to me of the same thing since. Both she and I are convinced now that Maurice thinks---you may be, better than we are, able to understand why---that he has lost Lucia, and that, therefore, a marriage of convenience is all that he can hope for. Perhaps I am mistaken, or, at all events, too soon alarmed; but the mere idea of his proposing to this young lady throws me into a panic. If she should accept him (and Lady Dighton thinks she probably would), it would be a life-long misery. I am old-fashioned enough to think it would be a sin. He will not do it yet; perhaps he may see you again before he does. Do, I entreat of you, use the great influence you have always had with him to set things right. I have written a very long letter, because I could not ask your help without explaining; but I trust to your kindness to sympathize with my anxiety. Kindest regards to Lucia."

Lucia put down the paper. The whole letter, slowly and painfully deciphered, seemed to make no impression on her brain. She lay still, with a sort of stunned feeling, till the sense of what she had read came to her fully.

"Oh, Maurice!" she cried under her breath, "I want you! Come back to me! She shall never have you! You belong to me!" She covered her face with her hands, ashamed of even hearing her own words; then she got up and went across to her window, and looked out at the light burning on the tower---the light which shone far across the sea towards England. But presently she came back, and reached her little desk---Maurice's gift long ago---and knelt down on the floor, and wrote, kneeling,---

"Dear Maurice, you promised that if ever I wanted you, you would come. I want you now more than ever I did in my life. Please, please

come.

"LUCIA."

Then she leaned her head down till it almost touched the paper, and stayed so for a few minutes before she got up from her knees and extinguished her candle.

CHAPTER XXI.

In the morning, when Lucia woke, her note to Maurice lay on the open desk, where she had left it, and was the first thing to remind her of what she had heard and done. She went and took it up to destroy it, but laid it down again irresolutely.

"I do want him," she said to herself. "Without any nonsense, I ought to see him again before he does anything. I ought to tell him I am sorry for being so cross and ungrateful; and if he were married, or even engaged, I could not do it; it would be like confessing to a stranger."

There was something very like a sob, making her throat swell as she considered. He would perhaps see them again, Mr. Leigh said. Ought she to trust to that chance? But then her courage might fail if he came over just like any ordinary visitor; and her young cousins from Chester were coming; and if they should be there, it would be another hindrance. "And, oh! I must see him again," she said, "and find out whether we are not to be brother and sister any more."

She said "brother and sister" still, as she had done long ago; but she knew very well in her heart now, that *that* had never been the relationship Maurice desired. And so she tore her note into little bits, and remained helpless, but rebelling against her helplessness. In this humour she went to her mother's room.

Mrs. Costello was not yet up. Lucia knelt down by the bedside, and laid Mr. Leigh's letter beside her.

"Mamma, I am very sorry," she said; "I think Mr. Leigh must have been very unhappy before he would write to you so."

"I agree with you. He is not a man to take fright without cause, either."

"Why do you say, 'to take fright?'"

"Why do I say so? Are you such a child still, that you cannot understand a man like Maurice, always so tender towards women---Quixotically so, indeed---making himself believe that he is doing quite right in marrying a poor girl in Miss Landor's position, when, in fact, he is doing a great wrong? It is a double wrong to her and to himself; and one for which he would be certain to suffer, whether she did or not. And, Lucia I must say it, whatever evil may come of it, now or in the future, is our fault."

"Oh, mamma! mamma, don't say 'our'---say 'your'---if it is mine---for certainly it is not yours."

"I will say your fault, then; I believe you feel it so."

"But, mamma, really and truly, is it anybody's fault? Don't people often love those who can't care for them in return?"

"Really and truly, quite honestly and frankly, Lucia, was that the case with you?"

Lucia's eyes fell. She could not say yes.

"I will tell you," Mrs. Costello went on, "what I believe to be the truth, and you can set me right if I am wrong. You knew that Maurice had always been fond of you---devoted to you, in a way that had come by use to seem natural; and it had never entered your mind to think either how much of your regard he deserved, or how much he really had. I will not say anything about Percy; but I do believe," and she spoke very deliberately, laying her hand on Lucia's, "that since Maurice went away, you have been finding out that you had made a mistake, and that your heart had not been wrong nearly so much as your imagination."

Lucia was still silent. If she had spoken at all, it must have been to confess that her mother was right, and that was not easy to do. Whatever suspicions she might have in her own heart, it was a mortifying thing to be told plainly that her love for Percy was a mistake---a mere counterfeit---instead of the enduring devotion which it ought to have been. But she was very much humbled now, and patiently waited for what her mother might say next.

"Well!" Mrs. Costello began again, "it is no use now to go on talking of the past. The question is rather whether anything can be done for the future. What do you say?"

"What can I say, mamma? What can I do?"

"I don't know. Maurice used to tell me of his plans, but he is not likely to do that now. I would write and ask him to come over, but it is more than doubtful whether he would come."

"He promised that if ever I wanted him he would come," Lucia said, hesitating.

"If you were in need of him I am sure he would, but it would be a kind of impertinence to send for him on that plea when it was not really for that."

"But it *is*. Mamma, don't be angry with me again! Don't be disgusted with me; but I want, so badly, to see him and tell him I behaved wrongly. I was so cross, so ungrateful, so *horrid*, mamma, that it was enough to make him think all girls bad. I should *like* to tell him how sorry I am; I feel as if I should never be happy till I did."

