

**MRS.  
ALEXANDER**

KATE VERNON,  
VOL. 2 (OF 3)

Mrs. Alexander

**Kate Vernon, Vol. 2 (of 3)**

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# **Mrs. Alexander**

## **Kate Vernon, Vol. 2 (of 3)**

### **A Tale. In three volumes**

#### **CHAPTER I**

#### **CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON**

It would give a very false idea of Kate Vernon's character, were we to say that Captain Egerton's departure did not leave a blank in the quiet routine of her life. Indeed, she was rather surprised to find how closely he had linked himself with the pleasures and occupations of the secluded little circle amongst whom accident had thrown him. She missed his ready companionship, and the amusing contrariety of his opinions and prejudices; she missed the interested attention with which he listened to every word that fell from her lips, and her eye, peculiarly alive to beauty in every form, missed his distinguished, soldierly figure, and bold, frank, open face. But her regrets did not even border on the sentimental, and were spoken as openly as her grandfather's, who every hour in the day, for a week, at least, after his departure, might be heard to say – "If Fred Egerton was here, he would do this, or that, for me." In short, Kate had never dreamt of Egerton as a lover. Marriage was to her a distant possibility – desirable, certainly, in due time, as she always considered it, if happy, the happiest state of life; but marriage with a soldier, who could not be always near her grandfather, was something so utterly beyond the powers of her imagination to conceive, that it gave her all the ease and security she might have felt with a brother.

So the winter wore steadily away. The morning's study – the afternoon walk with her grandfather – often to visit the sick and needy – the interchange of contrasting thought with Winter and the organist, kept Miss Vernon too wholesomely active both in mind and body to permit the pleasant monotony of her life to degenerate into stagnation.

But the half-hour in the evening, while her grandfather dosed, was the happiest portion of the day to her; when she leaned back in her chair gazing at the fire-light as it danced upon the wall and cast uncouth shadows, and, following some train of thought suggested by the reading, or occurrences of the day, dreamed of the future, or conjured up the past! And often did she feel surprise, at the frequent recurrence of the ball at Carrington – of Egerton's farewell – among these visions – though, at this point, she ever turned resolutely away.

Then Colonel Vernon was laid up for a month with a feverish cold, which made Kate rather anxious, and banished every thought not connected with the invalid.

So-came on the lengthening days' warmer sun, and more piercing winds of early spring; and one morning, towards the end of March, Mrs. O'Toole laid two letters before the Colonel; one directed to him in a clear, bold hand, bearing the Marseilles' post-mark, the other to Kate.

"I really think this is from Fred Egerton," said the Colonel, feeling in every pocket for glasses. "Kate, my dear! they were hanging round my neck before breakfast?"

"Oh! here they are, dear grandpapa," exclaimed she, eagerly; "do not mind looking at the outside – open it."

And she laid aside her own.

With many a break, and many a tantalising pause, the Colonel slowly doled forth Egerton's letter, it was short, and contained little more than a report of his safe arrival, after a tedious journey, many expressions of sincere regard, and kind enquiries for his friends at A – , but breathed an indefinable tone of despondency, and restlessness of spirit, unlike anything they had hitherto observed in him.

The Colonel, at length, concluded, in a sort of surprised accent, as though he expected something more; and Kate exclaimed —

"Is that all? Do you know, grandpapa, I expected much greater things from Captain Egerton's first letter from India. Do you not think he writes dejectedly."

"I cannot quite make him out," he replied, in an absent manner; "but I am obliged to him for his kind remembrance of us. We must tell Winter and Gilpin — he was such a favorite with them. Now open your despatch, my dear. I see it is from Georgina."

"Dearest Kate," began Miss Vernon, in obedience to his commands, "your last letter is now so ancient, I am ashamed to mention it — your first I did not answer because I was too much vexed at your absurd opposition to all my plans for your benefit. Time has cooled my resentment, and accident has revived my affection for my pretty, loveable god-child, while it has, I hope, awakened in your mind proper regret for the folly of preferring a life of seclusion in a dull country town to the brilliant lot you might have secured. I forgive you, as I am sure you have punished yourself enough. The immediate cause of this letter is as follows. Mrs. Wentworth, one of my closest allies at Naples, told me, a brother of hers met a most exquisite personage, called Colonel Vernon, and an equally exquisite Miss Vernon at A — , I recognised the description, and immediately a vision of my happy girlish days at Dungar, and of all I owed to my kind and venerated cousin, rose before my mind; and deep was the self-reproach, with which I thought of my long unpardonable neglect! It is the life of unchecked prosperity I lead, that makes me thus thoughtless, thus inferior to you, my bright-eyed recluse, in whose name I once promised and vowed the three things you have practised. I am what I am, and will feign nothing. I acknowledge, that tardy as this letter is, I doubt if I should have penned it, had not certain fleeting catspaws ruffled the smooth surface of my life, and showed me how slight are the bands that hold back the "dogs of war," doubt, emptiness, and dissatisfaction! I fear I am selfish, but nothing will do my heart so much good as the sight of your calm, sweet face, and the sound of your noble-hearted grandfather's well-remembered voice — forgive me, I know how guilty I am, I feel I am most unworthy — yet, forgive me, and come; leave the seclusion nature never intended for either. D'Arcy Vernon never refused me a request in those old times when I was all but a dependent on his bounty — I trust he will not now prevent me from employing some of the filthy lucre fortune has thrown in my way, in administering to my own enjoyment, by accelerating your journey here. I have written so much longer than usual, I can add nothing of the charms intrinsic or extrinsic of fair Florence, to me it will be nothing if you refuse to come.

*"Yours as warmly as ever,*

*"G. Desmond.*

"P.S. — Moore writes me word there has been a great search for some papers relating to the Knockdrum farm, I do not exactly understand what they want them for; some lawsuit that a Mr. Taaffe is engaged in, but you had better tell your grandfather."

"What a charming letter!" cried Kate, as she concluded. "Is it not delightful, to read such a candid, warm-hearted acknowledgement of error? I am so glad to have heard from her at last. It is so dreadful to feel that any chilling cloud of doubt intervenes between you and one you love!"

"Yes, indeed," said the Colonel; "what a rash impulsive creature Georgy has ever been! rushing into injustice one moment, and atoning for it with such graceful self-abasement the next; it would

be better if she could steer clear of both extremes; but let me look at that postscript again; she is as distinct as ladies usually are on legal subjects."

Kate handed him the letter, and he continued to read and re-read the postscript for some minutes, with a look of concentrated attention, then, raising his eyes and speaking more to himself than to his grand-daughter —

"I am astonished, that Moore has not written to me on this matter," he said, in a displeased tone. "If this Taaffe, be the nephew of old Arthur Taaffe, and the papers required, those connected with that judgment;" he stopped abruptly, and sat for a few moments in deep thought, looking very grave. Kate also kept a respectful silence, feeling little interest in any legal matter, till her grandfather rousing himself, and with his old contented look returning, observed, "no, no! no man could act such a villanous part, he must be perfectly aware it was paid years ago."

