So I gathered it up-where was broken The tear-faded thread of my theme. Telling how, as one night I sat writing, A fairy broke in on my dream, A little inquisitive fairy-My own little girl, with the gold Of the sun in her hair, and the dewy Blue eyes of the fairies of old.

Twas the dear little girl that I scolded-"For was it a moment like this." I said-"When she knew I was busy, Come romping in for a kiss! Come rowdying up from her mother, And clamoring there at my knee For "One 'ittle kiss for dolly, And one 'ittle uzzer for me !"

God pity the heart that repelled her And the cold hand that turned her away ! And take from the lips that denied her This answerless prayer of to-day!

Take, Lord, from mem'ry forever

That pitiful sob of despair, And the patter and trip of the little bare feet,

I put by the half-written poem. While the pen idly trailed in my hand, Writes on—" Had I words to complete it, Who'd read it or who'd understand?" But the little bare feet on the stairway, And the faint, smothered laugh in the hal! And the errie-low lisp on the silence, Cry up to me over it all.

And the one piercing cry on the stair !

LOVERS YET.

(By the author of "Madoline's Lover.")

CHAPTER XIX.

There were confusion and dismay in the stately home of the Earles. One sultry morning in August Lord Earle went out excessive heat. As he did not return to luncheon, the butler went in search of him, and found his master lying as one dead on the ground. He was carried to his own room, doctors were summoned in hot haste from far and near; everything that science or love, skill or wisdom, could suggest was done for him, but all in vain. The hour had come when he must leave home, rank, wealth, position, whatever he valued most -when he must answer for his life and what he had done with it-when he must account for wealth, talent, for the son given to him-when human likings, human passions, would seem so infinitely little.

But, while Lord Earle lay upon the bed pale and unconscieus, Lady Earle, who knelt by him and never left him, felt sure that his mind and heart were both active. He could not speak; he did not seem to understand. Who knows what passes in those dread moments of silence, when the light of eternity shows so clearly all that we have done in the past? It may be that while he lay there, hovering as it were between two worlds, the remembrance of his son struck him like a two-edgad sword -his son, his only child, given to him to train, not only for earth but for heaven,the boy he had loved and idolized, then cast off, and allowed to become a wanderer on the face of the earth. It may be that his stern, sullen pride, his imperious selfwill, his resolute trampling upon the voice of nature and duty, confronted him in a new light shining upon him. Perhaps his own words returned to him, that until he lay dead Ronald should never see Earlescourt again, for suddenly the voice they thought hushed forever sounded strangely Earle. in the silence of that death-chamber. "My son!" cried the dying man, clasping

his hands—"my son!" They who saw it never forgot the blank, awful terror that came upon the dying face

as he uttered his last words. They bore his weeping wife from the room. Lady Earle, strong and resolute though she was, could not drive that scene from her mind. She was ill for many days, and so it happened that the Lord of Earlescourt was laid in the family vault long ere the family at the Elms knew of the change awaiting them.

Ronald was summoned home in all haste, but months passed ere letters reached him, and many more before he of taking her son's wife and children home

returned to England Lord Earle's will was brief; there was no mention of his son's name. There was a handsome provision for Lady Earle, the pretty little estate of Roslyn was settled upon her, the servants received numerous legacies, Sir Harry Lawrence and Sir Hugh Charteris were each to receive a magnificent mourning ring; but there was no mention of the once-loved son and heir.

-the large amount of money the late lord had saved, title, estates, everything reverted to him. But Ronald would have exchanged all for one line of forgiveness, one word of pardon from the father he had never ceased to love.

