

CHARLOTTE M. BRAME

LOVE WORKS WONDERS:
A NOVEL

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Love Works Wonders: A Novel

CHAPTER I. A GIRL WITH A CHARACTER

It was a strange place for an intelligence office, yet Madame Selini evidently knew what she was doing when she established her office in an aristocratic neighborhood, and actually next door to the family mansion of the Countess Dowager of Barewood. The worthy countess was shocked, and, taking counsel of her hopes, predicted that Madame Selini's institution would soon prove a failure. Notwithstanding this prediction, the agency prospered, and among its patrons were many of the nobility.

One fine morning in May a carriage stopped before Madame Selini's door, and from it descended a handsome, aristocratic gentleman, evidently of the old school. There was some little commotion in the interior of the building, and then a foot-page appeared to whom Sir Oswald Darrell – for that was the gentleman's name – gave his card.

"I am here by appointment," he said, "to see Madame Selini."

He was ushered into a handsomely furnished room, where, in a few minutes, he was joined by Madame Selini herself – a quick, bright Frenchwoman, whose dark eyes seemed to embrace everything in their comprehensive glance. Sir Oswald bowed with stately courtesy and quaint, old-fashioned grace.

"Have you been so fortunate, madame, as to find that which I am in search of?" he inquired.

"I think you will be pleased, Sir Oswald – nay, I am sure you will," answered the lady. "I have a lady waiting to see you now, who will prove, I should say, a treasure."

Sir Oswald bowed, and madame continued:

"Miss Hastings – Miss Agnes Hastings – has been for the last six years finishing governess at Lady Castledine's, and her two pupils make their debut this year; so that there is no longer any occasion for her services."

"And you think she would be fitted, madame, to occupy the position for which I require a lady of talent and refinement?"

"I am quite sure of it," replied madame. "Miss Hastings is thirty years of age. She is highly accomplished, and her manners are exceedingly lady-like. She is a person of great refinement; moreover, she has had great experience with young girls. I do not think, Sir Oswald, that you could do better."

"Is the lady here? Can I see her?"

Madame Selini rang, and desired the little page to ask Miss Hastings to come to her. In a few minutes an elegant, well-dressed lady entered the room. She advanced with a quiet grace and dignity that seemed natural to her; there was not the slightest trace of awkwardness or *mauvaise honte* in her manner.

Madame Selini introduced her to Sir Oswald Darrell.

"I will leave you," she said, "to discuss your private arrangements."

Madame quitted the room with gliding, subtle grace, and then Sir Oswald, in his courtly fashion, placed a chair for Miss Hastings. He looked at the pale, clear-cut face for a few minutes in silence, as though he were at a loss what to say, and then he commenced suddenly:

"I suppose Madame Selini has told you what I want, Miss Hastings?"

"Yes," was the quiet reply; "your niece has been neglected – you want some one to take the entire superintendence of her."

"Neglected!" exclaimed Sir Oswald. "My dear madame, that is a mild word, which does not express the dreadful reality. I wish to disguise nothing from you, I assure you – she literally horrifies me."

Miss Hastings smiled.

"Neglected!" he repeated – "the girl is a savage – a splendid savage – nothing more nor less."

"Has she not received any kind of training, then, Sir Oswald?"

"Training! My dear madame, can you imagine what a wild vine is – a vine that has never been cultivated or pruned, but allowed to grow wild in all its natural beauty and strength, to cling where it would, to trail on the ground and to twine round forest trees? Such a vine is a fit type of my niece."

Miss Hastings looked slightly bewildered. Here was a very different pupil from the elegant, graceful daughters of Lady Castledine.

"I should, perhaps," continued Sir Oswald, "explain to you the peculiar position that my niece, Miss Pauline Darrell, has occupied."

His grand old face flushed, and his stately head was bowed, as though some of the memories that swept over him were not free from shame; and then, with a little gesture of his white hand, on which shone a large diamond ring, he said:

"There is no need for me to tell you, Miss Hastings, that the Darrells are one of the oldest families in England – ancient, honorable, and, I must confess, proud – very proud. My father, the late Sir Hildebert Darrell, was, I should say, one of the proudest and most reserved of men. He had but two children, myself and a daughter twelve years younger – my sister Felicia. I was educated abroad. It was one of my father's fancies that I should see many lands, that I should study men and women before settling down to my right position in the world; so that I knew but little of my sister Felicia. She was a child when I left home – the tragedy of her life had happened before I returned."

Again a great rush of color came over the pale, aristocratic face.

"I must apologize, Miss Hastings, for troubling you with these details, but unless you understand them you will not understand my niece. I cannot tell you how it happened, but it did so happen that while I was away my sister disgraced herself; she left home with a French artist, whom Sir Hildebert had engaged to renovate some choice and costly pictures at Darrell Court. How it came about I cannot say – perhaps there were excuses for her. She may have found home very dull – my father was harsh and cold, and her mother was dead. It may be that when the young artist told her of warm love in sunny lands she was tempted, poor child, to leave the paternal roof.

"My father's wrath was terrible; he pursued Julian L'Estrange with unrelenting fury. I believe the man would have been a successful artist but for my father, who had vowed to ruin him, and who never rested until he had done so – until he had reduced him to direst poverty – and then my sister appealed for help, and my father refused to grant it. He would not allow her name to be mentioned among us; her portrait was destroyed; everything belonging to her was sent away from Darrell Court.

"When I returned – in an interview that I shall never forget – my father threatened me not only with disinheritance, but with his curse, if I made any attempt to hold the least communication with my sister. I do not know that I should have obeyed him if I could have found her, but I did not even know what part of the world she was in. She died, poor girl, and I have no doubt that her death was greatly hastened by privation. My father told me of her death, also that she had left one daughter; he did more – he wrote to Julian L'Estrange, and offered to adopt his daughter on the one condition that he would consent never to see her or hold the least communication with her.

"The reply was, as you may imagine, a firm refusal and a fierce denunciation. In the same letter came a note, written in a large, childish hand:

"'I love my papa, and I do not love you. I will not come to live with you. You are a cruel man, and you helped to kill my dear mamma.'

"It was a characteristic little note, and was signed 'Pauline L'Estrange.' My father's anger on receiving it was very great. I confess that I was more amused than angry.

"My father, Miss Hastings, lived to a good old age. I was not a young man when I succeeded him. He left me all his property. You must understand the Darrell and Audleigh Royal estates are not entailed. He made no mention in his will of the only grandchild he had; but, after I had arranged all my affairs, I resolved to find her. For ten years I have been doing all I could – sending to France, Italy, Spain, and every country where I thought it possible the artist might have sought refuge.

"Three months since I received a letter from him, written on his death-bed, asking me to do something for Pauline, who had grown up into a beautiful girl of seventeen. I found then that he had been living for some years in the Rue d'Orme, Paris. I buried him, brought his daughter to England, and made arrangements whereby she should assume the name of Darrell. But I little knew what a task I had undertaken. Pauline ought to be my heiress, Miss Hastings. She ought to succeed me at Darrell Court. I have no other relatives. But – well, I will not despair; you will see what can be done with her."

"What are her deficiencies?" asked Miss Hastings.

Sir Oswald raised his white hands with a gesture of despair.

"I will tell you briefly. She has lived among artists. She does not seem to have ever known any of her own sex. She is – I am sorry to use the word – a perfect Bohemian. Whether she can be transformed into anything faintly resembling a lady, I cannot tell. Will you undertake the task, Miss Hastings?"

She looked very thoughtful for some minutes, and then answered:

"I will do my best, Sir Oswald."

"I thank you very much. You must permit me to name liberal terms, for your task will be no light one."

And the interview ended, to their mutual satisfaction.

CHAPTER II.

"DARRELL COURT IS A PRISON TO ME!"

It was a beautiful May day, bright with fresh spring loveliness. The leaves were springing fresh and green from the trees; the hedges were all abloom with pink hawthorn; the chestnut trees were all in flower; the gold of the laburnum, the purple of the lilac, the white of the fair acacia trees, and the delicate green of the stately elms and limes gave a beautiful variety of color. The grass was dotted with a hundred wild-flowers; great clusters of yellow buttercups looked in the distance like the upspreading of a sea of gold; the violets perfumed the air, the bluebells stirred in the sweet spring breeze, and the birds sang out loudly and jubilantly.

If one spot looked more lovely than another on this bright May day, it was Darrell Court, for it stood where the sun shone brightest, in one of the most romantic and picturesque nooks of England – the part of Woodshire bordering on the sea.

The mansion and estates stood on gently rising ground; a chain of purple hills stretched away into the far distance; then came the pretty town of Audleigh Royal, the Audleigh Woods, and the broad, deep river Dart. The bank of the river formed the boundary of the Darrell estates, a rich and magnificent heritage, wherein every beauty of meadow and wood seemed to meet. The park was rich in its stately trees and herds of deer; and not far from the house was a fir-wood – an aromatic, odorous fir-wood, which led to the very shores of the smiling southern sea.

By night and by day the grand music of nature was heard in perfection at Darrell Court. Sometimes it was the roll of the wind across the hills, or the beat of angry waves on the shore, or the wild melody of the storm among the pine trees, or the full chorus of a thousand feathered songsters. The court itself was one of the most picturesque of mansions. It did not belong to any one order or style of architecture – there was nothing stiff or formal about it – but it looked in that bright May sunshine a noble edifice, with its square towers covered with clinging ivy, gray turrets, and large arched windows.

Did the sun ever shine upon such a combination of colors? The spray of the fountains glittered in the air, the numerous balconies were filled with flowers; wherever it was possible for a flower to take root, one had been placed to grow – purple wistarias, sad, solemn passion-flowers, roses of every hue. The star-like jessamine and scarlet creepers gave to the walls of the old mansion a vivid glow of color; gold and purple enriched the gardens, heavy white lilies breathed faintest perfume. The spot looked a very Eden.

The grand front entrance consisted of a large gothic porch, which was reached by a broad flight of steps, adorned with white marble vases filled with flowers; the first terrace was immediately below, and terrace led from terrace down to the grand old gardens, where sweetest blossoms grew.

There was an old-world air about the place – something patrician, quiet, reserved. It was no vulgar haunt for vulgar crowds; it was not a show place; and the master of it, Sir Oswald Darrell, as he stood upon the terrace, looked in keeping with the surroundings.