"What was paid, grandpapa?"

"That debt to old Taaffe; he advanced my father money on Knockdrum, and got me to join in the bond, on which, of course judgments were entered against us both. I paid it years ago, and simply got an acknowledgement from him, but did not go through some other form, satisfying the judgment, I think they term it."

"Well, I am sure no one would ever doubt your word," cried Kate, "even if these papers cannot be found."

"I am afraid, my dear child, the great mass of legal and money-lending people do not come within the category of christians, who 'believe all things.' I must write to Moore this very day, I'll be in time for the Irish post, give me my desk, Kate."

"But suppose this man insists on the production of these papers, and you cannot satisfy him?" asked Kate, as she was leaving the room after arranging the Colonel's writing materials.

He looked up with a sudden expression of pain in his noble, benevolent countenance.

"We shall be beggars, my child! that's all."

Miss Vernon walked into the drawing-room, and opened the piano mechanically; while her thoughts were busily engaged in conjecturing whether the lingering debility of indisposition, rather than justly grounded fears, prompted her grandfather's gloomy view of Lady Desmond's intelligence.

"Shall we then really know the poverty, nurse talks of? Shall I be strong enough to say, in sincerity, '*Thy will be done!*'"

But soon these gloomy speculations gave place to the pleasanter topic of her cousin's invitation, which seemed to have escaped her grandfather's notice.

She had been *thus* meditating for some time, when nurse entered with a letter in her hand.

"The master's love, Miss Kate, and if it's not too early he'd like you to go out wid him, he says he does not feel so well!"

"Yes, nurse, I will go and get my bonnet and shawl, when I have settled this music."

"Faith now, alannah, I'm not plaised at all with the looks iv him!"

"How?" said Kate, suspending her occupation of replacing the books in the music-stand, and looking up anxiously in Mrs. O'Toole's face, which wore an unusual look of care, especially about the depressed corners of her expressive mouth.

"Sorra one iv me can tell why, but he looks like as when a big black cloud is beginin' to be dhrawn over the sun in a fine summer's day; he just sits in the chair tired like; an ses he, 'only one letther for the post, nurse,' ses he, 'but be sure it's in time for the Irish maal,' and then he give me the message, I gave yes. The Cross iv Christ betune us an harum, ses I, as soon as I see 'J. Moore, Esquire,' on the letther; how are we to have luck or grace when we have any thing to say to the man that sould Dungar, an give it up to the spalpeen that has it now; look Miss Kate, thim's the Esquires that's going now! Faith an I remember Paddy Moore, his father, carrying sacks iv corn to the mill, an meself own maid up at the big house! Ay, then, J. Moore, Esquire, ye'r the first esquire in yer family,

any ways, an there was ever an always sorra to sup when there was letthers goin back an forward betune you an the masther!"

"But, nurse, I have always heard that Mr. Moore was an upright honourable man, and I hope grandpapa's letter will be only productive of good."

"Well, well, may be so, but I'd a mighty quare dhrame both last night an the night afore. Oh, ye may laugh now, Miss Kate, but no matther! I seen the masther as plain as I see yer own sweet face forenent me, slippin, slippin down a steep slim place wid the say roarin mad on dher, an you houlding him for the dear life, an yer round white arms all strained an tremblin wid the weight that was too much for yez, an I couldn't help yez, tho' I struve an struve to run to yez; an in the struggle I woke up, all in a shake; an God forgive the word, but it's a mighty bad dhrame intirely!"

"No, Nurse – you say dreams go by contraries, so it is grandpapa that will be ascending some lofty eminence and dragging me after him."

"It was in the mornin', asthore, in the mornin' I dhreamt it."

"Never mind, nurse, if so, God will lend these slight arms strength for all that may be required of them – do not tell me any more dreams now, I must go to grandpapa."

"Sweet Mary, shield ye darlint!" ejaculated Mrs. O'Toole, as she looked after her nursling, "but we've rested so long widout them thieving attorneys, I don't like to see them beginin' their letthers agin. *J. Moore, esquire!* the divil go wid such esquires! amen."

Fearful and wonderful indeed is our spiritual organisation. Reason may smile at fears, unsubstantiated by any tangible motive, but the instant her accents of reproof have ceased, lo! the same formless and gnawing terror steals back, undiminished by one iota of its influence, to depress the soul, until again routed by reason's disciplined troops; a true guerilla warfare in which the irregular forces, ever ready to disperse and reassemble, always repulsed, but never conquered, are sure to wear out resistance in the end.

So Kate Vernon, in spite of her clear and cultivated intellect, her sound judgment, and her sense of the ridiculous, could not keep nurse's evil omen from dwelling on her mind; more, ay, a thousand times more, than her grandfather's apparent anxiety about the intelligence communicated by Lady Desmond, and they accomplished the circuit of the walls, silently, or, exchanging occasional remarks very foreign from the subject occupying both their minds.

At length the Colonel said abruptly —

"Kate, my child, what do you think of Lady Desmond's invitation?"

"Oh! I think it a delightful plan; but you, grandpapa, do you think we shall be able to accept it?"

"At present decidedly not. I must not be farther from Dublin than I am – I fear I shall have much letter writing, if indeed I am not obliged to go to Ireland myself; if matters come right again, I shall certainly endeavour to let the Priory, and take you to Italy; this complete retirement is not good or safe."

"Safe!" said Kate, laughing. "Why I thought it was quite *selon les regles*, of all romances, that a dethroned prince, and his lovely and interesting daughter, like you and I, should be safe only while in obscurity."

"According to old romances, I grant; but according to reality, there is more danger in the strong contrasts which the occasional breaks in a life of retirement present, in the tone of mind it engenders, than in the action of society, at least to you, Kate."

"Danger! Oh, tempt me not to boast," cried Kate, endeavouring to draw her grandfather from his moralising mood. "You may despise old romances, but you are nevertheless assuming the tone of some melancholy Count Alphonso, warning a sensitive and angelic Lady Malvina, against the world in general: dearest and best," she continued, in graver and tenderer tones, "I must swim down the troubled current of life, as you have done before me, and meet its difficulties and trials – leave me then to the same guide by whose aid, you have passed many a dangerous rapid safely, to float in a smooth, though diminutive haven at last."



"You are right, Kate, quite right; but how much longer the smoothness will last, God only knows."

"Well, there *is* a God, to know all, and direct all, and that consciousness, must rob the future of all apprehension. Shall I write to Lady Desmond, on our return, and tell her of our indecision and its causes?"

"By all means. Yet, dear child, I wish *you* would accept her invitation, you want change, and I could remain quite comfortably with nurse and –"

"Do not utter such treason! Leave you! and to amuse myself in Italy, when there is a chance that so far from being able to do without me, you may peculiarly want me."