It was arranged that until Ronalds' return his mother should continue to reside at Earlescourt, and the management of the you will allow them to visit me, Lady position; on the other, a simple farmer thing very probable, but Lillian passed

Lady Earle reso to go to the Elms for it." herself; great changes must be made there. proud satisfaction in thinking that, thanks | solitude, the desolation?" to her sensible and judicious management, "I know it all," replied Dora. "It will struck them both that there was some Dora would fill her future position with be hard but not so hard nor so bitter as mystery in the life of their parents. Both duty to Lady Earle." credit. She anticipated Ronald's delight living under the same roof with their grew more shy of speaking of the Elms, when he should see his beautiful, accom- father.' plished daughters. Despite her great Carefully and quietly Dora listened to youth that there was something unnatural saw no fault in them. Beautiful, accomsorrow, the lady of Earlescourt felt some Lady Earle's plans and arrangements in their position. degree of hope for the future. She wrote how her children were to go to Earlesto the Elms, telling Dora of her husband's court, and take the position belonging to Sir Harry and Lady Lawrence of Holtham death, and announcing her own coming; them. Mrs. Vyvian was to go with them, often called; Lady Charteris came from

mourning. Dora was strangely quiet accustom them to so great a change, magnificent voice, and gay, graceful manner, What would Lady Earle—so truthful, so and sad through all. The girls asked a When Lord Earle returned, he could was certainly the favorite. Sir Harry honorable—have thought or said had she hundred questions about their father, whom | pursue what course he would. they longed to see. They knew that he "He will be so proud of them!" said country. had left home in consequence of some Lady Earle. "I have never seen a girl so quarrel with his father—so much Lady Earle spirited and beautiful as Beatrice, nor one once when Lady Earle told them that the vessel, who was to claim ber in two years told them—but they never dreamed that so fair and gentle as Lillian. Oh, Dora, I daughter of her devoted friend Lady for his wife? his marriage had caused the fatal disagree- should be happy if you were going with Charteris was coming to spend a few days Lady Earle had formed her own plans mother's sake, Lady Earle carefully

room, wishing for a long consultation | it?" with her, Dora received her with gentle, reverential affection.

"I wish to see you first," said Lady must be treated with respect." course shall you adopt?"

has nothing whatever to do with me." "But surely," said Lady Helena, "for the children's sake you will not refuse at least an outward show of reconciliation?" "Mr. Earle has not asked it," said Dora

-"he never will do so, Lady Helena. It is as far from his thoughts as from mine." Lady Earle sat for some moments too much astounded for speech.

"I never inquired the cause of your separation, Dora," she said, gently, "and I never wish to know it. My son told me you could live together no longer. I loved my own husband; I was a devoted and affectionate wife to him. I bore with his faults and loved his virtues, so that I cannot imagine what I should do were I in your Ronald—they are solemn words—'What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder.' Now let me tell you my opinion. It is this-that nothing can but the most outrageous offences, or the course, Dora; submit to your husband. tomed splendor. Believe me, woman's rights are all fancy and nonsense; loving, gentle submission is the fairest ornament of women. Even should Ronald be in the wrong, trample upon all pride and temper, and make the first advances to him.'

"I cannot," said Dora, gravely. "Ronald was always generous and chivalrous," continued Lady Earle. "Oh, into the garden, paying no heed to the Dora, have you forgotten how my boy gave stood before Lady Helena's portrait, had dreamed of long ago; this was one of strange to him after so many years of the up all the world for you?"

"No," she replied, bitterly; "nor has he forgotten it, Lady Earle." The remembrance of what she thought her wrongs rose visibly before her. saw again the magnificent face of Valentine Charteris, with its calm high-bred wonder. She saw her husband's white, angry, inaignant countenance—his gestures full of unutterable contempt. Ah, no, never again!

Nothing could heal that quarrel. "You must take your place in the world," continued Lady Helena. "You are no longer simply Mrs. Earle, of the Elms: you are Lady Earle of Earlescourt, wife of its lord, the mother of his children. You have duties too numerous for me to mention and you must not shrink from them."

refuse to share your son's titles, his wealth, his position, his duties; I refuse to make refuse to be reconciled."

"And why?" asked Lady Helena gravely. A proud flush rose to Dora's face-hot

anger stirred in her heart. "Because your son said words to me that I never can and never will forget," was mad, jealous, blind-I did wrong-I away. did what I now know to be dishonorable and degrading. I knew no better, and he might But before the woman I believed to be my rival, he bitterly regretted having made me his wife."