There was a *distingue* air about Sir Oswald, an old-fashioned courtly dignity, which never for one moment left him. He was thoroughly well bred; he had not two sets of manners – one for the world, and one for private life; he was always the same, measured in speech, noble in his grave condescension. No man ever more thoroughly deserved the name of aristocrat; he was delicate and fastidious, with profound and deeply-rooted dislike for all that was ill-bred, vulgar, or mean.

Even in his dress Sir Oswald was remarkable; the superfine white linen, the diamond studs and sleeve links, the rare jewels that gleamed on his fingers – all struck the attention; and, as he took from his pocket a richly engraved golden snuff-box and tapped it with the ends of his delicate white fingers, there stood revealed a thorough aristocrat – the ideal of an English patrician gentleman.

Sir Oswald walked round the stately terraces and gardens.

"I do not see her," he said to himself; "yet most certainly Frampton told me she was here."

Then, with his gold-headed cane in hand, Sir Oswald descended to the gardens. He was evidently in search of some one. Meeting one of the gardeners, who stood, hat in hand, as he passed by, Sir Oswald asked:

"Have you seen Miss Darrell in the gardens?"

"I saw Miss Darrell in the fernery some five minutes since, Sir Oswald," was the reply.

Sir Oswald drew from his pocket a very fine white handkerchief and diffused an agreeable odor of millefleurs around him; the gardener had been near the stables, and Sir Oswald was fastidious.

A short walk brought him to the fernery, an exquisite combination of rock and rustic work, arched by a dainty green roof, and made musical by the ripple of a little waterfall. Sir Oswald looked in cautiously, evidently rather in dread of what he might find there; then his eyes fell upon something, and he said:

"Pauline, are you there?"

A rich, clear, musical voice answered:

"Yes, I am here, uncle."

"My dear," continued Sir Oswald, half timidly, not advancing a step farther into the grotto, "may I ask what you are doing?"

"Certainly, uncle," was the cheerful reply; "you may ask by all means. The difficulty is to answer; for I am really doing nothing, and I do not know how to describe 'nothing.'"

"Why did you come hither?" he asked.

"To dream," replied the musical voice. "I think the sound of falling water is the sweetest music in the world. I came here to enjoy it, and to dream over it."

Sir Oswald looked very uncomfortable.

"Considering, Pauline, how much you have been neglected, do you not think you might spend your time more profitably – in educating yourself, for example?"

"This is educating myself. I am teaching myself beautiful thoughts, and nature just now is my singing mistress." And then the speaker's voice suddenly changed, and a ring of passion came into it. "Who says that I have been neglected? When you say that, you speak ill of my dear dead father, and no one shall do that in my presence. You speak slander, and slander ill becomes an English gentleman. If I was neglected when my father was alive, I wish to goodness such neglect were my portion now!"

Sir Oswald shrugged his shoulders.

"Each one to his or her taste, Pauline. With very little more of such neglect you would have been a –"

He paused; perhaps some instinct of prudence warned him.

"A what?" she demanded, scornfully. "Pray finish the sentence, Sir Oswald."

"My dear, you are too impulsive, too hasty. You want more quietness of manner, more dignity."

Her voice deepened in its tones as she asked:

"I should have been a what, Sir Oswald? I never begin a sentence and leave it half finished. You surely are not afraid to finish it?"

"No, my dear," was the calm reply; "there never yet was a Darrell afraid of anything on earth. If you particularly wish me to do so, I will finish what I was about to say. You would have been a confirmed Bohemian, and nothing could have made you a lady."

"I love what you call Bohemians, and I detest what you call ladies, Sir Oswald," was the angry retort.

"Most probably; but then, you see, Pauline, the ladies of the house of Darrell have always been ladies – high-bred, elegant women. I doubt if any of them ever knew what the word 'Bohemian' meant."

She laughed a little scornful laugh, which yet was sweet and clear as the sound of silver bells.

"I had almost forgotten," said Sir Oswald. "I came to speak to you about something, Pauline; will you come into the house with me?"

They walked on together in silence for some minutes, and then Sir Oswald began:

"I went to London, as you know, last week, Pauline, and my errand was on your behalf."

She raised her eyebrows, but did not deign to ask any questions.

"I have engaged a lady to live with us here at Darrell Court, whose duties will be to finish your education, or, rather, I may truthfully say, to begin it, to train you in the habits of refined society, to – to – make you presentable, in fact, Pauline, which I am sorry, really sorry to say, you are not at present."

She made him a low bow – a bow full of defiance and rebellion.

"I am indeed indebted to you, Sir Oswald."

"No trifling," said the stately baronet, "no sarcasm, Pauline, but listen to me! You are not without sense or reason – pray attend. Look around you," he continued; "remember that the broad fair lands of Darrell Court form one of the grandest domains in England. It is an inheritance almost royal in its extent and magnificence. Whoso reigns here is king or queen of half a county, is looked up to, respected, honored, admired, and imitated. The owner of Darrell Court is a power even in this powerful land of ours; men and women look up to such a one for guidance and example. Judge then what the owner of the inheritance should be."

The baronet's grand old face was flushed with emotion.

"He must be pure, or he would make immorality the fashion; honorable, because men will take their notions of honor from him; just, that justice may abound; upright, stainless. You see all that, Pauline?"

"Yes," she assented, quickly.

"No men have so much to answer for," continued Sir Oswald, "as the great ones of the land – men in whose hands power is vested – men to whom others look for example, on whose lives other lives are modeled – men who, as it were, carry the minds, if not the souls, of their fellow men in the hollows of their hands."

Pauline looked more impressed, and insensibly drew nearer to him.

"Such men, I thank Heaven," he said, standing bareheaded as he uttered the words, "have the Darrells been – loyal, upright, honest, honorable, of stainless repute, of stainless life, fitted to rule their fellow men – grand men, sprung from a grand old race. And at times women have reigned here – women whose names have lived in the annals of the land – who have been as shining lights from the purity, the refinement, the grandeur of their lives."

He spoke with a passion of eloquence not lost on the girl by his side.

"I," he continued, humbly, "am one of the least worthy of my race. I have done nothing for its advancement; but at the same time I have done nothing to disgrace it. I have carried on the honors passively. The time is coming when Darrell Court must pass into other hands. Now, Pauline, you have heard, you know what the ruler of Darrell Court should be. Tell me, are you fitted to take your place here?"

"I am very young," she murmured.

"It is not a question of youth. Dame Sibella Darrell reigned here when she was only eighteen; and the sons she trained to succeed her were among the greatest statesmen England has ever known. She improved and enlarged the property; she died, after living here sixty years, beloved, honored, and revered. It is not a question of age."

"I am a Darrell!" said the girl, proudly.

"Yes, you have the face and figure of a Darrell; you bear the name, too; but you have not the grace and manner of a Darrell."

"Those are mere outward matters of polish and veneer," she said, impatiently.

"Nay, not so. You would not think it right to see an unformed, untrained, uneducated, ignorant girl at the head of such a house as this. What did you do yesterday? A maid displeased you. You boxed her ears. Just imagine it. Such a proceeding on the part of the mistress of Darrell Court would fill one with horror."

A slight smile rippled over the full crimson lips.

"Queen Elizabeth boxed her courtiers' ears," said the girl, "and it seemed right to her."

"A queen, Pauline, is hedged in by her own royalty; she may do what she will. The very fact that you are capable of defending an action so violent, so unlady-like, so opposed to all one's ideas of feminine delicacy, proves that you are unfit for the position you ought to occupy."

"I am honest, at least. I make no pretensions to be what I am not."

"So is my butler honest, but that does not fit him to be master of Darrell Court. Honesty is but one quality – a good one, sturdy and strong; it requires not one, but many qualities to hold such a position as I would fain have you occupy."

Miss Darrell's patience was evidently at an end.

"And the upshot of all this, Sir Oswald, is – "

"Exactly so – that I am anxious to give you every chance in my power – that I have found an estimable, refined, elegant woman, who will devote her time and talents to train you and fit you for society."

A low, musical laugh broke from the perfect lips.

"Have you any idea," she asked, "what I shall be like when I am trained?"

"Like a lady, I trust – a well-bred lady. I can imagine nothing more beautiful than that."

"When is she coming, this model of yours, Sir Oswald?"

"Nay, your model, niece, not mine. She is here now, and I wish to introduce her to you. I should like you, if possible," he concluded, meekly, "to make a favorable impression on her."

There was another impatient murmur.

"I wish you to understand, Pauline," he resumed, after a short pause, "that I shall expect you to render the most implicit obedience to Miss Hastings – to follow whatever rules she may lay down for you, to attend to your studies as she directs them, to pay the greatest heed to all her corrections, to copy her style, to imitate her manners, to – "

"I hate her!" was the impetuous outburst. "I would sooner be a beggar all my life than submit to such restraint."

"Very well," returned Sir Oswald, calmly. "I know that arguing with you is time lost. The choice lies with yourself. If you decide to do as I wish – to study to become a lady in the truest sense of the word – if you will fit yourself for the position, you shall be heiress of Darrell Court; if not – if you persist in your present unlady-like, unrefined, Bohemian manner, I shall leave the whole property to some one else. I tell you the plain truth without any disguise."

"I do not want Darrell Court!" she cried, passionately; "it is a prison to me!"

"I excuse you," rejoined Sir Oswald, coldly; "you are excited, and so not answerable for what you say."

"Uncle," said the girl, "do you see that beautiful singing bird there, giving voice to such glorious melody? Do you think you could catch it and put it in a cage?"

"I have no doubt that I could," replied Sir Oswald.

"But, if you did," she persisted; "even suppose you could make it forget its own wild melodies, could you teach it to sing formally by note and at your will?"

"I have never supposed anything of the kind," said Sir Oswald. "You are possessed of far too much of that kind of nonsense. The young ladies of the present day – properly educated girls – do not talk in that way."

"I can easily believe it," she returned, bitterly.

"Miss Hastings is in the library," said Sir Oswald, as they entered the house. "I hope to see you receive her kindly. Put away that frown, Pauline, and smile if you can. Remember, it is characteristic of the Darrells to be gracious to strangers."

With these words Sir Oswald opened the library door, and holding his niece's hand, entered the room. Miss Hastings rose to receive them. He led Pauline to her, and in the kindest manner possible introduced them to each other.