"My dear, dear, unselfish child."

"Not a bit unselfish —*tout au contraire*. I should be miserable away, besides – but here are our friends, Winter and Gilpin, so, dearest grandpapa, leave the future to take care of itself; all will be arranged for the best."

There was no time to say more, as the painter and organist approached; but though the Colonel made no reply, some unexplained current of feeling induced him to pass his arm through Kate's, instead of offering it, as was his habit, for her support.

"Ha! Miss Vernon, I see you have taken advantage of a stray gleam of sun, to seduce the Colonel into risking another cold – the wind is truly detestable, but as I could not keep Gilpin in doors, I came out with him, he has not a grain of prudence!"

"My dear Winter, it is a remarkable fine day for March, I am glad, Gilpin, you felt equal to a walk."

"I think you look better," observed Kate.

"Yes: I think I am better, I feel to revive at the approach, however boisterous, of spring."

"*Cospetto!* three months in Italy would make you a new man; but here, the great mystery to me is, how any one who catches a cold ever loses it."

"The remedy is worse than the disease; imagine a depressed invalid in a strange country, without a single friend, or, even acquaintance, and ignorant of its language," returned Gilpin.

"Wretched indeed! but wait for me, Mr. Gilpin, we have some thoughts of taking a flight to Italy, this summer," said Miss Vernon.

"*Corpo di Baccho!* I'll not be left behind: to act as Miss Vernon's *cicerone*, would be something more than commonly delightful – what a state of enjoyment you would be in; but what put such a move into your head, Colonel?"

"An invitation from Lady Desmond, who is at Florence," said Colonel Vernon, "Our acceptance of it however is very uncertain, though I see Kate is full of the project. I had another letter, Messieurs, which I think will give you pleasure – here; read it, Winter."

"Bombay – Fred Egerton —*che gusto*."

A quick glance at Kate. The whole party moved slowly towards Abbey Gardens, the Colonel and Winter, who read the letter aloud, and Gilpin close behind with Kate.

"*Ad ogni uccello suo nido é bello*," said Winter, as he concluded the epistle, "here am I shivering and pining for a warm sun, which many years' custom has made natural to me, and there is that young scape-grace, revelling in baths; and slaves, and sunshine, dying to be back among east winds and consumption!"

"Captain Egerton does not forget his friends – as soldiers are said to do," said Gilpin.

"Pooh, pshaw!" cried Winter, "he was bored by a bad sea voyage; sea-sickness is at the bottom of half the sentimental adieus to my native shores, that you read in albums and annuals, wait until he gets among his tiger-shooting brother officers, or the Bombay belles, he'll soon forget the sum-total of all he left behind – stuff!"

"I do not quite agree with you, Mr. Winter," replied Kate. "I think Captain Egerton will always remember our little circle, kindly, and be delighted to see any member of it again. Beyond this we

have no right to expect; he would not charge his memory with regrets for people, who do not let his absence interfere with their pleasures or occupations."

"Bravo, Miss Vernon! if he was some worthy curate, in a white tie and spectacles, you would not bustle up so warmly in his defence; but a handsome light dragoon, with moustache, and a long sword and spurs, and saucy 'make way for me look,' is another affair."

"Wrong again, Mr. Winter," said Kate. "I see no reason why a Lancer's cap may not cover as good qualities, as a clerical broad-brim – and I have been too long your pupil, not to appreciate form and color."

"Good; and if every Lancer was like Captain Egerton, I, for one, would prefer trusting them, even in a confessional, to the white neck-clothed curates," chimed in the organist.

"In truth, though Egerton is the type of a class I have always disliked, I cannot help liking him – especially when I think of his – pooh, pooh – I was forgetting – " And Winter stopped abruptly.

"You are mysterious," said the Colonel. "But let me see the *Times*, at your house; I want to read the Indian news, that came by the last mail; and to see Mrs. Winter."

"Do you really think you will go to Italy, Miss Vernon?" asked Gilpin.

"I fear it is problematical. I long to travel; but grandpapa has some business, and nurse has had a dream, which bodes evil for my wishes."

"Oh, the dream ought not to be classed with the business."

"I dare confess to you, and to you only," returned Kate, with a smile, "that it seems to shake my hopes far more than the business."

"The philosophic Miss Vernon – superstitious!"

"No, no! yet, you know —

'It may be a sound,  
A tone of music, summer's eve, or spring;  
A flower, the wind, the ocean, which shall wound,  
Striking the electric chain wherewith we're darkly bound.'"

"Winter would say it was the east wind."

"Perhaps so," said Miss Vernon, "for alas! how ignominiously physical are the causes of many a tenderly poetic mood! not that I am at all addicted to such, but – "

"I think it is a mistake to consider everything physical, as despicable," observed Gilpin; "we hear of mere physical force, mere physical wants; but the same hand made and blended our two natures, and we shall be happy and healthy, in proportion as we train both to work in harmony, without giving undue preference to either."

"I often think we have a species of trinity within us," said Miss Vernon. "We have sense with all its powerful tendencies in one direction, and spirit with its aspirations in another, while the heart and its affections seem to be neutral ground, where the claims of both may be adjusted."

"I like the fancy; but sense gets the upper hand in many a heart."

"No," interrupted Kate, "the heart may be destroyed in the struggle, but while it exists, the spirit always has fair play."

"Your sentence is too sweeping; in all such warfare, the variations are so delicately shaded that — "

"Walk in, Colonel," broke in Winter; "never mind if Mrs. Winter is in or not; Gilpin, we'll have some Scotch broth for luncheon, that will set you up. I give you no choice – in you must come."

"Sense must carry the day, Mr. Gilpin," said Kate, smiling.

Some days elapsed after this conversation before a reply from Mr. Moore reached the Colonel; and the anxiety he and Kate had experienced, died away into a half-forgetfulness.

It is strange how events, which at first strike us with such keen force, lose their sharpness of outline as the mind becomes accustomed to what was at first a novel aspect of affairs; and, as nothing fresh arises, we gradually sink back into our former frame of mind, or recur to that which distressed it, in momentary spasms of anxiety.

So Kate and her grandfather had quite recovered their usual serenity, and the former had written to Lady Desmond, long and affectionately; rejoicing that the cloud which had for a while interposed between them, had been dispersed; merely mentioning the obstacle to their journey, as a temporary annoyance, and speaking of its removal as a matter of certainty.

But she did not allude to it when in conversation with the Colonel, as she fancied he avoided the subject.

Such was their frame of mind when, at the usual post hour, one morning, Mrs. O'Toole entered.

"A letter for the master," a large, blue, pitiless looking envelop, such as emanate from attorneys' and merchants' offices, implacable places, sacrificial alters, where youth and joy, tenderness and the pleasant amenities of life are immolated at the shrine of the English juggernaut "business."