"They were hard words," said Lady

"Very hard," replied Dora; "they broke my heart—they slew me in my youth: I have never lived since then." "Can you never forgive and forget them,

Dora?" asked Lady Helena. "Never," she replied; "they are burned into my heart and on my brain. I shall never forget them; your son and I must be strangers, Lady Earle, while we live." "I can say no more," sighed Lady Earle. "Perhaps a mightier voice will call to you.

Dora, and then you will obey." A deep silence fell upon them. Lady Helena was more grieved and disconcerted seeing only a few old friends of the family; enthusiastic letter came. Dora said simply in triumph, but it was not to be.

"Shall we speak of the children now? she asked at length. "Some arrangements

must be made for them." "Yes," said Dora, "their father has claims upon them. I am ready to yield to them. I do not believe he will ever love or care for them, because they are mine. At the same time, I give them up to him and to you, Lady Earle. The sweetest and best years of their lives have been As heir-at-law everything was Ronald's spent with me; I must therefore not repine. I have but one stipulation to make, and it is that my children shall never hear one word against me."

"You know little of me," said Lady Helena, "if you think such a thing is possible. You would rather part with your children than accompany them?"

estates should be intrusted to Mr. Burt, the Earle. I have known for many years that and his homely wife, the plain old homesuch a time must come, and I am prepared

"But, my dear Dora," said Lady Earle,

then the little household understood that and remain until Lord Earle returned. Greenoke; and all warmly admired the like one of the Ladies Earle just stepped out their quiet and solitude had ended forever. Until then they were not to be introduced lovely daughters of Lord Earle. The first thing was to provide handsome into society; it would take some time to

"None," she replied. Your son's return the very bitterness of death seemed to be any one else she had ever met. upon her.

CHAPTER XX.

It was a proud moment for Lady Earle them. They were both silent from sheer wonder. They had left Florence at so banks of the Arno. All their ideas were centered in the Elms-they had never seen any other home.

Lady Earle watched the different effect any one so dazzling or so bright. instantly to take in the spirit of the place. justify such a separation as yours—nothing carried more regally than ever. There was that had flamed in hot auger upon her. no timidity no shyly-expressed wonder, no most barbarous cruelty. Take the right sensitive shrinking from new and unaccus- said; "has she never mentioned my name?

> magnificence of their new home. For oldest friends." many long days Lady Earle employed herself in showing them the numerous treasures of art and virtu the house contained. The picture gallery pleased as the Princess. Beatrice most: she gloried in the portraits of the grand old ancestors, "each with a long bright dream. Beatrice almost story to his name." One morning she worshipped Valentine; this is what she admiring the striking likeness. Suddenly the ideal ladies living in the bright gay turning to the stately lady by her side, she world she was learning to understand. said; "All the Ladies Earles are here;

there no portrait of her?" Lady Helena. returns, all those things will be seen to." "We have no brother," continued sake.

Beatrice. "Every baron here seems to have been succeeded by his son-who will succeed my father?"

and estate." She sighed deeply; it was a real trouble | England."

to Lady Helena that she should never see "I refuse all," she replied, calmly; "I her son's son, never love and nurse, never bless the heir of Earlescourt. Lillian delighted most in the magnificent

any advances toward a reconciliation; I gardens, the thickly wild-wooded park, where every dell was filled with flowers and ferns, every knoll crowned with noble trees. The lake, with white lilies sleeping on its tranquil bosom, and weeping willows touching its clear surface, pleased her most of all. As they stood on its banks, Beatrice, looking into the transparent she cried. "I did wrong-Lady Helena, I depths, shuddered, and turned quickly

"I am tired of water," she said; nothing wearied me so much at Knutsford as the have pardoned me, remembering that wide, restless sea. I must have been born with a natural antipathy to water."