When, after this outbreak, Lucia's face went down upon her hands, Mrs. Costello could not resist a little self-gratulatory smile. 'All may come right yet,' she thought to herself, 'if that wilful boy will only come over.'

"I think you are right," she said aloud. "Possibly he may come over, and then you will have an opportunity of speaking to him, perhaps."

"Yes," Lucia said, very slowly, thinking of her note, and of the comfort it would have been if she *could* but have sent it. "Oh, mamma, if we were but in England!"

"Useless wishes, dear. Give me your advice about writing to Mr. Leigh."

"You will write, will you not?"

"I suppose I must. Yet it is a difficult letter for me to answer."

"Could not you just say 'I will do what I can?'"

"Which is absolutely nothing---unless Maurice should really pay us a visit here, a thing not likely at present."

So the conversation ended without any satisfaction to Lucia. Nay, all her previous days had been happy compared to this one. She was devoured now, by a restless, jealous curiosity about that Miss Landor whom Mr. Leigh feared---she constantly found her thoughts reverting to this subject, however she might try to occupy them with others, and the tumult of her mind reacted upon her nerves. She could scarcely bear to sit still. It rained all afternoon and evening, and she could not go out, so that in the usual course of events she would have read aloud to her mother part of the time, and for the other part sat by the window with her crochet in her hand, but to-day she wandered about perpetually. She even opened the piano and began to sing her merriest old songs, but that soon ceased. She found the novel they were reading insufferably stupid, and took up a volume of Shakespeare for refreshment, but it opened naturally to the 'Merchant of Venice,' and, to the page where Portia says:---

"Though for myself alone,
I would not be ambitious in my wish,
To wish myself much better, yet for you
I would be trebled twenty times myself;
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich;
That only to stand high on your account,
I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,
Exceed account."

She shut the book---yes, this was a true woman, who for true love thought herself and all she possessed too little to give in return; but for the little, foolish, blind souls that could not see till too late, what *was* true love, she was no fit company.

The evening passed on wearily, and Mrs. Costello, who had her own share of disquiet also, though it was mixed with a little amusement at the impetuosity of these young people, who were so dear to her and so troublesome, did very little in the way of consolation.

Next day, the weather had cleared again, and was very lovely. In the afternoon, Lucia persuaded Mrs. Costello to go with her to the beach. There they got chairs, and sat for a long while enjoying the gay, and often comical, scene round them. Numbers of people were bathing, and beside the orthodox bathers, there was a party of little boys wading about with bare legs, and playing all sorts of pranks in the water.

A little way to the left of where they sat, there was a curious kind of wooden pier, which ran far away out into the sea and terminated in a small square wooden building. The whole thing was raised on piles about five or six feet above the present level of the water which flowed underneath it. The pier itself, in fact, was only a narrow bridge or footpath railed partly on one side only, partly on both, and with an oddly unsafe and yet tempting look about it. Lucia had been attracted by it before, and she drew her mother's attention to it now---

"Look, mamma," she said, "does not it seem as if one could almost cross the Channel on it, it goes so far out. See that woman, now---I have watched since she started from this end, and now you can scarcely distinguish her figure."

"There is a priest coming along it---is it not Father Paul?"

"I do believe it is. I wish he would come and talk to you for a little while, and then I would go."

"You need not stay for that, dear. I shall sit here alone quite comfortably, if you wish to go out there."

"I should like very much to go. I want to see what the sea looks like away from the beach. There is no harm, is there?"

"None whatever. Go, and I will watch you."

Lucia rose to go.

"It *is* Father Paul," she said, "and he is coming this way."

She lingered a minute, and the priest, who had recognized them, came up.

Mrs. Costello told him of Lucia's wish to go out on the pier, and he assured her she would enjoy it.

"The air seems even fresher there than here," he said; and she went off, and left him and her mother together.

For a few minutes they talked about the weather, the sea, and the people about them, as two slight acquaintances would naturally do; but then, when there had been a momentary pause, Father Paul startled Mrs. Costello, by saying,

"Last night, madam, you told me of persons I had not heard of for years---this morning, strangely enough, I have met with a person of whom you probably know something---or knew something formerly."

"I?" she answered. "Impossible! I know no one in France."

"This is not a Frenchman. He is named Bailey, an American, I believe."

"Bailey?" Mrs. Costello repeated, terrified. "Surely he is not here?"

"There is a man of that name here---a miserable ruined gambler, who says that he knows Moose Island, and once travelled in Europe with a party of Indians."

"And what is he doing now?"

"Nothing. He is the most wretched, squalid object you can imagine. He came to me this morning to ask for the loan of a few francs. He had not even the honesty to beg without some pretence of an intention to pay."

"Is he so low then as to need to beg?"

"Madame, he is a gambler, I repeat it. If he had a hundred francs to-night, he would most likely be penniless to-morrow morning."

"And he claimed charity from you because of your connection with Canada?"

"Exactly. Having no other plea. I was right, madame: you know this man?"

"He was my bitterest enemy!" she answered, half rising in her vehemence. "But for him I might have had a happy life."

Father Paul looked shocked.

"Forgive me," he said, in a troubled voice, "I am grieved to have spoken of him."

"On the contrary, I am thankful you did so. If I had met him by chance in the street, I believe he could not change so much that I should not know him, and he---"

She stopped, then asked abruptly,

"You did not mention me?"