"I will leave you together," he said. "Pauline will show you your rooms, Miss Hastings; and I hope that you will soon feel happy, and quite at home with us."

Sir Oswald quitted the library, leaving the two ladies looking in silence at each other.

CHAPTER III. "YOUR GOOD SOCIETY IS ALL DECEIT."

Miss Hastings had been prepared to see a hoiden, an awkward, unfledged schoolgirl, one who, never having seen much of good society, had none of the little graces and charms that distinguish young ladies. She had expected to see a tall, gaunt girl, with red hands, and a general air of not knowing what to do with herself – that was the idea she had formed. She gazed in wonder at the reality – a magnificent figure – a girl whose grand, pale, statuesque beauty was something that could never be forgotten. There was nothing of the boarding-school young lady about her; no acquired graces. She was simply magnificent – no other word could describe her. Miss Hastings, as she looked at her, thought involuntarily of the graceful lines, the beautiful curves, the grand, free grace of the world-renowned Diana of the Louvre; there was the same arched, graceful neck, the same royal symmetry, the same harmony of outline.

In one of the most celebrated art galleries of Rome Miss Hastings remembered to have seen a superb bust of Juno; as she looked at her new pupil, she could almost fancy that its head had been modeled from hers. Pauline's head was royal in its queenly contour; the brow low, white, and rounded at the temples; the hair, waving in lines of inexpressible beauty, was loosely gathered together and fastened behind with a gleaming silver arrow. The eyes were perhaps the most wonderful feature in that wonderful face; they were dark as night itself, somewhat in hue like a purple heartsease, rich, soft, dreamy, yet at times all fire, all brightness, filled with passion more intense than any words, and shining then with a strange half-golden light. The brows were straight, dark, and beautiful; the lips crimson, full, and exquisitely shaped; the mouth looked like one that could persuade or condemn – that could express tenderness or scorn, love or pride, with the slightest play of the lips.

Every attitude the girl assumed was full of unconscious grace. She did not appear to be in the least conscious of her wonderful beauty. She had walked to the window, and stood leaning carelessly against the frame, one beautiful arm thrown above her head, as though she were weary, and would fain rest – an attitude that could not have been surpassed had she studied it for years.

"You are not at all what I expected to see," said Miss Hastings, at last. "You are, indeed, so different that I am taken by surprise."

"Am I better or worse than you had imagined me?" she asked, with careless scorn.

"You are different – better, perhaps, in some things. You are taller. You are so tall that it will be difficult to remember you are a pupil."

"The Darrells are a tall race," she said, quietly. "Miss Hastings, what have you come here to teach me?"

The elder lady rose from her seat and looked lovingly into the face of the girl; she placed her hand caressingly on the slender shoulders.

"I know what I should like to teach you, Miss Darrell, if you will let me. I should like to teach you your duty to Heaven, your fellow-creatures, and yourself."

"That would be dry learning, I fear," she returned. "What does my uncle wish me to learn?"

"To be in all respects a perfectly refined, graceful lady."

Her face flushed with a great crimson wave that rose to the white brow and the delicate shell-like ears.

"I shall never be that," she cried, passionately. "I may just as well give up all hopes of Darrell Court. I have seen some ladies since I have been here. I could not be like them. They seem to speak by rule; they all say the same kind of things, with the same smiles, in the same tone of voice; they follow each other like sheep; they seem frightened to advance an opinion of their own, or even give

utterance to an original thought. They look upon me as something horrible, because I dare to say what I think, and have read every book I could find."

"It is not always best to put our thoughts in speech; and the chances are, Miss Darrell, that, if you have read every book you could find, you have read many that would have been better left alone. You are giving a very one-sided, prejudiced view after all."

She raised her beautiful head with a gesture of superb disdain.

"There is the same difference between them and myself as between a mechanical singing bird made to sing three tunes and a wild, sweet bird of the woods. I like my own self best."

"There is not the least doubt of that," observed Miss Hastings, with a smile; "but the question is not so much what we like ourselves as what others like in us. However, we will discuss that at another time, Miss Darrell."

"Has my uncle told you that if I please him – if I can be molded into the right form – I am to be heiress of Darrell Court?" she asked, quickly.

"Yes; and now that I have seen you I am persuaded that you can be anything you wish."

"Do you think, then, that I am clever?" she asked, eagerly.

"I should imagine so," replied Miss Hastings. "Pauline – I need not call you Miss Darrell – I hope we shall be friends; I trust we shall be happy together."

"It is not very likely," she said, slowly, "that I can like you, Miss Hastings."

"Why not?" asked the governess, astonished at her frankness.

"Because you are to correct me; continual correction will be a great annoyance, and will prevent my really liking you."

Miss Hastings looked astounded.

"That may be, Pauline," she said; "but do you know that it is not polite of you to say so? In good society one does not tell such unpleasant truths."

"That is just it," was the eager retort; "that is why I do not like good society, and shall never be fit for it. I am truthful by nature. In my father's house and among his friends there was never any need to conceal the truth; we always spoke it frankly. If we did not like each other, we said so. But here, it seems to me, the first lesson learned to fit one for society is to speak falsely."

"Not so, Pauline; but, when the truth is likely to hurt another's feelings, to wound susceptibility or pride, why speak it, unless it is called for?"

Pauline moved her white arms with a superb gesture of scorn.

"I would rather any day hear the truth and have my mind hurt," she said, energetically, "than feel that people were smiling at me and deceiving me. Lady Hampton visits Sir Oswald. I do not like her, and she does not like me; but she always asks Sir Oswald how his 'dear niece' is, and she calls me a 'sweet creature – original, but very sweet' You can see for yourself, Miss Hastings, that I am not that."

"Indeed, you are not sweet," returned the governess, smiling; "but, Pauline, you are a mimic, and mimicry is a dangerous gift."

She had imitated Lady Hampton's languid tones and affected accent to perfection.

"Sir Oswald bows and smiles all the time Lady Hampton is talking to him; he stands first upon one foot, and then upon the other. You would think, to listen to him, that he was so charmed with her ladyship that he could not exist out of her presence. Yet I have seen him quite delighted at her departure, and twice I heard him say 'Thank Heaven' – it was for the relief. Your good society is all deceit, Miss Hastings."

"I will not have you say that, Pauline. Amiability, and the desire always to be kind and considerate, may carry one to extremes at times; but I am inclined to prefer the amiability that spares to the truth that wounds."

"I am not," was the blunt rejoinder. "Will you come to your rooms, Miss Hastings? Sir Oswald has ordered a suite to be prepared entirely for our use. I have three rooms, you have four; and there is a study that we can use together."

They went through the broad stately corridors, where the warm sun shone in at the windows, and the flowers breathed sweetest perfume. The rooms that had been prepared for them were bright and pleasant with a beautiful view from the windows, well furnished, and supplied with every comfort. A sigh came from Miss Hastings as she gazed – it was all so pleasant. But it seemed very doubtful to her whether she would remain or not – very doubtful whether she would be able to make what Sir Oswald desired out of that frank, free-spoken girl, who had not one conventional idea.

"Sir Oswald is very kind," she said, at length, looking around her; "these rooms are exceedingly nice."

"They are nice," said Pauline; "but I was happier with my father in the Rue d'Orme. Ah me, what liberty we had there! In this stately life I feel as though I were bound with cords, or shackled with chains – as though I longed to stretch out my arms and fly away."

Again Miss Hastings sighed, for it seemed to her that the time of her residence at Darrell Court would in all probability be very short.

CHAPTER IV.

"YOU ARE GOING TO SPOIL MY LIFE."

Two days had passed since Miss Hastings' arrival. On a beautiful morning, when the sun was shining and the birds were singing in the trees, she sat in the study, with an expression of deepest anxiety, of deepest thought on her face. Pauline, with a smile on her lips, sat opposite to her, and there was profound silence. Miss Darrell was the first to break it.

"Well," she asked, laughingly, "what is your verdict, Miss Hastings?"

The elder lady looked up with a long, deep-drawn sigh.

"I have never been so completely puzzled in all my life," she replied. "My dear Pauline, you are the strangest mixture of ignorance and knowledge that I have ever met. You know a great deal, but it is all of the wrong kind; you ought to unlearn all that you have learned."

"You admit then that I know something."

"Yes; but it would be almost better, perhaps, if you did not. I will tell you how I feel, Pauline. I know nothing of building, but I feel as though I had been placed before a heap of marble, porphyry, and granite, of wood, glass, and iron, and then told from those materials to shape a magnificent palace. I am at a loss what to do."

Miss Darrell laughed with the glee of a child. Her governess, repressing her surprise, continued:

"You know more in some respects than most educated women; in other and equally essential matters you know less than a child. You speak French fluently, perfectly; you have read a large number of books in the French language – good, bad, and indifferent, it appears to me; yet you have no more idea of French grammar or of the idiom or construction of the language than a child."

"That, indeed, I have not; I consider grammar the most stupid of all human inventions."

Miss Hastings offered no comment.

"Again," she continued, "you speak good English, but your spelling is bad, and your writing worse. You are better acquainted with English literature than I am – that is, you have read more. You have read indiscriminately; even the titles of some of the books you have read are not admissible."

The dark eyes flashed, and the pale, grand face was stirred as though by some sudden emotion.

"There was a large library in the house where we lived," she explained, hurriedly, "and I read every book in it. I read from early morning until late at night, and sometimes from night until morning; there was no one to tell me what was right and what was wrong, Miss Hastings."

"Then," continued the governess, "you have written a spirited poem on Anne Boleyn, but you know nothing of English history – neither the dates nor the incidents of a single reign. You have written the half of a story, the scene of which is laid in the tropics, yet of geography you have not the faintest notion. Of matters such as every girl has some idea of – of biography, of botany, of astronomy – you have not even a glimmer. The chances are, that if you engaged in conversation with any sensible person, you would equally astonish, first by the clever things you would utter, and then by the utter ignorance you would display."

"I cannot be flattered, Miss Hastings," Pauline put in, "because you humiliate me; nor can I be humiliated, because you flatter me."

But Miss Hastings pursued her criticisms steadily.

"You have not the slightest knowledge of arithmetic. As for knowledge of a higher class, you have none. You are dreadfully deficient. You say that you have read Auguste Comte, but you do not know the answer to the first question in your church catechism. Your education requires beginning all over again. You have never had any settled plan of study, I should imagine."