Many days passed before they were familiar with Earlescourt. Every day brought its new wonders. A pretty suite of rooms had been prepared

for each sister; they were in the western wing, and communicated with each other. The Italian nurse who had come with them from Florence had preferred remaining with Dora. Lady Earle had engaged two fashionable ladies' maids, had slso ordered for each a wardrobe suitable to the daughters of Lord Earle.

Mrs. Vyvian had two rooms near her charges. Knowing some months might elapse before Ronald returned, Lady Helena settled upon a course of action. The young girls were to be kept in seclusion, they were to continue to study for a few that she had never named the Princess Lady Earle after luncheon, to join her at she did not care to remember. 7 o'clock dinner, and to pass the evening in the drawing-room.

It was a new and delightful life. Beatrice reveled in the luxury and grandeur that surrounded her. She amused Lady

I never did there. At times I wake up, half dreading to hear the rustling of the they are like. Make them happy, mother; tall elm trees, and old Mrs. Thorne's voice let them have all they want; and, if it be asking about the cows. "Poor mamma! possible, after my long neglect, teach

When they became more accustomed to the new life, the strange incongruity in some of the noblest families in England-"Far rather," she replied. "I know a stately house, title, wealth, rank, and stead, and complete isolation from all they now considered society.

feeling with the keen instinct peculiar to son's return; looking at his daughters, she

Visitors came occasionally to Earlescourt.

declared she was the finest rider in the known that her brilliant favorite with the

seeing her grand-daughters, went to Dora's wonderingly; "why will she not assume never likely to meet with any one else she must each look your very best this evening. "Your mother's tastes are simple and lover. He had the virtues, without the home to-night." plain," replied Lady Earle. "Her wishes faults, of the children of the South, a The calm, proud voice faltered then, and Helena Earle, "so that we may arrange Dora did not give way until the two cultivated artistic tastes, good principles, the thought of her son's return as she had our plans before the children know fair faces that had brightened her house and a chivalrous sense of honor. Perhaps never wept since he left her. anything of them. Ronald will return to vanished. When they were gone, and a the thing that touched her most was his England in a few months. Dora, what strange, hushed silence fell upon the place, great love for her. In many respects he pride and courage gave way. In that hour resembled Ronald Earle more nearly than

To the intense delight of both parents, Miss Charteris accepted him. For her sake, the Prince consented to spend every alternate year in England.

Three times had the whole country-side when she led the two young girls through welcomed the stately Italian and his the line of servants assembled to receive beautiful wife. This was their fourth visit to England, and, when the Princess heard from Lady Charteris that Ronald's early an age that they had not the faintest two daughters, whom she remembered as remembrance of the pretty villa on the little babes, were at Earlescourt, nothing would satisfy her but a visit there.

The young girls looked in admiring wonder at the lady. They had never seen produced upon them by the first glimpse calm, grand Grecian face had gained in of Earlescourt. Lillian grew pale; she beauty, the magnificent head with its place. I say to you what I shall say to trembled; her wondering eyes filled with wealth of gold-u hair, the tall, stately tears. Beatrice, on the contrary, seemed figure, charmed them. And, when Valentine took them in her arms and kissed Her face flushed; a proud light came into them, her thoughts went back to the white, her glorious eyes; her haughty head was wild face in the garden and the dark eyes

"I knew your mother years ago," she I used to nurse you both in the little villa They were deeply impressed with the at Florence. I was one of your father's

No, they had never heard her name; and Beatrice wondered that her mother could have known and forgotten one so beautiful

The week she remained passed like a

When the Prince and Princess left where is my own mamma? Her face is Earlescourt they made Lady Helena sweet and fair as an" of these. Why is promise that Beatrice and Lillian should visit them at Florence. They spoke of "There will be one some day," said the fair and coquettish Countess Rosalie, "When your father still a reigning belle, and said how warmly she would welcome them for their father's

"You talk so much of Italy," said Valentine to Beatrice-"it is just the land for the romance you love. You shall see blue "His next of kin," replied Lady Earle, sky and sunny seas, vines, and myrtles, sadly-" Lionel Dacre; he is a third cousin and orange trees in bloom; you shall see of Lord Earle's. He will have both title such luxuriance and beauty that you will never wish to return to this cold, dreary

It was thus arranged that, when Lord Earle returned, the visit should be paid. The evening after their guests' departure seemed long and triste.