"Most assuredly not."

"Yet he might recognise me. What shall I do?"

She was speaking to herself, and not to her companion now, and she looked impatiently towards the pier where Lucia was slowly coming back.

Presently she recovered herself a little, and asked a few more questions about Bailey. She gathered from the answers that he had been some time at Bourg-Cailloux, getting gradually more poverty-stricken and utterly disreputable. That he was now wandering about without a home, or money even for gambling. She knew enough of the man to be certain that under such circumstances he would snatch at any means of obtaining money, and what means easier, if he only knew it, than to threaten and persecute her. And at any moment he might discover her---her very acquaintance with Father Paul might betray her to him. She cast a terrified look over all the groups of people on the beach, half expecting to see the well-remembered features of Bailey among them; but he was not there. Close by her, however, stood Lucia, and at a little distance the carriage, which had been ordered to fetch them, was just drawing up.

CHAPTER XXII.

Mrs. Costello said nothing to Lucia on their way home about Bailey. She sat in her corner of the carriage, leaning back and thinking despairingly what to do. Her spirits had so far given way with her failing health that she no longer felt the courage necessary to face annoyance. And it was plainly to be feared that in case this man discovered her, he would have no scruples, being so needy and degraded, about using every means in his power to extort money from her. Undoubtedly he had such means---he had but to tell her story, as he *could* tell it, and not only her own life, but Lucia's, would be made wretched; the separation from Maurice, which she was beginning to hope might be only temporary, would become irrevocable---and, what seemed to her still more terrible, there would be perpetual demands from her enemy, and the misery of perpetual contact with him. To buy off such a man, at once and finally, was, she knew, utterly beyond her power---what then could she do?

When they were at home, and the door of their sitting-room safely closed, she turned anxiously to Lucia,

"Bailey is here," she said.

"Bailey?" Lucia repeated---she had forgotten the name.

"The man who was present at my marriage---the American."

"Mamma! How do you know?"

"Father Paul told me just now."

"How did he know?"

"The wretched man had gone to him begging, and he mentioned him to me by chance, thinking I might know something about him."

"But surely he would not remember you?"

"I think he would. If by any accident he met you and me together, I am certain he would."

"Ah! I am so like my father."

"Lucia, I *dare* not meet him. I believe the very sight of him would kill me."

"Let us go away, mamma. He knows nothing about us yet. We might start to-morrow."

"Where should we go? Even at our own door we might meet him, at the railway station---anywhere. No, it is only inside these walls we are safe, and scarcely here."

Mrs. Costello was literally trembling, the panic which had seized her was so great; Lucia, not fully understanding yet, could not help being infected by her terror.

"But, mamma, we cannot shut ourselves up in these rooms. That, with the constant fear added to it, would soon make you ill again."

"What can we do?" Mrs. Costello repeated helplessly. "If, indeed, we could start to-night, and go south, or go out of France altogether. But I have not even money in the house for our journey."

"And if you had, you have not strength for it. Would not it be well to consult Mr. Wynter? If we had any friend here who would make the arrangement for us, I don't see why we should not be able to go away without any fear of meeting this man."

"No; that would not do. To consult George would just be opening up again all that was most painful---it would be almost as bad as meeting Bailey himself."

"And we could not be stopped even if we did meet Bailey. Let me go alone, mamma, and do what is to be done---it is not much. If I meet him I shall not know it, and seeing me alone, the likeness cannot be so strong as to make him recognize me all at once."

"But he might see us together when we start from here; and he might trace us. He would know at once that he could get money from me, and for money he would do anything."

She leaned back, and was silent a minute.

"We must keep closely shut up for a little while, till I can decide what to do. I wish Maurice would come."

Lucia looked up eagerly. It was her own thought, though she had not dared to say it. Maurice could always find the way out of a difficulty.

"Mamma," she said anxiously, but with some hesitation, "I think this is need---the kind of need Maurice meant."

"Need, truly. But I do not know---"

"He would be glad to help you. And he knows all about us."

"Yes, I should not have to make long explanations to him."

Just then there was a knock at the door. Both started violently. Absurd as it was, they both expected to see Bailey himself enter. Instead, they saw Madame Everaert, her round face flushed with walking and her hands full of flowers.

"For mademoiselle," she said, laying them down on the table, and nodding and smiling good humouredly. "I have been to Rosendahl to see my goddaughter there, and she has a magnificent garden, so I brought a few flowers for mademoiselle."

Lucia thanked her, and admired the flowers, and she went away without suspecting the fright her visit had caused.

"Get your desk, Lucia," Mrs. Costello said, gasping for breath, and almost exhausted by the terrible beating of her heart, "and write a note for me."

The desk was brought and opened.

"Is it to Maurice?" Lucia asked.

"Yes. Say that we are in great need of a friend."

Lucia began. She found it much more difficult than she had done the other night, when she wrote those few impetuous lines which had been afterwards torn up.

"Dear Maurice," she said, "mamma tells me to write to you, and say that something has happened which has frightened her very much, and that we are in great need of a friend. Will you keep your promise, and come to us?"

This was what she showed to her mother. When Mrs. Costello had approved of it, she wrote a few words more.

"I want to ask you to forgive me. I don't deserve it, but I am so unhappy.

"Yours affectionately,

"LUCIA."

She hesitated a little how to sign herself, but finally wrote just what she had been accustomed to put to all her little notes written to Maurice during his absences from Cacouna in the old days.