"No. I learned drawing from Jules Lacroix. Talk of talent, Miss Hastings. You should have known him – he was the handsomest artist I ever saw. There was something so picturesque about him."

"Doubtless," was the dry response; "but I think 'picturesque' is not the word to use in such a case. Music, I presume, you taught yourself?"

The girl's whole face brightened – her manner changed.

"Yes, I taught myself; poor papa could not afford to pay for my lessons. Shall I play to you, Miss Hastings?"

There was a piano in the study, a beautiful and valuable instrument, which Sir Oswald had ordered for his niece.

"I shall be much pleased to hear you," said Miss Hastings.

Pauline Darrell rose and went to the piano. Her face then was as the face of one inspired. She sat down and played a few chords, full, beautiful, and harmonious.

"I will sing to you," she said. "We often went to the opera – papa, Jules, Louis, and myself. I used to sing everything I heard. This is from 'Il Puritani.'"

And she sang one of the most beautiful solos in the opera.

Her voice was magnificent, full, ringing, vibrating with passion – a voice that, like her face, could hardly be forgotten; but she played and sang entirely after a fashion of her own.

"Now, Miss Hastings," she said, "I will imitate Adelina Patti."

Face, voice, manner, all changed; she began one of the far-famed prima-donna's most admired songs, and Miss Hastings owned to herself that if she had closed her eyes she might have believed Madame Patti present.

"This is *a la* Christine Nilsson," continued Pauline; and again the imitation was brilliant and perfect.

The magnificent voice did not seem to tire, though she sang song after song, and imitated in the most marvelous manner some of the grandest singers of the day. Miss Hastings left her seat and went up to her.

"You have a splendid voice, my dear, and great musical genius. Now tell me, do you know a single note of music?"

"Not one," was the quick reply.

"You know nothing of the keys, time, or anything else?"

"Why should I trouble myself when I could play without learning anything of the kind?"

"But that kind of playing, Pauline, although it is very clever, would not do for educated people."

"Is it not good enough for them?" she asked, serenely.

"No; one cannot help admiring it, but any educated person hearing you would detect directly that you did not know your notes."

"Would they think much less of me on that account?" she asked, with the same serenity.

"Yes; every one would think it sad to see so much talent wasted. You must begin to study hard; you must learn to play by note, not by ear, and then all will be well. You love music, Pauline?"

How the beautiful face glowed and the dark eyes shone.

"I love it," she said, "because I can put my whole soul into it – there is room for one's soul in it. You will be shocked, I know, but that is why I liked Comte's theories – because they filled my mind, and gave me so much to think of."

"Were I in your place I should try to forget them, Pauline."

"You should have seen Sir Oswald's face when I told him I had read Comte and Darwin. He positively groaned aloud."

And she laughed as she remembered his misery.

"I feel very much inclined to groan myself," said Miss Hastings. "You shall have theories, or facts, higher, more beautiful, nobler, grander far than any Comte ever dreamed. And now we must begin to work in real earnest."

But Pauline Darrell did not move; her dark eyes were shadowed, her beautiful face grew sullen and determined.

"You are going to spoil my life," she said. "Hitherto it has been a glorious life – free, gladsome, and bright; now you are going to parcel it out. There will be no more sunshiny hours; you are going to reduce me to a kind of machine, to cut off all my beautiful dreams, my lofty thoughts. You want to make me a formal, precise young lady, who will laugh, speak, and think by rule."

"I want to make you a sensible woman, my dear Pauline," corrected Miss Hastings, gravely.

"Who is the better or the happier for being so sensible?" demanded Pauline.

She paused for a few minutes, and then she added, suddenly:

"Darrell Court and all the wealth of the Darrells are not worth it, Miss Hastings."

"Not worth what, Pauline?"

"Not worth the price I must pay."

"What is the price?" asked Miss Hastings, calmly.

"My independence, my freedom of action and thought, my liberty of speech."

"Do you seriously value these more highly than all that Sir Oswald could leave you?"

"I do – a thousand times more highly," she replied.

Miss Hastings was silent for some few minutes, and then said:

"We must do our best; suppose we make a compromise? I will give you all the liberty that I honestly can, in every way, and you shall give your attention to the studies I propose. I will make your task as easy as I can for you. Darrell Court is worth a struggle."

"Yes," was the half-reluctant reply, "it is worth a struggle, and I will make it."

But there was not much hope in the heart of the governess when she commenced her task.

CHAPTER V. PAULINE'S GOOD POINTS

How often Sir Oswald's simile of the untrained, unpruned, uncultivated vine returned to the mind of Miss Hastings! Pauline Darrell was by nature a genius, a girl of magnificent intellect, a grand, noble, generous being all untrained. She had in her capabilities of the greatest kind – she could be either the very empress of wickedness or angelic. She was gloriously endowed, but it was impossible to tell how she would develop; there was no moderation in her, she acted always from impulse, and her impulses were quick, warm, and irresistible. If she had been an actress, she would surely have been the very queen of the stage. Her faults were like her virtues, all grand ones. There was nothing trivial, nothing mean, nothing ungenerous about her. She was of a nature likely to be led to the highest criminality or the highest virtue; there could be no medium of mediocre virtue for her. She was full of character, charming even in her willfulness, but utterly devoid of all small affectations. There was in her the making of a magnificent woman, a great heroine; but nothing could have brought her to the level of commonplace people. Her character was almost a terrible one in view of the responsibilities attached to it.

Grand, daring, original, Pauline was all force, all fire, all passion. Whatever she loved, she loved with an intensity almost terrible to witness. There was also no "middle way" in her dislikes – she hated with a fury of hate. She had little patience, little toleration; one of her greatest delights consisted in ruthlessly tearing away the social vail which most people loved to wear. There were times when her grand, pale, passionate beauty seemed to darken and to deepen, and one felt instinctively that it was in her to be cruel even to fierceness; and again, when her heart was touched and her face softened, one imagined that she might be somewhat akin to the angels.

What was to become of such a nature? What was to develop it – what was to train it? If from her infancy Pauline had been under wise and tender guidance, if some mind that she felt to be superior to her own had influenced her, the certainty is that she would have grown up into a thoughtful, intellectual, talented woman, one whose influence would have been paramount for good, one to whom men would have looked for guidance almost unconsciously to themselves.

But her training had been terribly defective. No one had ever controlled her. She had been mistress of her father's house and queen of his little coterie; with her quiet, unerring judgment, she had made her own estimate of the strength, the mind, the intellect of each one with whom she came in contact, and the result was always favorable to herself – she saw no one superior to herself. Then the society in which her father had delighted was the worst possible for her; she reigned supreme over them all – clever, gifted artists, good-natured Bohemians, who admired and applauded her, who praised every word that fell from her lips, who honestly believed her to be one of the marvels of the world, who told her continually that she was one of the most beautiful, most talented, most charming of mortals, who applauded every daring sentiment instead of telling her plainly that what was not orthodox was seldom right – honest Bohemians, who looked upon the child as a wonder, and puzzled themselves to think what destiny was high enough for her – men whose artistic tastes were gratified by the sight of her magnificent loveliness, who had for her the deepest, truest, and highest respect, who never in her presence uttered a syllable that they would not have uttered in the presence of a child – good-natured Bohemians, who sometimes had money and sometimes had none, who were always willing to share their last *sou* with others more needy than themselves, who wore shabby, threadbare coats, but who knew how to respect the pure presence of a pure girl.

Pauline had received a kind of education. Her father's friends discussed everything – art, science, politics, and literature – in her presence; they discussed the wildest stories, they indulged in unbounded fun and satire, they were of the wittiest even as they were of the cleverest of men.

They ridiculed unmercifully what they were pleased to call the "regulations of polite society;" they enjoyed unvarnished truth – as a rule, the more disagreeable the truth the more they delighted in telling it. They scorned all etiquette, they pursued all dandies and belles with terrible sarcasm; they believed in every wild or impossible theory that had ever been started; in fact, though honest as the day, honorable, and true, they were about the worst associates a young girl could have had to fit her for the world. The life she led among them had been one long romance, of which she had been queen.

The house in the Rue d'Orme had once been a grand mansion; it was filled with quaint carvings, old tapestry, and the relics of a by-gone generation. The rooms were large – most of them had been turned into studios. Some of the finest of modern pictures came from the house in the Rue d'Orme, although, as a rule, the students who worked there were not wealthy.

It was almost amusing to see how this delicate young girl ruled over such society. By one word she commanded these great, generous, unworldly men – with one little white finger upraised she could beckon them at her will; they had a hundred pet names for her – they thought no queen or empress fit to be compared with their old comrade's daughter. She was to be excused if constant flattery and homage had made her believe that she was in some way superior to the rest of the world.

When the great change came – when she left the Rue d'Orme for Darrell Court – it was a terrible blow to Pauline to find all this superiority vanish into thin air. In place of admiration and flattery, she heard nothing but reproach and correction. She was given to understand that she was hardly presentable in polite society – she, who had ruled like a queen over scholars and artists! Instead of laughter and applause, grim silence followed her remarks. She read in the faces of those around her that she was not as they were – not of their world. Her whole soul turned longingly to the beautiful free Bohemian world she had left. The crowning blow of all was when, after studying her carefully for some time, Sir Oswald told her that he feared her manners were against her – that neither in style nor in education was she fitted to be mistress of Darrell Court. She had submitted passively to the change in her name; she was proud of being a Darrell – she was proud of the grand old race from which she had sprung. But, when Sir Oswald had uttered that last speech, she flamed out in fierce, violent passion, which showed him she had at least the true Darrell spirit.

There were points in her favor, he admitted. She was magnificently handsome – she had more courage and a higher spirit than fall even to the lot of most men. She was a fearless horse-woman; indeed it was only necessary for any pursuit to be dangerous and to require unlimited courage for her instantly to undertake it.

Would the balance at last turn in her favor? Would her beauty, her spirits, her daring, her courage, outweigh defective education, defective manner, and want of worldly knowledge?

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROGRESS MADE BY THE PUPIL

It was a beautiful afternoon in June. May, with its lilac and hawthorn, had passed away; the roses were in fairest bloom, lilies looked like great white stars; the fullness and beauty, the warmth and fragrance of summer were on the face of the land, and everything living rejoiced in it.

Pauline had begged that the daily readings might take place under the great cedar tree on the lawn.