"I will write to mamma," said Beatrice; 'it is strange she never told us anything of her friend. I must tell her all about the

Not daring to ask the girls to keep any secret from Dora, Lady Earle was obliged to let the letter go. The passionate, lonely heart brooded over every word. Beatrice dwelt with loving admiration on the calm, grand beauty of the Princess, her sweet and gracious manner, her kindly recollection of Dora, and her urgent invitation to them. Dora read it through calmly, each word stabbing her with cruel pain. The old, fierce jealousy rose strong in her heart, crushing every gentle thought. She tore the letter, so full of Valentine, into a

thousand shreds. "She drew my husband from me," she cried, "with the miserable beauty of her fair face, and now she will win my

children.' Then across the fierce tempest of jealous anger came one thought like a ray of light. Valentine was married; she had married the wealthy, powerful Prince who had been Ronald's patron; so that after all even if she had lured Ronald from her, he had not cared for her, or she had soon ceased to care for him.

Beatrice thought it still more strange deceived. and not to be introduced to the gay world, when her mother's reply to that long, hours every morning, to drive or walk with Borgezi, because she was a person whom some in smiles, some in tears.

Fifteen months passed, and at length came a letter from Lord Earle saying that he hoped to reach England before Christmas, and, in any case would be with them by Christmas-day. It was a short letter, Earle by her vivacious description of the written in the hurry of travelling; the words that touched his children most "I feel at home here," she said, "and were, "I am glad you have the girls at Earlescourt; I am anxious to see what them to love me."

The letter contained no mention of their mother; no allusion was made to her. The heir family struck them both. On one girls marked the weeks go by in some little side a grand old race, intermarried with trepidation. What if, after all, this father whom they did not remember should not many an hour in nervous, fanciful alarm. It was strange how completely all the

old life had died away. Both had felt a How could it be? How came it that kind of affection for the homely farmer Ronald's wife and children must take warmly, "have you considered what their father was lord of Earlescourt, and and his wife—they sent many presents to their place in the world; and she felt a parting with your children implies—the their mother the daughter of a plain them—but Beatrice would curl her proud country farmer? For the first time it lip in scorn when she read aloud that "Mr. and Mrs. Thorne desired their humble

Lady Earle felt no anxiety about her plished, and graceful, what more could he desire! She inwardly thanked Providence "at neither of them bore the least resemfrom a picture; Lillian in her fair, dove-Beatrice with her brilliant beauty, her like lovelines. was quite as charming. Earle face had plighted her troth, unknown There was an unusual stir of preparation to any one, to the captain of a trading-

at Earlescourt. Then, for the first time, for Beatrice; she hoped the time would Never once during the few days of busy they saw the beautiful and stately lady come when she would be Lady Earle of little girls! I will not see them until I am Concealed all knowledge of it from them. preparation did Dora's proud courage give whose fate was so strangely interwoven | Earlescourt. Nothing could be more and harmy with you." evening in the beginning of September. her; they exhausted themselves in con- Valentine Charteris was no longer "the would marry the young heir, Lionel Dacre. jectures as to her continued residence at queen of the county." Prince Borgezi had One morning, as the sisters sat in During the long years Dora had grown the Elms, and were forced to be satisfied won the beautiful Englishwoman. He Lillian's room, Lady Earle entered with to love the stately, gentle lady, who was Ronald's mother. She could not resist her sweet, gracious dignity and winning but a quiet life.

The Elins, and were forced to be satisfied to be sa manner. So, when Lady Earle, before "Mamma has a title now," said Beatrice, the matter over, and decided that she was "My dear children," she said, "you

liked and respected so much as her Italian I have a note here—your father will be

lavishly generous, princely disposition, well | the stately mistress of Earlescourt wept at

CHAPTER XXI.