When the letter had been sealed and sent off by Madame Everaert's servant to the post-office, they began to feel that all they could do for the present was done. Mrs. Costello lay still on her sofa, without having strength or energy to talk, and Lucia took her never-finished crochet, and sat in her old place by the window.

But very soon it grew too dark to work. The Place was lighted, and alive with people passing to and fro. The windows of the guard house opposite were brilliant, and from those of a cafe on the same side as Madame Everaert's there shone

out, half across the square, a broad line of light. In this way, at two places, the figures of those who moved about the pavement on each side of the Place, were very plainly visible; even the faces of some could be distinguished. Lucia watched these people to-night with a new interest. Every time the strong glare fell upon a shabby slouching figure, or on a poorly dressed man who wanted the air of being a Frenchman, she thought, "Is that Bailey?" When the lamp came in, Mrs. Costello had fallen asleep, so Lucia turned it down low, and still sat at the window. The light on the tower shone out clear and bright--above it the stars looked pale, but the sky was perfectly serene. Maurice, if he came soon, had every prospect of a fair passage. "And he will come," she thought to herself, "even if he is really too much vexed with me to forgive me, he will come for mamma's sake."

All next day they both kept indoors. Lucia tried to persuade her mother to drive out into the country, but even for this Mrs. Costello had not courage. At the same time she seemed to be losing all sense of security in the house. She fancied she had not sufficiently impressed on Father Paul the importance of not betraying her in any way to Bailey. She wished to write and remind him of this, but she dared not lest her note should fall into wrong hands. Then she thought of asking him to visit her, but hesitated also about that till it was too late. In short, was in a perfectly unreasonable and incapable condition--fear had taken such hold of her in her weak state of health that Lucia began to think it would end in nervous fever. With her the dread of Bailey began to be quite lost in apprehension for her mother, and her own affairs had to be put altogether on one side to make room for these new anxieties.

In the afternoon of that day Mrs. Costello suddenly roused herself from a fit of thought.

"We must go somewhere," she said. "That is certain, whatever else is. As soon as Maurice comes we ought to be prepared to start. Do go, Lucia, and see if there is any packing you can do---without attracting attention, you know."

"But, mamma," Lucia objected, "Maurice cannot be here to-day, nor even, I believe, to-morrow, at the very soonest, and I will soon do what there is to do."

"There is a great deal. And I can't help you, my poor child. And there ought not to be a moment's unnecessary delay."

Lucia had to yield. She began to pack as if all their arrangements were made, though they had no idea either when, or to what end, their wanderings would recommence, nor were able to give a hint to those about them of their intended departure.

Another restless night passed, and another day began. There was the faintest possibility, they calculated, that Maurice, if he started as soon as he received Lucia's note, might reach them late at night.

It was but the shadow of a chance, for Hunsdon, as they knew, lay at some distance from either post-office or railway station, and the letter might not reach him till this very morning. Yet, since he *might* come, they must do all they could to be ready. The day was very hot. All the windows were open, and the shutters closed; a drowsy heat and stillness filled the rooms. Mrs. Costello walked about perpetually. She had tried to help Lucia, but had been obliged to leave off and content herself with gathering up, here and there, the things that were in daily use, and bringing them to Lucia to put away. They said very little to each other. Mrs. Costello could think of nothing but Bailey, and she did not dare to talk about him from some fanciful fear of being overheard. Lucia thought of her mother's health and of Maurice, and Mrs. Costello had no attention to spare for either.

Suddenly, sounding very loud in the stillness, there came the roll of a carriage over the rough stones of the Place. It stopped; there was a moment's pause, and then a hasty ring at the door-bell. Both mother and daughter paused and listened. There was a quick movement downstairs--a foot which was swifter and lighter than Madame Everaert's on the staircase---and Maurice at the sitting-room door.

Mrs. Costello went forward from the doorway where she had been arrested by the sound of his coming; Lucia, kneeling before a trunk in the adjoining room, saw him standing there, and sprang to her feet; he came in glad, eager, impatient to know what they wanted of him; and before any of them had time to think about it, this meeting, so much desired and dreaded, was over.

"But how could you come so soon?" Mrs. Costello asked. "We did not expect you till to-morrow."

"By the greatest chance. I had been in town for two days. Our station and post-office are at the same place. When they met me at the station, they brought me letters which had just arrived, and yours was among them. So I was able to catch the next train back to London, instead of going home."

"And which way did you come? The boat is not in yet?"

"By Calais. It was quicker. Now tell me what has happened."

Mrs. Costello looked carefully to see that the door was shut. Then she told Maurice who and what she feared, and how she could not even leave Bourg-Cailloux without help.

"Yet, I think I ought to leave," she said.

"Of course you ought," Maurice answered. "You must go to England."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"You must go to England," Maurice said decidedly. "It is an easy journey, and you would be quite safe there."

"But I ought not to go to England," Mrs. Costello answered rather uncertainly. "And Bailey might follow us there."

"I doubt that. By what you say, too, if he were in England, we might perhaps set the police to watch him, which would prevent his annoying you. However, the thing to do is to carry you off before he has any idea you are in Europe at all."

Lucia stayed long enough to see that the mere presence of Maurice inspired her mother with fresh courage; then she went back to her packing, leaving the door ajar that she might hear their voices. She went on with her work in a strange tumult and confusion. Not a word beyond the first greetings had passed between Maurice and herself, but she could not help feeling as if their positions were somehow changed--and not for the worse.