"If I must be bored by dry historical facts," she said, "let me at least have the lights and shadows on the lawn to look at. The shadow of the trees on the grass is beautiful beyond everything else. Oh, Miss Hastings, why will people write dull histories? I like to fancy all kings heroes, and all queens heroines. History leaves us no illusions."

"Still," replied the governess, "it teaches us plenty of what you love so much – truth."

The beautiful face grew very serious and thoughtful.

"Why are so many truths disagreeable and sad? If I could rule, I would have the world so bright, so fair and glad, every one so happy. I cannot understand all this under-current of sorrow."

"Comte did not explain it, then, to your satisfaction?" said Miss Hastings.

"Comte!" cried the girl, impatiently. "I am not obliged to believe all I read! Once and for all, Miss Hastings, I do not believe in Comte or his fellows. I only read what he wrote because people seemed to think it clever to have done so. You know – you must know – that I believe in our great Father. Who could look round on this lovely world and not do so?"

Miss Hastings felt more hopeful of the girl than she had ever felt before. Such strange, wild theories had fallen at times from her lips that it was some consolation to know she had still a child's faith.

Then came an interruption in the shape of a footman, with Sir Oswald's compliments, and would the ladies go to the drawing-room? There were visitors.

"Who are they?" asked Miss Darrell, abruptly.

The man replied:

"Sir George and Lady Hampton."

"I shall not go," said Pauline, decidedly; "that woman sickens me with her false airs and silly, false graces. I have not patience to talk to her."

"Sir Oswald will not be pleased," remonstrated Miss Hastings.

"That I cannot help – it is not my fault. I shall not make myself a hypocrite to please Sir Oswald."

"Society has duties which must be discharged, and which do not depend upon our liking; we must do our duty whether we like it or not."

"I detest society," was the abrupt reply – "it is all a sham!"

"Then why not do your best to improve it? That would surely be better than to abuse it."

"There is something in that," confessed Miss Darrell, slowly.

"If we each do our little best toward making the world even ever so little better than we found it," said Miss Hastings, "we shall not have lived in vain."

There was a singular grandeur of generosity about the girl. If she saw that she was wrong in an argument or an opinion, she admitted it with the most charming candor. That admission she made now by rising at once to accompany Miss Hastings.

The drawing-room at Darrell Court was a magnificent apartment; it had been furnished under the superintendence of the late Lady Darrell, a lady of exquisite taste. It was all white and gold, the white hangings with bullion fringe and gold braids, the white damask with a delicate border of gold; the pictures, the costly statues gleamed in the midst of rich and rare flowers; graceful ornaments, tall,

slender vases were filled with choicest blossoms; the large mirrors, with their golden frames, were each and all perfect in their way. There was nothing gaudy, brilliant, or dazzling; all was subdued, in perfect good taste and harmony.

In this superb room the beauty of Pauline Darrell always showed to great advantage; she was in perfect keeping with its splendor. As she entered now, with her usual half-haughty, half-listless grace, Sir Oswald looked up with admiration plainly expressed on his face.

"What a queenly mistress she would make for the Court, if she would but behave like other people!" he thought to himself, and then Lady Hampton rose to greet the girl.

"My dear Miss Darrell, I was getting quite impatient; it seems an age since I saw you – really an age."

"It is an exceedingly short one," returned Pauline; "I saw you on Tuesday, Lady Hampton."

"Did you? Ah, yes; how could I forget? Ah, my dear child, when you reach my age – when your mind is filled with a hundred different matters – you will not have such a good memory as you have now."

Lady Hampton was a little, over-dressed woman. She looked all flowers and furbelows – all ribbons and laces. She was, however, a perfect mistress of all the arts of polite society; she knew exactly what to say and how to say it; she knew when to smile, when to look sympathetic, when to sigh. She was not sincere; she never made the least pretense of being so. "Society" was her one idea – how to please it, how to win its admiration, how to secure a high position in it.

The contrast between the two was remarkable – the young girl with her noble face, her grand soul looking out of her clear dark eyes; Lady Hampton with her artificial smiles, her shifting glances, and would-be charming gestures. Sir Oswald stood by with a courtly smile on his face.

"I have some charming news for you," said Lady Hampton. "I am sure you will be pleased to hear it, Miss Darrell."

"That will quite depend on what it is like," interposed Pauline, honestly.

"You dear, droll child! You are so original; you have so much character. I always tell Sir Oswald you are quite different from any one else."

And though her ladyship spoke smilingly, she gave a keen, quiet glance at Sir Oswald's face, in all probability to watch the effect of her words.

"Ah, well," she continued, "I suppose that in your position a little singularity may be permitted," and then she paused, with a bland smile.

"To what position do you allude?" asked Miss Darrell.

Lady Hampton laughed again. She nodded with an air of great penetration.

"You are cautious, Miss Darrell. But I am forgetting my news. It is this – that my niece, Miss Elinor Rocheford, is coming to visit me."

She waited evidently for Miss Darrell to make some complimentary reply. Not a word came from the proud lips.

"And when she comes I hope, Miss Darrell, that you and she will be great friends."

"It is rather probable, if I like her," was the frank reply.

Sir Oswald looked horrified. Lady Hampton smiled still more sweetly.

"You are sure to like her. Elinor is most dearly loved wherever she goes."

"Is she a sweet creature?" asked Pauline, with such inimitable mimicry that Miss Hastings shuddered, while Sir Oswald turned pale.

"She is indeed," replied Lady Hampton, who, if she understood the sarcasm, made no sign. "With Sir Oswald's permission, I shall bring her to spend a long day with you, Miss Darrell."

"I shall be charmed," said Sir Oswald – "really delighted, Lady Hampton. You do me great honor indeed."

He looked at his niece for some little confirmation of his words, but that young lady appeared too haughty for speech; the word "honor" seemed to her strangely misapplied.

Lady Hampton relaxed none of her graciousness; her bland suavity continued the same until the end of the visit; and then, in some way, she contrived to make Miss Hastings understand that she wanted to speak with her. She asked the governess if she would go with her to the carriage, as she wished to consult her about some music. When they were alone, her air and manner changed abruptly. She turned eagerly to her, her eyes full of sharp, keen curiosity.

"Can you tell me one thing?" she asked. "Is Sir Oswald going to make that proud, stupid, illiterate girl his heiress – mistress of Darrell Court?"

"I do not know," replied Miss Hastings. "How should I be able to answer such a question?"

"Of course I ask in confidence – only in strict confidence; you understand that, Miss Hastings?"

"I understand," was the grave reply.

"All the county is crying shame on him," said her ladyship. "A French painter's daughter. He must be mad to think of such a thing. A girl brought up in the midst of Heaven knows what. He never can intend to leave Darrell Court to her."

"He must leave it to some one," said Miss Hastings; "and who has a better right to it than his own sister's child?"

"Let him marry," she suggested, hastily; "let him marry, and leave it to children of his own. Do you think the county will tolerate such a mistress for Darrell Court – so blunt, so ignorant? Miss Hastings, he must marry."

"I can only suppose," replied the governess, "that he will please himself, Lady Hampton, without any reference to the county."

CHAPTER VII. CAPTAIN LANGTON

June, with its roses and lilies, passed on, the laburnums had all fallen, the lilies had vanished, and still the state of affairs at Darrell Court remained doubtful. Pauline, in many of those respects in which her uncle would fain have seen her changed, remained unaltered – indeed it was not easy to unlearn the teachings of a life-time.

Miss Hastings, more patient and hopeful than Sir Oswald, persevered, with infinite tact and discretion. But there were certain peculiarities of which Pauline could not be broken. One was a habit of calling everything by its right name. She had no notion of using any of those polite little fictions society delights in; no matter how harsh, how ugly the word, she did not hesitate to use it. Another peculiarity was that of telling the blunt, plain, abrupt truth, no matter what the cost, no matter who was pained. She tore aside the flimsy veil of society with zest; she spared no one in her almost ruthless denunciations. Her intense scorn for all kinds of polite fiction was somewhat annoying.

"You need not say that I am engaged, James," she said, one day, when a lady called whom she disliked. "I am not engaged, but I do not care to see Mrs. Camden."

Even that bland functionary looked annoyed. Miss Hastings tried to make some compromise.

"You cannot send such a message as that, Miss Darrell. Pray listen to reason."

"Sir Oswald and yourself agreed that she was –"

"Never mind that," hastily interrupted Miss Hastings. "You must not hurt any one's feelings by such a blunt message as that; it is neither polite nor well-bred."

"I shall never cultivate either politeness or good breeding at the expense of truth; therefore you had better send the message yourself, Miss Hastings."

"I will do so," said the governess, quietly. "I will manage it in such a way as to show Mrs. Camden that she is not expected to call again, yet so as not to humiliate her before the servants; but, remember, not at any sacrifice of truth."

Such contests were of daily, almost hourly, occurrence. Whether the result would be such a degree of training as to fit the young lady for taking the position she wished to occupy, remained doubtful.

"This is really very satisfactory," said Sir Oswald, abruptly, one morning, as he entered the library, where Miss Hastings awaited him. "But," he continued, "before I explain myself, let me ask you how are you getting on – what progress are you making with your tiresome pupil?"

The gentle heart of the governess was grieved to think that she could not give a more satisfactory reply. Little real progress had been made in study; less in manner.

"There is a mass of splendid material, Sir Oswald," she said; "but the difficulty lies in putting it into shape."

"I am afraid," he observed, "people will make remarks; and I have heard more than one doubt expressed as to what kind of hands Darrell Court is likely to fall into should I make Pauline my heiress. You see she is capable of almost anything. She would turn the place into an asylum; she would transform it into a college for philosophers, a home for needy artists – in fact, anything that might occur to her – without the least hesitation."

Miss Hastings could not deny it. They were not speaking of a manageable nineteenth century young lady, but of one to whom no ordinary rules applied, whom no customary measures fitted.

"I have a letter here," continued Sir Oswald, "from Captain Aubrey Langton, the son of one of my oldest and dearest friends. He proposes to pay me a visit, and – pray, Miss Hastings, pardon me for suggesting such a thing, but I should be so glad if he would fall in love with Pauline. I have an idea that love might educate and develop her more quickly than anything else."

Miss Hastings had already thought the same thing; but she knew whoever won the love of such a girl as Pauline Darrell would be one of the cleverest of men.