The Colonel, keeping his eye fixed on it, felt in his pockets for his spectacles, silently, with a certain determination of manner, very different from the joyous confusion with which he sought for them, when opening Fred Egerton's letter; then with a loud hem, as if he wished to clear both throat and brains, he tore open the missive.

Kate sat opposite gazing at him, as if she could read the contents through his countenance; and although that morning she had risen with the full conviction that the anticipated letter would only prove their anxiety to be groundless, she now felt the terrible, creeping, gnawing, sickening sensation of doubt and dread which makes the hand so cold, and the eye so dim, when felt in its full force.

This however was her first and but slight experience of care, so she sat quite still, not knowing of what she thought, until her grandfather had turned over the second page of the rather lengthy epistle; and she could see the flourishing signature at the end of it. Still the Colonel did not speak, but turned back to re-read some passage, and Kate was surprised to find she had not courage to ask "what news?"

At last her grandfather without looking up, handed her the letter, observing —

"Much what I ought to have anticipated; read it, my dear."

Kate, with a sensation of extreme repugnance, took the letter and read as follows: —

*"Dublin, March 27th, 18 — .*

*"My Dear Sir,*

"In reply to yours of the 21st inst., on the subject of Lady Desmond's communication to Miss Vernon, it is true that the present Mr. Taaffe has raised the question as to whether the debt to his uncle was paid; seeing, on searching the records, that the judgments securing it remain unsatisfied on the roll. But, as I concluded you got warrants to satisfy them, at the time of the payment, I was not uneasy on the subject, and thought it unnecessary to trouble you until I should first search amongst your papers in my possession for them, which, as yet, I have not done, as the matter was not pressing. If, however, you did not get the necessary warrants to satisfy, as I begin to apprehend was the case from the tenor of your letter, I fear we shall have some trouble, as the present Mr. Taaffe affects to consider himself bound to conclude the debt was not paid; and obliged, in his character as executor of his late uncle, to call it in, altho' he knows, in his heart, (as I firmly believe), the contrary. I trust, however, although you may not, (from your unacquaintance with law terms and forms) recollect what sort of acknowledgment you got at the time, it will turn up to be a warrant to satisfy, or, if not, some docu-

ment sufficient to induce a court of equity to stay any proceedings Mr. Taaffe may be advised to institute at law, on foot of the judgment.

"You had better search diligently among your papers and send me whatever you find, at all affecting this matter, and in the mean time I will search also amongst those of yours in my possession.

"With respectful compliments to Miss Vernon, I remain, my dear sir, your faithful and obedient servant,

*"J. Moore.*

*"To Colonel Vernon, &c."*

Kate's first feeling was that of indignant scorn at such, to her imagination, unheard of villany as that recorded in the letter she had just perused; but she suppressed the expression of it, in order to put the least gloomy view of the matter, her simple sense presented, before her grandfather.

"After all it is not so bad," she said, "you see, Mr. Moore, only anticipates, 'some trouble,' and surely there can be no doubt your word would be taken, especially in Ireland, before any other man's oath!"

"My dear Kate, '*some trouble*,' has a very vague meaning from a solicitor; it may be a month's quibbling or forty years' litigation; and in law there is no such thing as honour; every thing must be proved; and though judge and jury may believe me incapable of wronging Mr. Taaffe of one sou; yet, if I cannot bring *legal proof*, he must succeed."

"What a dishonest wretch he must be! but I always had a horror of the name of Taaffe!" cried Kate, the proud, indignant blood mounting to her forehead.

"Some association of ideas with Taffy's thieving propensities?" observed the Colonel, with an effort to be cheerful.

"But, dear grandpapa, what is to be done? this letter leaves us just in the same state of uncertainty we were in before."

"We must search amongst all my papers, dear child, as Moore advises; if I find any thing bearing on the subject, I will send it to him; but I much fear I shall find nothing; I destroyed a great many papers, as useless, on leaving Dungar, and although I do not recollect any connected with Taaffe's business among them, there may have been; for I considered it so completely settled beyond dispute, that I should have burnt them, unhesitatingly, had I come across any. And then, Kate, we must bide our time."

"And are there no more active steps to be taken? Could you not write to this nephew; assure him you have paid the money, and advise him not to expose himself to universal opprobrium by acting so base a part."

"Ah, Kate, my own warm hearted child!" said her grandfather, sadly, "God grant you may not have to struggle with the world of which you are so ignorant. 'Universal opprobrium,' is an expression frequently and flourishingly put forth by newspaper editors; and it may be occasionally drawn down by the singularly flagrant acts of some public characters, but the dread of it never yet withheld any man, so inclined, from preying on his fellows in private life; and it will take many more years' experience to convince you how utterly fruitless and unorthodox such a proceeding would be."

"Well, grandpapa, if I am useless as a counsellor can I not be an agent and assist you in your search."

"Yes, send away the breakfast things and tell nurse to bring me the tin box, and oak brass-bound cabinet that are in my room; make Susan help her, they are too heavy for her unassisted strength."

True to his character, D'Arcy Vernon had room in his heart to think for another, though borne down by the weight of a deeper anxiety than he had ever felt before. His former reverse of fortune, obliged him to renounce the pomps and vanities of high life, and soon custom proved them to be, trifles indeed; but here was a question involving the possibility, nay he could scarcely hide it from himself, the probability of beggary.

"Athen, mavourneen; it's the sore heart's within me this day to be carryin down thim onlooky boxes; sure, I ses to meself the minit I set eyes on that big baste iv a blue letther, faith mee dhrame's out sure enough; an it's not for the likes iv mee to be spaken to quolity, but it was just on the tip iv mee tongue to say 'throw it in the fire, Kurnel jewel, an don't meddle or make with the likes iv it at all, at all.' Sure I knew at oncet it kem from Moore's place, be the look iv it. Oh, what was in it, good or bad Miss Kate, avourneen?"

Nurse was too old and devoted a friend to be excluded from the family councils, and Miss Vernon was too well acquainted with her affectionate self-forgetful nature to consider her question intrusive.

"Only some business, dear nurse; it may be troublesome or may not, but cannot be avoided, even by your good advice; so just bring down the boxes, and you shall hear more when I have more to tell, and, nurse," turning back from the dining-room door, "should Mr. Winter or Mr. Gilpin, or any one call, you had better say that grandpapa and I are particularly engaged."

"The Lord look down on me!" soliloquised Mrs. O'Toole, as she crossed herself, with an air of alarm, "not see Winther nor the crather iv an Organist. Faith there is throuble gotherin sure enough, I knew be the darlint's two eyes there was throuble in her heart this week past; sure we were too long quiet an happy, that thim divils iv attorneys should remember us. I'll go bail, it was thim that druv the captin off to that murtherin hot counthry, an I thinkin he an mee sweet child id make it up betune thim. The masther's as innocent as a lamb, but lave ould nurse alone for seein as far into a mill stone as her naybors ow wow; many a time, I seen him takin the full iv his eye, out iv her, an I removin the tay things. Och! bud it's the wearisome world! Susy yer idle gowk, are ye goin to lave me to pull the arrums out of mee, liftin a ton weight here, widout puttin a finger to help me?"