There had been no words; but just for one second Maurice had held her hand and looked at her very earnestly; whereupon she had felt her cheeks grow very hot, and her eyes go down to the ground as if she were making some confession.

After that he released her, and she went about her occupations. She began to wonder now whether she would have to tell him how sorry she was, or whether enough had been said; and to incline to the last opinion.

Meanwhile she went on busily. In about half an hour she heard Maurice go out, and then Mrs. Costello came to her.

"He is gone to make inquiries," she said; "you know there is a boat to-night, but then we may not be able to get berths."

"To-night, mamma, for England?"

Mrs. Costello looked a little displeased at Lucia's surprise, "To be sure," she said; "why, my dear child, you yourself thought England would be the best place."

"I did *think* so certainly, but I did not know I had said it."

"Well, can we be ready?"

"I can finish packing in an hour, but there is Madame Everaert to arrange with."

"We must wait till Maurice comes back before doing that."

"I suppose we must; mamma, will you please go and lie down? Otherwise you will not be able to go."

Mrs. Costello smiled. She felt able for any exertion to escape from her enemy under Maurice's guidance. However, she did as her daughter wished, and lay quietly waiting for his coming back.

Lucia heard his steps first, notwithstanding. She had her last trunk just ready for locking, and went into the sitting-room to hear the decision, with her hair a little disordered and a bright flush of excitement and fatigue on her cheeks.

"Are we to go?" she said quickly.

"I think you should if you can," he answered her. "But can you be ready?"

"By what time?"

"Nine o'clock."

"Everything is packed. Half an hour is all we really need now."

"Three hours to spare then. Everything is in our favour. It is not a bad boat, and there is room for us on board."

"Have you taken berths then?" Mrs. Costello asked.

"Yes. And I will tell you why I did so without waiting to consult you. I made some inquiries about this fellow Bailey, and found out that it would most likely not suit him to go to England for some time to come."

"You inquired about him? Good heavens, what a risk!"

"You forget, dear Mrs. Costello, that I was meant for a lawyer. Don't be afraid. He has no more thought of you than of the Khan of Tartary."

"If you only knew the comfort it is having you, Maurice; I was quite helpless, quite upset by this last terror."

"But you had been ill, mamma," Lucia interposed. "It was no wonder you were upset."

"That is not kind, Lucia," Maurice said, turning to her with a half smile. "Mrs. Costello wishes to make me believe she depends on me, and you try to take away the flattering impression."

"Oh! no; I did not mean that. Mamma knows---" but there she got into confusion and stopped.

"Well," Mrs. Costello said, "we had better send for Madame Everaert, and tell her we are going."

Madame came. She was desolated, but had nothing to say against the departure of her lodgers, and, as Lucia had told Maurice, half an hour was enough for the settling of their last affairs at Bourg-Cailloux.

Mrs. Costello did not wish to go on board the boat till near the hour named for sailing; it was well, too, that she should have as much rest as possible before her journey. She kept on her sofa, therefore, where so large a portion of her time lately had been spent; and Lucia, from habit, took her seat by the window.

Then in the quiet twilight arose the question, "Where are we to go when we reach England?"

"Where?" Maurice said, "why, to Hunsdon, of course. My father will be so pleased---and Louisa will come rushing over in ecstasies the moment she hears."

"That might be all very well," Mrs. Costello said, "if we were only coming to England as visitors, but since we are not, I shall wish to find a place where we can settle as quickly as possible. I should certainly like it to be within reach of Hunsdon, if we can manage it."

"Come to Hunsdon first, at any rate, and look out."

"I think not, Maurice. We might stay in London for a week or two."

"Well, if you *prefer* it. But, at all events, I know perfectly well that one week of London will be as much as either of you can bear. When you have had that, I shall try again to persuade you."

While they talked, Lucia sat looking out. For the last time she saw the Place grow dusky, and then flame out with gas---for the last time she watched the lighting of the beacon, and wondered how far on their way they would be able to see it still.

Eight o'clock struck; then a quarter past, and it was time to go.

The boat lay in the dock. On board, a faint light gleamed out from the cabin-door, but everything on shore was dark. Passengers were arriving each moment, and their luggage stood piled up ready to be embarked. Sailors were talking or shouting to each other in English and French; the cargo of fruit and vegetables was still being stowed away, and people were running against other people in the darkness, and trying vainly to discover their own trunks on the deck, or their own berths in the cabin. Into the midst of all this confusion Maurice brought his charges; but as he had been on board in the afternoon, he knew where to take them, and they found their own quarters without difficulty. While he saw to their packages, they made their arrangements for the night.

"I shall lie down at once," Mrs. Costello said. "It is not uncomfortable here, and I think it is always best."

"But it is so early, and on deck the air is so pleasant. Should you mind my leaving you for a little while?"

"Not at all. There is no reason why you should stay down here if you dislike it. Maurice will take care of you."

But Lucia had no intention of waiting for Maurice. She saw her mother comfortably settled, and then stole up alone to the deck. The boat had not yet started; it seemed to lie in the very shadow of the quaint old town, and Lucia could trace the outline of the buildings against the starry sky.

She felt a little soft sensation of regret at saying good-bye to this last corner of France. 'And yet,' she thought, 'I have been very unhappy here. I wonder if England will be happier?'