"I am writing to him to tell him that I hope he will remain with us for a month; and during that time I hope, I fervently hope, he may fall in love with my niece. She is beautiful enough. Pardon me again, Miss Hastings, but has she ever spoken to you of love or lovers?"

"No. She is in that respect, as in many others, quite unlike the generality of girls. I have never heard an allusion to such matters from her lips – never once."

This fact seemed to Sir Oswald stranger than any other; he had an idea that girls devoted the greater part of their thoughts to such subjects.

"Do you think," he inquired, "that she cared for any one in Paris – any of those men, for instance, whom she used to meet at her father's?"

"No," replied Miss Hastings; "I do not think so. She is strangely backward in all such respects, although she was brought up entirely among gentlemen."

"Among – pardon me, my dear madame, not gentlemen – members, we will say, of a gentlemanly profession."

Sir Oswald took from his gold snuff-box a pinch of most delicately-flavored snuff, and looked as though he thought the very existence of such people a mistake.

"Any little influence that you may possess over my niece, Miss Hastings, will you kindly use in Captain Langton's favor? Of course, if anything should come of my plan – as I fervently hope there may – I shall stipulate that the engagement lasts two years. During that time I shall trust to the influence of love to change my niece's character."

It was only a fresh complication – one from which Miss Hastings did not expect much.

That same day, during dinner, Sir Oswald told his niece of the expected arrival of Captain Langton.

"I have seen so few English gentlemen," she remarked, "that he will be a subject of some curiosity to me."

"You will find him – that is, if he resembles his father – a high-bred, noble gentleman," said Sir Oswald, complacently.

"Is he clever?" she asked. "What does he do?"

"Do!" repeated Sir Oswald. "I do not understand you."

"Does he paint pictures or write books?"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Sir Oswald, proudly. "He is a gentleman."

Her face flushed hotly for some minutes, and then the flush died away, leaving her paler than ever.

"I consider artists and writers gentlemen," she retorted – "gentlemen of a far higher stamp than those to whom fortune has given money and nature has denied brains."

Another time a sharp argument would have resulted from the throwing down of such a gantlet. Sir Oswald had something else in view, so he allowed the speech to pass.

"It will be a great pleasure for me to see my old friend's son again," he said. "I hope, Pauline, you will help me to make his visit a pleasant one."

"What can I do?" she asked, brusquely.

"What a question!" laughed Sir Oswald. "Say, rather, what can you not do? Talk to him, sing to him. Your voice is magnificent, and would give any one the greatest pleasure. You can ride out with him."

"If he is a clever, sensible man, I can do all that you mention; if not, I shall not trouble myself about him. I never could endure either tiresome or stupid people."

"My young friend is not likely to prove either," said Sir Oswald, angrily; and Miss Hastings wondered in her heart what the result of it all would be.

That same evening Miss Darrell talked of Captain Langton, weaving many bright fancies concerning him.

"I suppose," she said, "that it is not always the most favorable specimens of the English who visit Paris. We used to see such droll caricatures. I like a good caricature above all things – do you, Miss Hastings?"

"When it is good, and pains no one," was the sensible reply.

The girl turned away with a little impatient sigh.

"Your ideas are all colorless," she said, sharply. "In England it seems to me that everybody is alike. You have no individuality, no character."

"If character means, in your sense of the word, ill-nature, so much the better," rejoined Miss Hastings. "All good-hearted people strive to save each other from pain."

"I wonder," said Pauline, thoughtfully, "if I shall like Captain Langton! We have been living here quietly enough; but I feel as though some great change were coming. You have no doubt experienced that peculiar sensation which comes over one just before a heavy thunder-storm? I have that strange, half-nervous, half-restless sensation now."

"You will try to be amiable, Pauline," put in the governess, quietly. "You see that Sir Oswald evidently thinks a great deal of this young friend of his. You will try not to shock your uncle in any way – not to violate those little conventionalities that he respects so much."

"I will do my best; but I must be myself – always myself. I cannot assume a false character."

"Then let it be your better self," said the governess, gently; and for one minute Pauline Darrell was touched.

"That sweet creature, Lady Hampton's niece, will be here next week," she remarked, after a short pause. "What changes will be brought into our lives, I wonder?"

Of all the changes possible, least of all she expected the tragedy that afterward happened.

CHAPTER VIII. THE INTRODUCTION

It was a never-to-be-forgotten evening when Captain Langton reached Darrell Court – an evening fair, bright, and calm. The sweet southern wind bore the perfume of flowers; the faint ripples of the fountains, the musical song of the birds, seemed almost to die away on the evening breeze; the sun appeared unwilling to leave the sapphire sky, the flowers unwilling to close. Pauline had lingered over her books until she could remain in-doors no longer; then, by Miss Hastings' desire, she dressed for dinner – which was delayed for an hour – and afterward went into the garden.

Most girls would have remembered, as they dressed, that a handsome young officer was coming; Miss Darrell did not make the least change in her usual toilet. The thin, fine dress of crape fell in statuesque folds round the splendid figure; the dark hair was drawn back from the beautiful brow, and negligently fastened with her favorite silver arrow; the white neck and fair rounded arms gleamed like white marble through the thin folds of crape. There was not the least attempt at ornament; yet no queen arrayed in royal robes ever looked more lovely.

Pauline was a great lover of the picturesque. With a single flower, a solitary knot of ribbon, she could produce an effect which many women would give all their jewels to achieve. Whatever she wore took a kind of royal grace from herself which no other person could impart. Though her dress might be made of the same material as that of others, it never looked the same. On her it appeared like the robes of a queen.

As Pauline was passing through the corridor, Miss Hastings met her. The governess looked scrutinizingly at the plain evening dress; it was the same that she had worn yesterday. Evidently there was no girlish desire to attract.

"Pauline, we shall have a visitor this evening," said Miss Hastings; "you might add a few flowers to your dress."

She passed on, with a smile of assent. Almost the first thing that caught her attention out of doors was a large and handsome fuchsia. She gathered a spray of the rich purple and crimson flowers, and placed it negligently in her hair. Many women would have stood before their mirror for an hour without producing the same superb effect. Then she placed another spray of the same gorgeous flowers in the bodice of her dress. It was all done without effort, and she would have been the last in the world to suspect how beautiful she looked. Then she went on to the fountain, for the beautiful, calm evening had awakened all the poet's soul within her. The grand, sensitive nature thrilled – the beautiful, poetic mind reveled in this hour of nature's most supreme loveliness. A thousand bright fancies surged through her heart and brain; a thousand poetical ideas shaped themselves into words, and rose to her lips.

So time passed, and she was unconscious of it, until a shadow falling over the great white lilies warned her that some one was near.

Looking up quickly, she saw a tall, fair, handsome young man gazing at her with mingled admiration and surprise. Beside him stood Sir Oswald, courtly, gracious, and evidently on the alert.

"Captain Langton," he said, "let me introduce you to my niece, Miss Darrell."

Not one feature of the girl's proud, beautiful face moved, but there was some little curiosity in her dark eyes. They rested for a minute on the captain's face, and then, with a dreamy look, she glanced over the heads of the white lilies behind him. He was not her ideal, not her hero, evidently. In that one keen, quick glance, she read not only the face, but the heart and soul of the man before her.

The captain felt as though he had been subjected to some wonderful microscopic examination.

"She is one of those dreadfully shrewd girls that pretend to read faces," he said to himself, while he bowed low before her, and replied with enthusiasm to the introduction.

"My niece is quite a Darrell," said Sir Oswald, proudly. "You see she has the Darrell face."

Again the gallant captain offered some flattering remark – a neatly turned compliment, which he considered ought to have brought her down, as a skillful shot does a bird – but the dark eyes saw only the lilies, not him.

"She is proud, like all the Darrells," he thought; "my father always said they were the proudest race in England."

"I hope," said Sir Oswald, courteously, "that you will enjoy your visit here, Aubrey. Your father was my dearest friend, and it gives me great delight to see you here."

"I am sure of it, Sir Oswald. I am equally happy; I cannot see how any one could be dull for one minute in this grand old place."

Sir Oswald's face flushed with pleasure, and for the first time the dark eyes slowly left the lilies and looked at the captain.

"I find not only one minute, but many hours in which to be dull," said Pauline. "Do you like the country so well?"

"I like Darrell Court," he replied, with a bow that seemed to embrace Sir Oswald, his niece, and all his possessions.

"You like it – in what way?" asked Pauline, in her terribly downright manner. "It is your first visit, and you have been here only a few minutes. How can you tell whether you like it?"

For a few moments Captain Langton looked slightly confused, and then he rallied. Surely a man of the world was not to be defied by a mere girl.

"I have seen that at Darrell Court," he said, deferentially, "which will make the place dear to me while I live."

She did not understand him. She was far too frank and haughty for a compliment so broad. But Sir Oswald smiled.

"He is losing no time," thought the stately old baronet; "he is falling in love with her, just as I guessed he would."

"I will leave you," said Sir Oswald, "to get better acquainted. Pauline, you will show Captain Langton the aviary."

"Yes," she assented, carelessly. "But will you send Miss Hastings here? She knows the various birds far better than I do."

Sir Oswald, with a pleased expression on his face, walked away.

"So you have an aviary at the Court, Miss Darrell. It seems to me there is nothing wanting here. You do not seem interested; you do not like birds?"

"Not caged ones," she replied. "I love birds almost as though they were living friends, but not bright-plumaged birds in golden cages. They should be free and wild in the woods and forests, filling the summer air with joyous song. I love them well then."

"You like unrestricted freedom?" he observed.

"I do not merely like it, I deem it an absolute necessity. I should not care for life without it."

The captain looked more attentively at her. It was the Darrell face, surely enough – features of perfect beauty, with a soul of fire shining through them.

"Yet," he said, musingly, cautiously feeling his way, "there is but little freedom – true freedom – for women. They are bound down by a thousand narrow laws and observances – caged by a thousand restraints."

"There is no power on earth," she returned, hastily, "that can control thoughts or cage souls; while they are free, it is untrue to say that there is no freedom."

A breath of fragrant wind came and stirred the great white lilies. The gallant captain saw at once that he should only lose in arguments with her.

"Shall we visit the aviary?" he asked.

And she walked slowly down the path, he following.

"She is like an empress," he thought. "It will be all the more glory for me if I can win such a wife for my own."