And diligently did the Colonel and his granddaughter untie, read, and examine, and re-tie the numerous bundles of papers and letters.

Now a packet in Lady Desmond's clear firm writing was laid aside, now a smaller one in Kate's own hand; rapturous letters, describing the enjoyments of her memorable visit to London, the only time she had ever been away from her grandfather; now turning over large yellow parchments, with red seals hanging from them, now eagerly examining a pile of papers whose crabbed writing bespoke business. It was weary work; Kate, with all the hopeful energy of youth, rapidly searching through each of the packets at all likely to contain a solicitor's letter, and handing them to her grandfather, who, latterly, leaned wearily back in his chair, and examined them languidly. Once his arm stole round her, as she knelt beside the pile of papers on the floor, and she felt how eloquent of despondency, was the close embrace with which he held her to him; but she constrained herself to receive it in silence, and took no further notice than to kiss, warmly, the hand which pressed her to his heart, as the last and best treasure left him.

"You are tired and cold," said she, rising, "I will stir the fire, and then, come and put your feet on the fender, and I will replace these packets we have examined in the box, and open all Lady Desmonds' letters, some such paper may have got among them."

"As you like, as you like, my dear child."

There was a long silence, broken only by the rustling of the papers. Half an hour elapsed, and at length Vernon, rousing himself, said —

"Do not tire yourself longer, give me my desk, I had better tell Moore there is not a symptom here of what we want."

"Wait a very little longer, there is only one packet more, of Georgina's; let us not give up too soon, dear grandpapa." A few minutes after she came over to him with an old-looking letter in her hand. "This is signed, 'A. Taaffe,' look at it."

Vernon took it eagerly.

"Ha, this may be useful, how could it have got among Georgina's letters?"

Kate read over his shoulder.

*"Anne Street, June, 23, 18 – .*

*"Dear Sir,*

"I have just received yours of the 21st, with its enclosure, many thanks for your obliging efforts to comply with my wishes.

"I have directed my solicitor to prepare the necessary warrants, they will be ready by Monday or Tuesday at farthest, when I will execute them and send them to you,

*"Your obliged and obedient servant,*

*"A. Taaffe.*

*"To Colonel Vernon, &c."*

"Victoria! Dearest of grandfathers will not that utterly annihilate Mr. Taaffe?"

"Well, I think it must be sufficient; thank Heaven, my love, you thought of searching among Georgy's letters; now I must write immediately, to Moore, and I have scarce time. You can put away all these papers."

With a lightened heart Kate prepared to obey, and so visible was the change from darkness to light, in her countenance, that nurse exclaimed, on receiving from her the letter for the post.

"Faith, an sure, Miss Kate, you've been makin the masther tell Misther Moore to hold his prate an lave off pinin' any more of his three an four pinnys to him."

"No; not exactly that nurse, but I think we shall soon have done with him."

"The Lord send! And I forgot to tell ye, Mr. Winther called; an faith, I could hardly keep him from walkin' in, widout 'by yer lave or wid yer lave,' an thin he kim back wid that bit iv a note."

"Thank you, now run to the post-office, dear nurse. An invitation to tea from Mr. Winter," said Kate, returning to the dining-room, where the Colonel was putting away his writing materials. "Do you feel equal to it?"

"Decidedly, my dear – I want to have a little kindly, honesty, after having had a scoundrel before my mind's eye all the morning; we will go and have a rubber, and a song. How poor Egerton used to enjoy our little parties."

"And how much more he would enjoy horse-whipping, Mr. Taaffe," cried Kate, as she locked the tin box.

"I believe he would," said the Colonel, laughing. "You and Egerton certainly understood each other."

## CHAPTER II. UNCERTAINTY

Welcome indeed was the gleam of hope, afforded by this discovery, to the Colonel and Kate.

To their non-legal minds, it appeared that any acknowledgment of money received, was sufficient, although no sum was mentioned; and Kate even felt remorse for her hasty condemnation of Mr. Taaffe; as she concluded the production of the newly found letter, would settle the question at once, and for ever, and draw forth an humble apology from the offender; her spirits rose even above their usual height, and overleaping, with the sanguine vivacity of her age and race, all intervening probabilities, she revelled in her anticipated visit to Italy, and spent many a pleasant half-hour in endeavouring to overcome nurse's inveterate antipathy to "thim rampagin divils, the Frinch" (under which name she classed all foreign nations and foreigners), and in exercising her powers of persuasion to induce the Winters and Gilpin to join in the pilgrimage.

"You know we would not travel in any extravagant style, *Caro Maestro*," she said, to Winter, as they were enjoying an April day, which seemed to have borrowed the balmy air of early summer. They had crossed the ferry, and were strolling side by side, her tall, graceful form, and elastic step, contrasting strongly with his stout puffy figure.

"You had better tie a knapsack on your shoulder at once, and trudge it – humph! ha! not so fast if you please – you walked me up that hill at a killing pace.

"But seriously – let us consider the best method of setting to work, for you cannot think how eagerly I look forward to the journey; and if we go cheaply to work, Mr. Gilpin might join us, and – "

"*Signorina Carrissima*, yes! I want to speak seriously," replied Winter, in a kinder accents than usual. "Are you not too sanguine about this journey, You make too little of the law's uncertainties. Mr. Moore's letters seem to promise well, as you read them. Your grandfather and I see only, and at best, the promise of a long, perhaps ruinous litigation. I felt so convinced that this will be the case, that, from the first, I strongly advised Colonel Vernon to endeavour to effect a compromise. It is true you have not much to divide, but remember *chi lascia il poco per haver l'assai nè l'uno nè l'altro avera mai*," I see I am acting as usual like a brute," he continued, thickly. "I intended to say all this by degrees, and tenderly – but I plunged into it at last too abruptly. My dear child, it cuts me to the heart, to hear you anticipating such unalloyed enjoyment, and forming such plans, when perhaps the reverse is before you; and I fancy your grandfather feels somewhat as I do, though he is more sanguine than I am."

They walked on a few paces, in silence – Kate's color varying, and her heart, after feeling, for a second or two, to stand still (at this sudden and rude shock, to her bright dreams), throbbing as though it would burst its prison.

"*Bella mia*, dear child, are you angry with me?" cried Winter anxiously. "Why do you not speak?"

"Simply, kind friend," returned she, putting her arm through his, "because I could not – angry with you? no; I am obliged to you," she added, with an effort to smile. "And now tell me all you think, and what we ought to do."

"Humph! you *are* a good girl; you see, my dear, it is more than a month since this business began; if it could have been settled quickly, it would be settled before this, and successful or unsuccessful, a chancery suit is ruin. There, you had better know it all."

"And are we absolutely embarked in this ruinous course?" asked Kate, faintly.