She stood leaning against the bulwarks, looking now at the town, now at the dark glimmer of the water below, and, to tell the truth, beginning to wonder where Maurice was. While she wondered, he came up to her and spoke.

"Lucia, it *is* you then? I thought you would not be able to stay below."

"No. It is so hot. Here the night is lovely."

"The deck is tolerably clear now. Come and walk up and down a little---unless you are tired?"

"I am tired, but to walk will rest me."

As she turned he took her hand and put it through his arm. For a minute they were silent.

"Two days ago, Lucia," Maurice said "I thought this was an impossibility."

"What!"

"Our being together---as we are now."

"Did you? But you had promised to come if ever we were in trouble."

"Yes. And I meant to keep my word. But I fancied you would never send for me."

"You see," Lucia said, trying to speak lightly, "that we had no other friend to send for."

"Is that so? Was that the only reason?"

"Maurice!"

"Tell me something, Lucia. Did you mean the last sentence of your note?"

"What was it?"

"You said you were unhappy."

"Oh! yes, I was. *So* unhappy---I was thinking of it just now."

"And at present? Are you unhappy still?"

"You know I am not."

"I have been miserable, too, lately. Horribly miserable. I was ready to do I can't tell you what absurdities. Until your note came."

He stopped a moment, but she had nothing to say.

"It is a great comfort to have got so far," he went on, "but I suppose one is never satisfied. Now that I am not quite miserable, I should like to be quite happy."

Lucia could not help laughing, though she did so a little nervously.

"Don't be unreasonable," she said.

"But I am. I must needs put it to the touch again. Lucia, you know what I want to say; can't you forget the past, and come home to Hunsdon and be my wife?"

They stood still side by side, in the starry darkness and neither of them knew very well for a few minutes what they said. Only Maurice understood that the object of his life was gained; and Lucia felt that from henceforth, for ever, she would never be perverse, or passionate, or wilful again, for Maurice had forgiven her, and loved her still.

They never noticed that the boat was delayed beyond its time, and that other passengers chafed at the delay. They stayed on deck in the starlight, and said little to each other, but they both felt that a new life had begun---a life which seemed to be grafted on the old one before their troubles, and to have nothing to do with this last year. When Maurice was about to say good-night at the cabin door, he made the first allusion to what had brought them together.

"I shall pension Bailey," he said. "His last good deed blots out all his misdoings."

"What good deed?"

"Frightening you."

"He did not frighten me."

"Frightening Mrs. Costello then. It comes to the same thing in the end. But why did not you send for your cousin, Mr. Wynter?"

"Ask mamma."

"I have something more interesting to ask her."

Mrs. Costello knew tolerably well, when Lucia kissed her that night, what had happened. She said nothing audibly, but in her heart there was a *Nunc Dimittis* sung thankfully; and in spite of the sea, she fell asleep over it. The night was as calm as it could be, and Maurice, who had no inclination for sleep or for the presence of the crowd below, spent most of it on deck. Towards morning he went down; but at seven o'clock, when Lucia peeped out, he was up again and waiting for her. She only gave him a little nod and smile, however, and then retreated, but presently came back with her mother.

They got chairs and sat watching the coast, which was quickly coming nearer, and the vessels which they passed lying out in the still waters.

"We shall be in in two hours," Maurice said, "though we were late starting. The captain says he has not had such a good run this year."

"For which I am very thankful," Mrs. Costello answered.

"What a mercy it is to have got away so easily; it was well we sent to you, Maurice."

"Very well; the best thing that ever was done. Lucia and I agreed as to that last night."

Lucia pouted the very least in the world, and her mother smiled.

"It seems to me you took a long while to settle the question. I thought she was never coming."

"Why, mamma? I came as soon as the boat started."

"We have settled our differences," Maurice said, leaning down to speak quietly to Mrs. Costello. "Do you give us leave to make our own arrangements for the future?"

"I think you are pretty sure of my leave."

"Then we all go straight on to Hunsdon together?"

"Are those your arrangements?"

"Not mine, certainly," Lucia interposed. "I thought we were to stay in London."

"But why?"

"Don't you see," Mrs. Costello asked, "that any little compact you two children may have made has nothing to do with the necessity of my finding a house for myself and my daughter---as long as she is only my daughter."

Maurice had to give way a second time.

"Very well then," he said. "At all events you can't forbid me to stay in London, too."

"But I certainly shall. You may stay and see us settled, but after that you are to go home and attend to your own affairs."

They reached London by noon, and before night they found, and took possession of, a lodging which Mrs. Costello said to herself would suit them very well until Lucia should be married; after which, of course, she would want to settle near Hunsdon. Maurice spent the evening with them, but was only allowed to do so on condition of leaving London for home next morning.

As soon as they were at all settled, Mrs. Costello wrote to her cousin. She told him that she had had urgent reason for quitting France suddenly; that other causes had weighed with her in deciding to return to England, and that she was anxious to see and consult with him. She begged him, therefore, to come up to town and to bring one at least of his daughters with him on a visit to Lucia.

When the letter had been sent off, she said to her daughter, "Suppose that we are penniless in consequence of our flight? What is to be done then?"

"Surely that cannot be?"

"I do not know until I see my cousin. I think it must depend legally on the terms of your grandfather's will; but, in fact, I suppose George had the decision in his hands."