CHAPTER IX. THE BROKEN LILY

Pauline Darrell was a keen, shrewd observer of character. She judged more by small actions than by great ones; it was a characteristic of hers. When women have that gift, it is more to be dreaded than the cool, calm, matured judgment of men. Men err sometimes in their estimate of character, but it is very seldom that a woman makes a similar mistake.

The garden path widened where the tall white lilies grew in rich profusion, and there Pauline and Captain Langton walked side by side. The rich, sweet perfume seemed to gather round them, and the dainty flowers, with their shining leaves and golden bracts, looked like great white stars.

Captain Langton carried a small cane in his hand. He had begun to talk to Pauline with great animation. Her proud indifference piqued him. He was accustomed to something more like rapture when he devoted himself to any fair lady. He vowed to himself that he would vanquish her pride, that he would make her care for him, that the proud, dark eyes should soften and brighten for him; and he gave his whole mind to the conquest. As he walked along, one of the tall, white lilies bent over the path; with one touch of the cane he beat it down, and Pauline gave a little cry, as though the blow had pained her. She stopped, and taking the slender green stem in her hand, straightened it; but the blow had broken one of the white leaves.

"Why did you do that?" she asked, in a pained voice.

"It is only a flower," he replied, with a laugh.

"Only a flower! You have killed it. You cannot make it live again. Why need you have cut its sweet life short?"

"It will not be missed from among so many," he said.

"You might say the same thing of yourself," she retorted. "The world is full of men, and you would hardly be missed from so many; yet you would not like –"

"There is some little difference between a man and a flower, Miss Darrell," he interrupted, stiffly.

"There is, indeed; and the flowers have the advantage," she retorted.

The captain solaced himself by twisting his mustache, and relieved his feelings by some few muttered words, which Miss Darrell did not hear. In her quick, impulsive way, she judged him at once.

"He is cruel and selfish," she thought; "he would not even stoop to save the life of the sweetest flower that blows. He shall not forget killing that lily," she continued, as she gathered the broken chalice, and placed it in her belt. "Every time he looks at me," she said, "he shall remember what he has done."

The captain evidently understood her amiable intention, and liked her accordingly. They walked on for some minutes in perfect silence; then Pauline turned to him suddenly.

"Have you been long in the army, Captain Langton?"

Flattered by a question that seemed to evince some personal interest, he hastened to reply:

"More than eight years. I joined when I was twenty."

"Have you seen any service?" she asked.

"No," he replied. "My regiment had been for many years in active service just before I joined, so that we have been at home since then."

"In inglorious ease," she said.

"We are ready for work," he returned, "when work comes."

"How do you employ your time?" she asked; and again he was flattered by the interest that the question showed. His face flushed. Here was a grand opportunity of showing this haughty girl, this "proudest Darrell of them all," that he was eagerly sought after in society such as she had not yet seen.

"You have no conception of the immense number of engagements that occupy our time," he replied; "I am fond of horses – I take a great interest in all races."

If he had added that he was one of the greatest gamblers on the turf, he would have spoken truthfully.

"Horse racing," said Miss Darrell – "that is the favorite occupation of English gentlemen, is it not?"

"I should imagine so. Then I am considered – you must pardon my boasting – one of the best billiard players in London."

"That is not much of a boast," she remarked, with such quiet contempt that the captain could only look at her in sheer wonder.

"There are balls, operas, parties, suppers – I cannot tell what; and the ladies engross a great deal of our time. We soldiers never forget our devotion and chivalry to the fair sex, Miss Darrell."

"The fair sex should be grateful that they share your attention with horses and billiards," she returned. "But what else do you do, Captain Langton? I was not thinking of such trifles as these."

"Trifles!" he repeated. "I do not call horse racing a trifle. I was within an inch of winning the Derby – I mean to say a horse of mine was. If you call that a trifle, Miss Darrell, you go near to upsetting English society altogether."

"But what great things do you do?" she repeated, her dark eyes opening wider. "You cannot mean seriously that this is all. Do you never write, paint – have you no ambition at all?"

"I do not know what you call ambition," he replied, sullenly; "as for writing and painting, in England we pay people to do that kind of thing for us. You do not think that I would paint a picture, even if I could?"

"I should think you clever if you did that," she returned; "at present I cannot see that you do anything requiring mind or intellect."

"Miss Darrell," he said, looking at her, "you are a radical, I believe."

"A radical?" she repeated, slowly. "I am not quite sure, Captain Langton, that I know what that means."

"You believe in aristocracy of intellect, and all that kind of nonsense," he continued. "Why should a man who paints a picture be any better than the man who understands the good points of a horse?"

"Why, indeed?" she asked, satirically. "We will not argue the question, for we should not agree."

"I had her there," thought the captain. "She could not answer me. Some of these women require a high hand to keep them in order."

"I do not see Miss Hastings," she said at last, "and it is quite useless going to the aviary without her. I do not remember the name of a single bird; and I am sure you will not care for them."

"But," he returned, hesitatingly, "Sir Oswald seemed to wish it."

"There is the first dinner-bell," she said, with an air of great relief; "there will only just be time to return. As you seem solicitous about Sir Oswald's wishes we had better go in, for he dearly loves punctuality."

"I believe," thought the captain, "that she is anxious to get away from me. I must say that I am not accustomed to this kind of thing."

The aspect of the dining-room, with its display of fine old plate, the brilliantly arranged tables, the mingled odor of rare wines and flowers, restored him to good humor.

"It would be worth some little trouble," he thought, "to win all this."

He took Pauline in to dinner. The grand, pale, passionate beauty of the girl had never shown to greater advantage than it did this evening, as she sat with the purple and crimson fuchsias in her hair and the broken lily in her belt. Sir Oswald did not notice the latter until dinner was half over. Then he said:

"Why, Pauline, with gardens and hothouses full of flowers, have you chosen a broken one?"

"To me it is exquisite," she replied.

The captain's face darkened for a moment, but he would not take offense. The elegantly appointed table, the seductive dinner, the rare wines, all made an impression on him. He said to himself that there was a good thing offered to him, and that a girl's haughty temper should not stand in his way. He made himself most agreeable, he was all animation, vivacity, and high spirits with Sir Oswald. He was deferential and attentive to Miss Hastings, and his manner to Pauline left no doubt in the minds of the lookers on that he was completely fascinated by her. She was too proudly indifferent, too haughtily careless, even to resent it. Sir Oswald Darrell was too true a gentleman to offer his niece to any one; but he had given the captain to understand that, if he could woo her and win her, there would be no objection raised on his part.

For once in his life Captain Langton had spoken quite truthfully.

"I have nothing," he said; "my father left me but a very moderate fortune, and I have lost the greater part of it. I have not been careful or prudent, Sir Oswald."

"Care and prudence are not the virtues of youth," Sir Oswald returned. "I may say, honestly, I should be glad if your father's son could win my niece; as for fortune, she will be richly dowered if I make her my heiress. Only yesterday I heard that coal had been found on my Scotch estates, and, if that be true, it will raise my income many thousands per annum."

"May you long live to enjoy your wealth, Sir Oswald!" said the young man, so heartily that tears stood in the old baronet's eyes.

But there was one thing the gallant captain did not confess. He did not tell Sir Oswald Darrell – what was really the truth – that he was over head and ears in debt, and that this visit to Darrell Court was the last hope left to him.

CHAPTER X. PAULINE STILL INCORRIGIBLE

Sir Oswald lingered over his wine. It was not every day that he found a companion so entirely to his taste as Captain Langton. The captain had a collection of anecdotes of the court, the aristocracy, and the mess-room, that could not be surpassed. He kept his own interest well in view the whole time, making some modest allusions to the frequency with which his society was sought, and the number of ladies who were disposed to regard him favorably. All was narrated with the greatest skill, without the least boasting, and Sir Oswald, as he listened with delight, owned to himself that, all things considered, he could not have chosen more wisely for his niece.

A second bottle of fine old port was discussed, and then Sir Oswald said:

"You will like to go to the drawing-room; the ladies will be there. I always enjoy forty winks after dinner."

The prospect of a *tete-a-tete* with Miss Darrell did not strike the captain as being a very rapturous one.

"She is," he said to himself, "a magnificently handsome girl, but almost too haughty to be bearable. I have never, in all my life, felt so small as I do when she speaks to me or looks at me, and no man likes that sort of thing."

But Darrell Court was a magnificent estate, the large annual income was a sum he had never even dreamed of, and all might be his – Sir Oswald had said so; his, if he could but win the proud heart of the proudest girl it had ever been his fortune to meet. The stake was well worth going through something disagreeable for.

"If she were only like other women," he thought, "I should know how to manage her; but she seems to live in the clouds."

The plunge had to be made, so the captain summoned all his courage, and went to the drawing-room. The picture there must have struck the least imaginative of men.

Miss Hastings, calm, elegant, lady-like, in her quiet evening dress of gray silk, was seated near a small stand on which stood a large lamp, by the light of which she was reading. The part of the room near her was brilliantly illuminated. It was a spacious apartment – unusually so even for a large mansion. It contained four large windows, two of which were closed, the gorgeous hangings of white and gold shielding them from view; the other end of the room was in semi-darkness, the brilliant light from the lamp not reaching it – the windows were thrown wide open, and the soft, pale moonlight came in. The evening came in, too, bringing with it the sweet breath of the lilies, the perfume of the roses, the fragrance of rich clover, carnations, and purple heliotropes. Faint shadows lay on the flowers, the white silvery light was very peaceful and sweet; the dewdrops shone on the grass – it was the fairest hour of nature's fair day.

Pauline had gone to the open window. Something had made her restless and unquiet; but, standing there, the spell of that beautiful moonlit scene calmed her, and held her fast. With one look at that wonderful sky and its myriad stars, one at the soft moonlight and the white lilies, the fever of life died from her, and a holy calm, sweet fancies, bright thoughts, swept over her like an angel's wing.

Then she became conscious of a stir in the perfumed air; something less agreeable mingled with the fragrance of the lilies scent of which she did not know the name, but which – some she disliked ever afterward because the captain used it. A low voice that would fain be tender murmured something in her ear; the spell of the moonlight was gone, the quickly thronging poetical fancies had all fled away, the beauty seemed to have left even the sleeping flowers. Turning round to him, she said, in a clear voice, every word sounding distinctly:

"Have the goodness, Captain Langton, not to startle me again. I do not like any one to come upon me in that unexpected manner."