"I fear so. Did you not see Moore's last letter."

"No; grandpapa said there was nothing new in it."

"Ha! a mistaken tenderness; there certainly was nothing new in it; but the plot thickens; and, I fear there is no case at present, to prevent Mr. Taaffe proceeding to revive the judgment, and ultimately obtain a receiver over your grandfather's remaining property."

"A receiver – what for?"

"To receive the rents in payment of the debt, if debt there be."

"What, all of them?"

"Yes all; but, do not be too much cast down, remember you have, few, but friends sincere; who will stick by you, and –"

"Dear Mr. Winter, let us be silent for a moment, I want to collect my thoughts."

They walked on in silence for some time.

"Then from what you tell me, before long we may be left quite penniless! Are you sure that this is a true picture of our case? and that your hatred of law does not color it!"

"Heaven grant your conjecture may be right," cried Winter. "I only tell you my own, and I think your grandfather's, real view of the matter. I have been long wishing for an opportunity to do so. I dreaded the effect of the shock on your sensitive and imaginative nature, and intended to have broken it to you gradually."

"But," continued Kate, not noticing the latter part of his speech, "shall we have nothing left? no money at all! good God! And grandpapa, what am I to do for him – and nurse? Do not think me very weak, but I cannot help the terror I feel."

"Miss Vernon, I vow to Heaven, I only intended just to prepare you a little for the worst; perhaps matters may not be so bad as your alarmed imagination paints. My great object in speaking thus to you is to show the necessity for endeavouring to effect a compromise, or at least, to come to some understanding with your grandfather as to future plans, you cannot look about you too soon; I know the first shock of a thing of this kind is terrible – but you are not one of those cowards who defer looking danger in the face, until it is too late."

"Yes, I know, but what plan can we possibly think of, if we are to have all our money taken from us, what are we to do?"

"Dear child, be prepared for it. I would in the first place, begin at once to curtail every possible outlay – look out for a tenant for the Priory. Take a smaller, humbler abode, or, a thousand times better, make our house your home, till matters are more decided."

"Always kind and good," murmured Kate, "and there is nothing more you would suggest?"

"No; except to speak freely of it all to the Colonel, and, by so doing, creep into his complete confidence."

"Oh! Mr. Winter," cried Kate, with an irrepressible burst of tears, "and is this to be his end? I always hoped that something, I knew not what would happen to restore him to his old position; and now to think of his being obliged to live and end his days in some mean and unsightly place."

"Courage Kate – you know not what good may be hidden up in store for you, behind this sterner dispensation; I have experienced severe poverty, and I tell you, none but those who have felt it, can know how few, how simple, and yet, how satisfying are the wants and pleasures of life."

"For you and I, yes; but for grandpapa, at his age, after youth and manhood spent in the possession and enjoyment of wealth and a dignified proposition."

"If I mistake not, Colonel Vernon's greatest concern will be on your account, and if he sees you content, or at least, resigned, he will be the same."

"Well, we can say no more now; I feel how necessary it was, I should be roused from my false security, and that you have acted as a true friend in undertaking, what I know, must have been so painful a task. I must try and think clearly and deeply; and will speak to you about my cogitations; meanwhile, as we shall soon be home, let us change the subject, and I will endeavour to recover my serenity before I meet grandpapa."



Winter pressed the hand she held out to him, with a feeling of sincere respect and admiration, for the manner in which she had borne his communications, and an earnest wish that the platform, at the next Jews' meeting, might prove insecure, and so open the ranks of the peerage to Fred Egerton —

"Though," he added, mentally, "there is no knowing the effects of prosperity on him."

"Is grandpapa at home, nurse?" asked Kate.

"No, miss, he said he felt lonesome, and walked out to see Mr. Gilpin."

Thankful for a few minutes' solitary reflection, she ran to her room, and hastily fastening the door, threw herself into a chair — not to think, that would be by no means a correct term to apply to the confusion of ideas, and images, which presented themselves to her mind; some most foreign to the subject of the conversation with Winter. Dungeness, and her early days, with their bright anticipations rose painfully clear before her eyes — the dreadful possibility of seeing her grandfather in poverty — and the insurmountable difficulty of making nurse understand the necessity for retrenchment — the distressing consciousness of the necessity to think deeply, struggling with the impossibility of fixing her thoughts; and a dim feeling that an impassable barrier was about to be raised between her and the class of which Fred Egerton was a representative.

All these and a thousand more undefined, shadowy, outlines swept across her mind, while she sat so still that she felt the throbbing of her heart, as if echoed in her head, and she could almost almost hear the pulses that vibrated through her slight frame.

Frightened at this continued rebellion of her thoughts, against her will, she threw herself on her knees, silently laying the painful chaos before the Almighty ruler and searcher of hearts!

"If accepted as coming from God," she murmured, "and therefore good, nothing is unbearable, Mr. Gilpin says, and he is right; perhaps we may succeed in this business after all, though I feel quite hopeless, after what Mr. Winter has said — but if we have no money, could I not earn it? I have a good knowledge of music — ah, delightful! how proud I should be, to earn it for grandpapa, who has always taken such care of me; and nurse would not mind it much. I like teaching. Ah! we may be happy yet — I must speak to Mr. Winter about it. Ah! nurse's dream may come true, but by contraries, after all; who can tell what strength love, and God's good help may lend even to these weak arms," and she stretched them out. "Enough to support dear grandpapa, perhaps — that would be a proud achievement!" she said almost aloud, as a feeling of quiet courage swelled her heart.

She proceeded to bathe her eyes and make her simple toilette, interrupted, it is true, by a delicious vision that would intrude itself, of Fred Egerton wealthy and powerful, flying to save her and hers, and interposing the shield of his affectionate care between them and every earthly ill; in vain she chided herself for so far-fetched a thought; instinctively she felt how readily and rapturously he would perform such a part; and however impressively she told herself she was absurd and visionary the idea would return. It was the nearest approach to love that had ever connected itself with him in her mind, and his image, once invested with this hue, never again lost it.

There has been so much said, and said with eloquence, pathos and truth, of the heroism of every day life, that I fear to approach ground already so well occupied; yet I cannot pass, in silence, the resolution with which Kate calmed herself to meet her grandfather at dinner; and, her attention now fully roused, preserved that composure even while observing a thousand minute indications of despondency, which cut her to the heart.

"Shall I speak to him of business to-night?" she asked herself more than once; anxious to begin that line of conduct which Winter had pointed out to be her duty; and, each time as she looked at the worn expression of that beloved and venerated face, her heart answered, "No, not to-night, let him have a good night's rest, and to-morrow, to-morrow, I will unflinchingly approach the subject."

So she brought him his footstool and moved his chair to the right angle with the fire.

"Are you quite well darling?" said he, gazing up at her as she arranged a cushion at his back, "I thought you looked pale at dinner."