After this they both looked anxiously for Mr. Wynter's answer.

CHAPTER XXIV.

But before Mr. Wynter had time to reply---indeed, by the very first possible post---came a letter to Lucia, the sight of which made her very rosy. She had had plenty of letters from Maurice long ago, and never blushed over them as she did over this; but then this was so different. She did not even like to read it in her mother's presence. She just glanced at it there, and carried it off to devour in comfort alone. It was quite short, after all, for he had scarcely had ten minutes before the post hour; but it said---beside several things which were of no interest except to the reader---that he had found Lady Dighton at Hunsdon on his arrival, and had told her and his father together of his engagement; that his cousin was going to write and invite Mrs. Costello to Dighton; and that Mr. Leigh said, if they did not come down immediately, he should be obliged to start for London himself to tell them how pleased he was.

"At any rate," Maurice concluded, "I shall be in town again on Saturday. I find I have business to see my lawyer about."

All this---as well as the rest of the note---was very agreeable. Lucia went and sat down on a footstool at her mother's feet to tell her the news. Mrs. Costello laid her hand on her child's head and sighed softly.

"You will have to give up this fashion of yours, darling," she said, "you must learn to be a woman now."

Lucia laughed.

"I don't believe I ever shall," she answered. "At least, not with you or with Maurice."

"Would you like to go to Dighton?"

She considered for a minute.

"Yes, mamma, I think I should. You know how things are in those great houses; but I have never seen anything but Canada, and even there, just the country. I should not like, by-and-by, for people to laugh at Maurice, because I was only an ignorant country girl."

She spoke very slowly and timidly; but Mrs. Costello began to think she was right. It would be as well that the future mistress of Hunsdon should have some little introduction to her new world, to prepare her for "by-and-by."

Next day came two letters for Mrs. Costello, as well as one for Lucia. The first was from Lady Dighton full of congratulation, and pressing her invitation; the other, from Mr. Wynter, announced that he, his wife, and daughter, would be in London next evening. Next evening was Saturday, and Maurice also would be there, and would, of course spend Sunday with them; so that they had a prospect of plenty of guests.

Maurice, however, arrived early in the day. He had established himself at a neighbouring hotel, and came in quite with the old air of being at home. He made a little grimace when he heard of the others who were expected, but contented himself by making the most of the hours before their train was due. He found an opportunity also of conveying to Mrs. Costello his conviction that Hunsdon was very much in want of a lady to make it comfortable, and that Lucia would be much better there than shut up in London. The fact that London was in its glory at that moment made no impression on him.

"That is just it," he said, when this was suggested to him. "I want to get it settled and bring her back to enjoy herself here a little before the season is over."

It seemed, indeed, pretty evident that the present state of things could not last long; there was no reason why it should, and nothing but the bride's preparations to delay the long-desired wedding.

The Wynters came about nine o'clock. Mrs. Wynter instantly recognized Maurice. Her daughters had speculated enough about her mysterious visitor that winter night, to have prevented her forgetting him, if she would otherwise have done so, and the state of affairs at present was very soon evident as an explanation of the mystery. When the party separated for the night, Mrs. Costello and Mr. Wynter remained in the drawing-room for that consultation for which he had come, while his wife and daughter stayed together upstairs to talk over their new relations before going to bed.

Mrs. Costello, as briefly as possible, made her cousin comprehend that she had been compelled to leave France, and had fled to England because it was the most accessible refuge.

"I never meant to have come back," she said. "I have never allowed myself to think of it, because I could not disobey my father again."

"I am glad you have come, to tell you the truth;" he answered. "I do not at all imagine that, in your present circumstances, my uncle would have wished to keep you away."

Mrs. Costello looked relieved.

"I am almost inclined to go further," he continued, "and to say that he must have anticipated your return."

"Why?"

"Because in his will he gives you your income unconditionally, and only expresses a wish that you should not come back."

"Is it so really?"

"Certainly. But you have a copy of the will."

"It has not been unpacked since we came from Canada. I had made it so much my duty to obey the request that I had forgotten it had no condition attached to it."

"It has none."

"I am very glad; and you think he would have changed his mind now?"

"I think so. Especially as it seems to me Lucia is likely to settle in England."

"Yes, indeed. That was the second thing I wanted to speak to you about."

"They are engaged, I suppose?"

"Yes; it has been the wish of my heart for years. Maurice is like a son to me."

They discussed the matter in its more commonplace aspect. The wealth and position of the bridegroom elect were points as to which Mr. Wynter felt it his business to inquire, and when he found these so satisfactory, he congratulated his cousin with great cordiality, and plainly expressed his opinion that delays in such a case were useless and objectionable. He liked Lucia, and admired her, and thought, too, that there would be no better way of blotting out the remembrance of the mother's unfortunate marriage than by a prosperous one on the part of the daughter.

Meantime Mrs. Wynter sat in an easy-chair by her dressing-table, and her daughter was curled up on the floor near her.

"Well, mamma," Miss Wynter said, "you see I was right. I knew perfectly well that there must be some romance at the bottom of it all."

"You were very wise, my dear."

"And, mamma, if I had seen Lucia, I should have been still more sure. Why, she is perfectly lovely! I hope she will let me be her bridesmaid."

"Tiny, you know I don't approve of your talking in that way."

"What way, mamma? Of course, they are going to be married. Anybody can see that."

"If they are, no doubt we shall hear in good time."