"I was so happy to find you alone," he whispered.

"I do not know why that should make you happy. I always behave much better when I am with Miss Hastings than when I am alone."

"You are always charming," he said. "I want to ask you something, Miss Darrell. Be kind, be patient, and listen to me."

"I am neither kind nor patient by nature," she returned; "what have you to say?"

It was very difficult, he felt, to be sentimental with her. She had turned to the window, and was looking out again at the flowers; one little white hand played impatiently with a branch of guelder roses that came peeping in.

"I am jealous of those flowers," said the captain; "will you look at me instead of them?"

She raised her beautiful eyes, and looked at him so calmly, with so much conscious superiority in her manner, that the captain felt "smaller" than ever.

"You are talking nonsense to me," she said, loftily; "and as I do not like nonsense, will you tell me what you have to say?"

The voice was calm and cold, the tones measured and slightly contemptuous; it was very difficult under such circumstances to be an eloquent wooer, but the recollection of Darrell Court and its large rent-roll came to him and restored his fast expiring courage.

"I want to ask a favor of you," he said; and the pleading expression that he managed to throw into his face was really creditable to him. "I want to ask you if you will be a little kinder to me. I admire you so much that I should be the happiest man in all the world if you would but give me ever so little of your friendship."

She seemed to consider his words – to ponder them; and from her silence he took hope.

"I am quite unworthy, I know; but, if you knew how all my life long I have desired the friendship of a good and noble woman, you would be kinder to me – you would indeed!"

"Do you think, then, that I am good and noble?" she asked.

"I am sure of it; your face –"

"I wish," she interrupted, "that Sir Oswald were of your opinion. You have lived in what people call 'the world' all your life, Captain Langton, I suppose?"

"Yes," he replied, wondering what would follow.

"You have been in society all that time, yet I am the first 'good and noble woman' you have met! You are hardly complimentary to the sex, after all."

The captain was slightly taken aback.

"I did not say those exact words, Miss Darrell."

"But you implied them. Tell me why you wish for my friendship more than any other. Miss Hastings is ten thousand times more estimable than I am – why not make her your friend?"

"I admire you – I like you. I could say more, but I dare not. You are hard upon me, Miss Darrell."

"I have no wish to be hard," she returned. "Who am I that I should be hard upon any one? But, you see, I am unfortunately what people call very plain-spoken – very truthful."

"So much the better," said Captain Langton.

"Is it? Sir Oswald says not. If he does not make me his heiress, it will be because I have such an abrupt manner of speaking; he often tells me so."

"Truth in a beautiful woman," began the captain, sentimentally; but Miss Darrell again interrupted him – she had little patience with his platitudes.

"You say you wish for my friendship because you like me. Now, here is the difficulty – I cannot give it to you, because I do not like you."

"You do not like me?" cried the captain, hardly able to believe the evidence of his own senses. "You cannot mean it! You are the first person who ever said such a thing!"

"Perhaps I am not the first who ever thought it; but then, as I tell you, I am very apt to say what I think."

"Will you tell me why you do not like me?" asked the captain, quietly. He began to see that nothing could be gained in any other fashion.

Her beautiful face was raised quite calmly to his, her dark eyes were as proudly serene as ever, she was utterly unconscious that she was saying anything extraordinary.

"I will tell you with pleasure," she replied. "You seem to me wanting in truth and earnestness; you think people are to be pleased by flattery. You flatter Sir Oswald, you flatter Miss Hastings, you flatter me. Being agreeable is all very well, but an honest man does not need to flatter – does not think of it, in fact. Then, you are either heedless or cruel – I do not know which. Why should you kill that beautiful flower that Heaven made to enjoy the sunshine, just for one idle moment's wanton sport?"

Captain Langton's face grew perfectly white with anger.

"Upon my word of honor," he said, "I never heard anything like this!"

Miss Darrell turned carelessly away.

"You see," she said, "friendship between us would be rather difficult. But I will not judge too hastily; I will wait a few days, and then decide."

She had quitted the room before Captain Langton had sufficiently recovered from his dismay to answer.

CHAPTER XI. HOW WILL IT END?

It was some minutes before Captain Langton collected himself sufficiently to cross the room and speak to Miss Hastings. She looked up at him with a smile.

"I am afraid you have not had a very pleasant time of it at that end of the room, Captain Langton," she said; "I was just on the point of interfering."

"Your pupil is a most extraordinary young lady, Miss Hastings," he returned; "I have never met with any one more so."

Miss Hastings laughed; there was an expression of great amusement on her face.

"She is certainly very original, Captain Langton; quite different from the pattern young lady of the present day."

"She is magnificently handsome," he continued; "but her manners are simply startling."

"She has very grand qualities," said Miss Hastings; "she has a noble disposition and a generous heart, but the want of early training, the mixing entirely with one class of society, has made her very strange."

"Strange!" cried the captain. "I have never met with any one so blunt, so outspoken, so abrupt, in all my life. She has no notion of repose or polish; I have never been so surprised. I hear Sir Oswald coming, and really, Miss Hastings, I feel that I cannot see him; I am not equal to it – that extraordinary girl has quite unsettled me. You might mention that I have gone out in the grounds to smoke my cigar; I cannot talk to any one."

Miss Hastings laughed as he passed out through the open French window into the grounds. Sir Oswald came in, smiling and contented; he talked for a few minutes with Miss Hastings, and heard that the captain was smoking his cigar. He expressed to Miss Hastings his very favorable opinion of the young man, and then bade her good-night.

"How will it end?" said the governess to herself. "She will never marry him, I am sure. Those proud, clear, dark eyes of hers look through all his little airs and graces; her grand soul seems to understand all the narrowness and selfishness of his. She will never marry him. Oh, if she would but be civilized! Sir Oswald is quite capable of leaving all he has to the captain, and then what would become of Pauline?"

By this time the gentle, graceful governess had become warmly attached to the beautiful, wayward, willful girl who persisted so obstinately in refusing what she chose to call "polish."

"How will it end?" said the governess. "I would give all I have to see Pauline mistress of Darrell Court; but I fear the future."

Some of the scenes that took place between Miss Darrell and the captain were very amusing. She had the utmost contempt for his somewhat dandified airs, his graces, and affectations.

"I like a grand, rugged, noble man, with the head of a hero, and the brow of a poet, the heart of a lion, and the smile of a child," she said to him one day; "I cannot endure a coxcomb."

"I hope you may find such a man, Miss Darrell," he returned, quietly. "I have been some time in the world, but I have never met with such a character."

"I think your world has been a very limited one," she replied, and the captain looked angry.

He had certainly hoped and intended to dazzle her with his worldly knowledge, if nothing else. Yet how she despised his knowledge, and with what contempt she heard him speak of his various experiences!

Nothing seemed to jar upon her and to irritate her as did his affectations. She was looking one morning at a very beautifully veined leaf, which she passed over to Miss Hastings.

"Is it not wonderful?" she asked; and the captain, with his eye-glass, came to look at it.

"Are you short-sighted?" she asked him, abruptly.

"Not in the least," he replied.

"Is your sight defective?" she continued.

"No, not in the least degree."

"Then why do you use that eye-glass, Captain Langton?"

"I-ah-why, because everybody uses one," he replied.

"I thought it was only women who did that kind of thing – followed a fashion for fashion's sake," she said, with some little contempt.

The next morning the captain descended without his eye-glass, and Miss Hastings smiled as she noticed it.

Another of his affectations was a pretended inability to pronounce his "t's" and "r's."

"Can you really not speak plainly?" she said to him one day.

"Most decidedly I can," he replied, wondering what was coming next.

"Then, why do you call 'rove' 'wove' in that absurd fashion?"

The captain's face flushed.

"It is a habit I have fallen into, I suppose," he replied. "I must break myself of it."

"It is about the most effeminate habit a man can fall into," said Miss Darrell. "I think that, if I were a soldier, I should delight in clear, plain speaking. I cannot understand why English gentlemen seem to think it fashionable to mutilate their mother tongue."

There was no chance of their ever agreeing – they never did even for one single hour.

"What are you thinking about, Pauline?" asked Miss Hastings one day.

Her young pupil had fallen into a reverie over "The History of the Peninsular War."

"I am thinking," she replied, "that, although France boasts so much of her military glory, England has a superior army; her soldiers are very brave; her officers the truest gentlemen."

"I am glad to hear that you think so. I have often wondered if you would take our guest as a sample."

Her beautiful lips curled with unutterable contempt.

"Certainly not. I often contrast him with a Captain Lafosse, who used to visit us in the Rue d'Orme, a grand man with a brown, rugged face, and great brown hands. Captain Langton is a coxcomb – neither more nor less, Miss Hastings."

"But he is polished, refined, elegant in his manner and address, which, perhaps, your friend with the brown, rugged face was not."

"We shall not agree, Miss Hastings, we shall not agree. I do not like Captain Langton."

The governess, remembering all that Sir Oswald wished, tried in vain to represent their visitor in a more favorable light. Miss Darrell simply looked haughty and unconvinced.

"I am years younger than you," she said, at last, "and have seen nothing of what you call 'life'; but the instinct of my own heart tells me that he is false in heart, in mind, in soul; he has a false, flattering tongue, false lips, false principles – we will not speak of him."

Miss Hastings looked at her sadly.

"Do you not think that in time, perhaps, you may like him better?"

"No," was the blunt reply, "I do not. I told him that I did not like him, but that I would take some time to consider whether he was to be a friend of mine or not; and the conclusion I have arrived at is, that I could not endure his friendship."

"When did you tell him that you did not like him?" asked Miss Hastings, gravely.

"I think it was the first night he came," she replied.

Miss Hastings looked relieved.

"Did he say anything else to you, Pauline?" she asked, gently.

"No; what should he say? He seemed very much surprised, I suppose, as he says most people like him. But I do not, and never shall."

One thing was certain, the captain was falling most passionately in love with Miss Darrell. Her grand beauty, her pride, her originality, all seemed to have an irresistible charm for him.

CHAPTER XII.

ELINOR ROCHEFORD

It was a morning in August, when a gray mist hung over the earth, a mist that resulted from the intense heat, and through which trees, flowers, and fountains loomed faintly like shadows. The sun showed his bright face at intervals, but, though he withheld his gracious presence, the heat and warmth were great; the air was laden with perfume, and the birds were all singing as though they knew that the sun would soon reappear.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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