Ah! Fred Egerton, dashing and fearless as you are, could you brave danger and death with nobler courage than that which steadied Kate's voice, when, instead of yielding to the almost irresistible inclination to throw herself into her grandfather's arms and pour forth passionate and tearful assurances, that, come what may, there was a world of inexhaustible love and energy, all his own in her heart, she said gently, but with a certain cheering steadiness —

"Well, always quite well, dear grandpapa. Now take a nice sleep."

"God bless you, Kate."

Seating herself, book in hand, in the window, away from the fire, for which the evening was almost too warm, but which the Colonel could not bear to give up, she gazed long and fixedly at the river, and the broken bank, the fields, the copse, and an orchard to the right, now one sheet of blossom; the sturdy old oak, which had looked like a rugged skeleton all the winter, now bursting into leaf; at the general flush of delicate, yellowish green which seemed to pervade all vegetable nature; yet the gradual close of evening, beautiful as it was, impressed her with a feeling of sadness, partly caused by the emotions of the day, and partly by the mournful tenderness, which is so often and so strangely induced, by the contemplation of coming night in early spring.

As Kate sat leaning her head against the window frame, her book hanging negligently from her hand, thinking of the rich autumn scene this view had presented, when Fred Egerton sketched it for her, some little bustle outside the drawing-room door attracted her attention, it was opened, and nurse announced,

"Misther and Missis Winther, Miss Kate."

Seldom had visitors been more heartily welcome, their coming was an inexpressible relief to Kate, and helped her well over the evening she had almost dreaded.

Few in this trying world of ours, do not know that there are times when a *tête-à-tête* with the person we love most on earth is an ordeal we would fain escape; when we shun the slightest expression of tenderness, lest it should betray the deep and yearning affection which swells the heart with sadness, not for ourselves, but for those for whom no sacrifice would seem painful, could we but save them from suffering.

"Shall I brush yer hair asthore?" said Mrs. O'Toole, as she followed Kate into her room.

"No, dear nurse, only I want a little rest."

"There's a shadow on yer face, darlint, an wont ye spake it out to yer own ould nurse, that held ye in her arms an ye a dawshy little craythure, widout a mother. May be, it's bad news of the Captin?"

"Of the Captain! No, we have heard nothing of him; but, good night, I will tell you all tomorrow, dear nurse — I am weary now."

Kate might have spared herself the anxious thoughts that kept her waking, as to how she should approach the painful subject of their difficulties with her grandfather. It was done for her rudely enough, by a letter from Mr. Moore, announcing in legal terms, the appointment of a receiver over their remaining property.

She knew by the rigidity with which the Colonel's left hand grasped the arm of his chair as he read; that some more than usual bad news was contained in the letter.

"I must see Winter," said he, after a short pause, "I must see him immediately," he repeated, rising.

"If there is bad news, had you not better tell me first, dear grandpapa," said Kate, boldly and calmly.

"My dear child, you are unfit for such discussions, they would only fret you."

"Grandpapa, I am surely old enough to be your confidante, if not wise enough to be your counsellor; if we are to meet with reverses, it is only in union we can find strength to bear them. Oh, dear grandpapa, come what may, let us avoid the pangs of concealment; let me read that letter."

With a mute expression of surprise, at the tone she had assumed, he handed her the letter, which but for Winter's communications the day before, would have enlightened her but little; as it was, she

felt a curious sensation of relief, that the dreaded moment was no longer to be anticipated, and that from the present hour a mutual confidence would be established between her and her grandfather.

"We must leave this house of course," she said, musingly, as she returned the letter. "Shall we receive any more money from Ireland?"

"Not a shilling! Resistance is, I fear, useless, except for my character's sake; my child, my bright Kate, what will become of you? I can do nothing."

Never before had she seen the old man's firmness shaken. The low moan, with which he turned away, covering his face with both his hands, as if oppressed with the sense of his own helplessness, struck terror into her heart, while it seemed to arm her with indomitable resolution to uphold and cherish her beloved parent, round whose declining years such heavy shadows were gathering. Steadying her voice by an immense effort, and striving to still the throbbing pulses that shook her frame, she raised and tenderly kissed the hand that hung, in nerveless despondency, over the back of a chair near which the Colonel stood.

"My own dear grandpapa, I know how sad all this is, but for my sake do not be so cast down, do not give way to despair. You have been my guide, my model all my life! show me how to bear misfortune now!"

She paused to regain command over her traitor voice, that would tremble.

"But, Kate, we are beggars; in another month I shall not know where to find the price of our daily food; and though Georgina Desmond is wealthy and generous, dependency is wretchedness."

"Right, dear grandpapa," she replied, almost gladly, at this opening to the proposition she feared to make, "and we will scorn it. See, I can play well, and I love to teach, oh, very much; you will let me try and be so happy as to earn a little for you – I should be so proud! Not here, but in London, and then we shall be always together, and so happy! and independent, and –"

"You teach! never," cried the old man, turning from her, excitedly. "You were born for a different fate. Would to God you had married that wealthy Englishman, as Georgy wished, but –"

"No, no," interrupted Kate, "is poverty, is earning one's own bread so miserable a lot, that one should prefer the unutterable wretchedness of a marriage without affection? But why, dearest and best, am I not to teach? how many, born to as good a position as mine, have done so, and, if I do not, what is to become of us?"

"What indeed!" groaned Vernon.

There was a mournful pause. Kate, not daring to break the thread of her grandfather's thoughts, and silently pressing her smooth, soft cheek against his wrinkled hand.

"My own consoling angel!" said he at last. "It is a sad lot for you, at your age, to sink at once into oblivion, and –"

"How do you know that I am to sink into oblivion? how can you tell to what brilliant destiny this dark passage may be but an entrance? Dear grandpapa, 'Time and the hours run through the darkest day,' let us bear the present expecting a brighter future, and now, shall I send for Mr. Winter?"

"Yes," with a deep sigh, "we cannot act too quickly."

Trembling in every nerve, yet not without a feeling of relief, that the dreaded explanation was over. Kate penned a hasty note to Mr. Winter, which he quickly responded to in person.

The long conference that followed placed Winter, '*au fond*,' of the position of his friend.

The farms of Knockdrum, worth little over two hundred pounds per annum, were all that was left to the Colonel, of the wreck of his property, and this poor remainder was barely sufficient to meet the claim of Mr. Taaffe.

We will not follow the long, desultory conversation that ensued; nor record the energy with which Winter poured forth proverbs, Spanish, French, and Italian, to prove the Satanic origin of law; nor the sweet endurance with which Kate endeavoured to accustom her grandfather's mind to her project of her teaching.

It was decided that the Priory house and its furniture should be disposed of at once, and that the Colonel and Kate should take up their abode at Winter's, till matters could be a little more arranged, and an answer received from Lady Desmond to Kate's last letter, which informed her of the delay occasioned by Taaffe's proceedings.