"And I am sure, if either of us were to marry half as well, the whole house would be in a flutter. I mean to be very good friends with Lucia, and then, perhaps, she will invite me to go and see her. And I *must* be her bridesmaid, because I am her nearest relation; and she can't have any friends in England, and I shall make her let me have a white dress with blue ribbons."

Mrs. Wynter still reproved, but she smiled, too; and Tiny being a spoiled child, needed no greater encouragement. She stopped in her mother's room until she heard Mr. Wynter coming, when she fled, dishevelled, to her own, and dropped asleep, to dream of following Lucia up the aisle of an impossible church, dressed in white with ribbons of *bleu de ciel*.

Lucia perhaps had said to herself also that she meant to be good friends with Tiny. At all events, the two girls did get on excellently together; before the week which the Wynters spent in London was at an end, they had discussed as much of Lucia's love story as she was disposed to tell, and arranged that Tiny and her sister should really officiate on that occasion to which everybody's thoughts were now beginning to be directed.

Another week found the Costellos at Dighton. They meant to stay a fortnight or three weeks, and then to return to town until the marriage; but of this no one of their Norfolk friends would hear a word. Lady Dighton, Maurice, and Mr. Leigh had made up their minds that Lucia should not leave the county until she did so a bride; and they carried their point. The wedding-day was fixed; and Lucia found herself left, at last, almost without a voice in the decision of her own destiny.

And yet, these last weeks of her girlhood were almost too happy. She went over several times with her mother and Lady Dighton to Hunsdon, and grew familiar with her future home; she saw the charming rooms that were being prepared for herself, and could sit down in the midst of all this new wealth and luxury, and talk with Maurice about the old times when they had no splendour, but little less happiness than now; and she had delicious hours of castle-building, sometimes alone, sometimes with her betrothed, which were pleasanter than any actual realization of their dreams could be.

Of course, they had endless talks, in which they said the same things over and over again, or said nothing at all; but they knew each other so thoroughly now, and each was so completely acquainted with all the other's past that there was truly nothing for them to tell or to hear, except the one old story which is always new.

One day, however, Maurice came over to Dighton in a great hurry, with a letter for Lucia to read. He took her out into the garden, and when they were quite alone he took it out and showed it to her.

"What is it?" she said. "It looks like a French letter."

"It is French. Do you remember your friend, Father Paul?"

"Of course. Oh, Maurice! it cannot be about Bailey?"

"Indeed, it is. But don't look frightened. I wrote to Father Paul, and this is his answer."

"What made you write?"

"Did not I say I would pension Bailey? *I* don't forget my promises if other people do."

"Surely, you were only joking?"

"Very far from it, I assure you. Your good friend undertook to manage it, and he writes to me that my letter only arrived in time; that Bailey was ill, and quite dependent on charity, and that he is willing to administer the money I send in small doses suitable to the patient's condition."

"But, Maurice, it is perfect nonsense. Why should you give money to that wretched man? *We* might, indeed, do something for him."

"Who are 'we'? You had better be careful at present how you use your personal pronouns."

"I meant mamma and I might, of course."

"I do not see the 'of course' at all. Mamma has nothing whatever to do with it--nor even you. This is simply a mark of gratitude to Mr. Bailey for a service he did me lately."

Lucia let her hand rest a little less lightly on Maurice's arm.

"And me too," she said softly.

"Use your 'we' in its right sense, then, and *we* will reward him. But not unless you are sure that you do not repent having been frightened."

"Ah! you don't know how glad I was when mamma made me write that note. It did better than the one I tore up."

"What was that? Did you tear one up?"

"Yes. After all, I don't believe you were as miserable as I was; for I wrote once; I did actually write and ask you to come---only I tore up the note---and you were consoling yourself with Miss Landor."

"Miss Landor! By the way, has she been asked to come over, for the tenth?"

"I don't know. You ought to ask her yourself. Why did not you propose to her, Maurice? Or perhaps you did?"

"If I did not, you may thank Bailey. Yes, indeed, Lucia, you contrived so well to persuade me you never would care for me that I began to imagine it was best I should marry her; that is, supposing she would have me."

"And all the while I was doing nothing but think of you, and of how wicked and ungrateful and all sorts of bad things I had been in Paris."

"And I---" *etc. etc.*

The rest of their conversation that morning was much like it was on other days, and certainly not worth repeating. Lucia, however, took the first opportunity of speaking to Lady Dighton about Miss Landor, and seeing that her invitation for the wedding was not neglected.

The tenth of July, Lucia's birthday and her marriage-day, came quickly to end these pleasant weeks of courtship. It was glorious weather---never bride in our English climate had more sunshine on her---and the whole county rung with the report of her wonderful beauty, and of the romantic story of these two young people, who had suddenly appeared from the unknown regions of Canada, and taken such a prominent and brilliant place in the neighbourhood.

But they troubled themselves little just then, either with their own marvellous fortunes or with the gossip of their neighbours. Out of the quaint old church where generations of Dightons had been married and buried, they came together, man and wife; and went away into "that new world which is the old," to fulfil, as they best might, the dream to which one of them had been so faithful. They went away in a great clamour of bells and voices, and left Mrs. Costello alone, to comfort herself with the thought that the changes and troubles of the past had but served to redeem its errors, and to bring her, at last, the fuller and more perfect realization of her heart's desire.

THE END.

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