"Remember, Colonel, though I think it too soon to consider Miss Vernon's proposition, when the time comes I shall be on her side. Kate, we must have a talk about it – and pray dine with us; when thinking is of no use it is better to have a rubber; do not be too much cast down; this '*diluvio*' has shown you the crown jewel you have still left; it is only the diamond that sparkles in the dark. And now, come and see poor Gilpin with me. You may as well, when you have answered that confounded letter. Here's your desk." Aside to Kate, as the old man settled himself to write. "We must not leave him too much by himself."

Light and pleasant is the task to paint the the various phases of joy, for whatever light touches it beautifies; but rare is the skill that can truly depict the gloom of sorrow, and fascinate the eye, by a depth of shadow that admits of little variation! For those who are gliding along on the smooth waters of prosperity, turn from a picture with which they cannot sympathise, and whose most exquisite touches, uninstructed by care or adversity, they pronounce overdrawn; and even the treaders of rough paths, wearied with 'the burden and heat of the day,' give but a reluctant glance, at what only reminds them of their own griefs, and exclaim; "this we know, this we have felt, tell us of joy, of hope, of true friends, and tender hearts; cheat us into a happy dream, even though it lull us but for a moment, even though the waking be bitter, and our souls will bless you."

## CHAPTER III. PREPARATIONS

The day but one after the above conversation, another summons brought Winter to the little dining-room of the Priory, the scene of so many consultations.

The Colonel welcomed him with his usual *empressement*, but a tremour of the hands, as he waved towards a seat, with an old-fashioned and urbane grace, which scarcely the shock of an earthquake could have made him forget, indicated some excitement; Kate's color too was heightened, and her eyes, though bright, had an anxious expression.

"You see we cannot get on without you, my dear sir," began the Colonel, "your prompt compliance with my request for an interview, is most gratifying – ah! The subject I wish to speak to you on is far from unpleasant, I want your opinion on a rather momentous question. In short, show Mr. Winter that letter, Kate."

"Ha, hum! Lady Desmond, I see. What a firm hand the woman writes."

It was hurriedly written, and short; after a few desultory remarks, apparently in reply to Kate's last letter, it concluded thus, "Of law and its probable delays, I can form no judgment, but why they should prevent your visit to me I cannot and will not understand; they are additional reasons, I think, why you should at once take up your abode with me, at least until affairs are arranged, and that low-bred knave's vile scheme is defeated; I know not, dearest Kate, how far these proceedings may affect the great tidal wave, which ebbs and flows in men's pockets. Therefore, whatever you may decide upon, and whenever you require it, I trust your dear grandfather will not refuse, to fill up the enclosed check on my banker for whatever sum he may want; it will be a gratification to his old *protégée* to think she can be of use to him, and if you will use it to facilitate your journey here, you will leave scarce a wish unfulfilled to yours, as ever. – G. D."

"Ha! done like a princess! a generous, headstrong woman, I'll lay my life; and now a journey or not a journey, that's the question; let me hear your opinion, Kate?"

"Oh! Mr. Winter, I have none; my only clear idea is, that this world is not such a bad, unhappy world, where we have a Lady Desmond and a Mr. Winter to leaven the whole lump. It is a most tempting offer; but you will call me perverse; I do not feel half so inclined to accept it as when – as when we were more independent of it."

"And you, Colonel Vernon?"

"I am very anxious," said the Colonel, in a hesitating manner, not usual with him, "at all events, that Kate should avail herself of such an invitation. Nurse might travel with her, I shall probably visit Dublin, look in upon you, and –"

"Pray where is the money to come from to do all this?" said Winter, bluntly.

"My dear sir, you forget we shall sell our furniture, and let this house."

"And when that is all gone you will be just where you were, except that your chief comforter will be many a league away, and Lady Desmond's gratitude immersed in that lethe in which impulsive people's noblest sentiments most frequently lose themselves."

"You wrong my cousin," cried Miss Vernon.

"In truth I feel incapable of deciding," said the Colonel. "I do not like the idea of throwing ourselves on Lady Desmond; but, Winter, you cannot comprehend the horror with which I contemplate my Kate's teaching – walking out alone, meeting insolence – Great God!"

He covered his face with his hands, and Kate, half appalled by the dismal picture he had drawn, clasped hers together with an appealing look to Winter, who said, huskily and oracularly,

"Hear me, Colonel. I can easily comprehend your feelings, though I am a plebeian; but I tell you there is another side of the picture. At present you are in perfect sympathy with your cousin, and

the electricity of mutual obligation and kindness runs freely back and forward between you; but when you have been for six months her inmate, feeling yourself dependent on her bounty for the bread you eat; when a wish for variety may tempt her to covet the rooms you occupy for some more amusing guest, less weighed down by care; and when the freshness and excitement of a generous act, shall have ceased to interest; a thousand mortifying slights, a thousand unimportant trifles, will make your life wretched, and wear away the links that now seem to bind you so close together."

"Oh, no, no, Georgy could never act unkindly," cried Kate.

"My dear young lady," resumed Winter, "there are few in this curious world of ours that cannot, once or twice in their lives, do a kind and a generous action; but there is not one in a thousand, or a hundred thousand, that can act with uniform kindness, courtesy and justice to a dependent, a creature in their power – power! it is the forcing house of evil! The woman who could quarrel with you because you would not be happy her way, is not one of these exceptions; she would wound you one day, and beg your forgiveness, in abject terms, the next; and you, doubly sensitive from feeling the impossibility of freedom, would live in a state of slavery! Pah! never shut yourselves out from the chance of earning independence here, for such a prospect, however *riant*, the aspect at present."

"Ha!" said Colonel Vernon, walking up and down. "There is a great deal of truth in what you say, but Lady Desmond is a woman of warm and generous feeling, and Kate, at least, would be safe with her, so –"

"You know, grandpapa, I will never leave you – it is useless and cruel to talk about it!"

"It is both, my dear Colonel," urged Winter, "Kate would be wretched without you; nor do I think this a fitting time for you to separate; and, be warned by me, live on a crust and cold water, if you can earn no more, rather than doom yourselves to a life of dependence."

"Dear Mr. Winter, you are right," said Kate, earnestly, "my own grandpapa, let us make up our minds, to bear all hardships, provided we are together. If I must teach, do not make my path more difficult by taking it so much to heart. We have long lived independent of any pleasures but those of our home; these we can still have; the worst pang will be to bid this kind friend farewell; but he will come and see us sometimes. And after all we may win the lawsuit and enjoy our little fortune doubly. I will write to dear Georgy, and affectionately decline her kind offer; and then let us set to work at once about what must be done – shall we, dearest and best?" kissing his hand.

"It must be so," said the Colonel, after a pause. "It must be so, and I will never fret you more, my love, by opposition to your wishes; I thought it right, at all events, to consider the advantages Lady Desmond's invitation might offer for you, though I shrink from the idea of living on any one – and to think of parting with you! ah!"

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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