Once more Ronald Earle stood upon English shores; once again he heard his mother tongue spoken by all around him; once again he felt the charm of quiet, sweet English scenery. Seventeen years had passed since he had taken Dora's hand in his, and told her he cared nothing for all he was leaving behind him, nothing for any one in the world save herself-seventeen years, and his love-dream had lasted but two! Then came the cruel shock that had blinded him with anger and shame; then came the rude awakening from his dream when, looking his life bravely in the face, he found it nothing but a burdenhope and ambition gone-the grand political mission he had once believed to be his own impossible-nothing left to him of his glorious dreams but existence—and all for what? For the mad, foolish love of a pretty face. He hated himself for his weakness and folly. For that-for the fair, foolish woman who had shamed him so sorely-he had half broken his mother's heart, and had embittered his father's life. For that he had made himself an exile, old in his youth, worn and weary, when life

should have been all smiling around him. These thoughts flashed through his mind as the express train whirled through the quiet English landscape. Winter snows had fallen, the great bare branches of the tall trees were gaunt and snow-laden, the fields were one vast expanse of snow, the frost had hardened the icicles hanging from hedges and trees. The scene seemed tropical sun. Yet every breath of the sharp, frosty air invigorated him, and brought him new life and energy.

At length the little station was reached, and he saw the carriage with its liveried servants awaiting him. A warm flush rose to Lord Earle's face; for a moment he felt almost ashamed of meeting his own domestics. They must all know why he had left home. His own valet, Morton, was there. Lord Earle had kept him, and the man had asked permission to go and meet his old master.

Ronald was pleased to see him: there were a few words of courteous greeting from Lord Earle to all around, and a few still kinder words to Morton.

Once again Ronald saw the old trees of which he had dreamed so often, the stately cedars, the grand spreading oaks, the tall aspens, the shady beeches, the groves of poplars-every spot was familiar to him. In the distance he saw the lake shining through the trees; he drove past the extensive gardens, the orchards now bare and empty. He was not ashamed of the tears that rushed warmly to his eyes when the towers and turrets of Earlescourt came in sight.

A sharp sense of pain filled his heartkeen regret, bitter remorse, a longing for power to undo all that was done, to recall the lost, miserable years—the best of his life. He might return; he might do his best to atone for his error; but neither repentance nor atonement could give him back the father whose pride he had humbled in the dust.

As the carriage rolled up the broad drive, a hundred instances of his father's love and indulgence flashed across him-he had never refused any request save one. He wisely and tenderly tried to dissuade him from the false step that could never be

retraced-but all in vain. He remembered his father's face on that morning when, with outstretched hands, he bade him leave his presence and never seek it more; when he told him that whenever he looked upon his dead face, he was to remember that death itself was less bitter than the hour in which he had been

Sad, bitter memories filled his heart, when the carriage stopped at the door and Ronald caught sight of old familiar faces,

The library door was thrown open. Hardly knowing whither he went, Lord Earle entered, and it was closed behind him. His eyes, dimmed with tears, saw a tall, stately lady, who advanced to meet him with open arms.

The face he remembered so fair and calm bore deep marks of sorrow; the proud, tender eyes were shadowed; the glossy hair threaded with silver; but it was his mother's voice that cried to him, "My son, my son, thank heaven you are returned!"

He never remembered how long his mother held him clasped in her arms. Earth has no love like a mother's lovenone so tender, so true, so full of sweet wisdom, so replete with pity and pardon. It was her own son whom Lady Earle held in her arms. She forgot that he was a man who had had incurred just displeasure. He was her boy, her own treasure; and so it was that her words of greeting were all of loving welcome.

"How changed you are!" she said, drawing him nearer to the fast-fading light. "Your face is quite bronzed, and you look so many years older—so sad, so worn! Oh, Ronald, I must teach you to grow young and happy again!" He sighed deeply, and his mother's heart

grew sad as she watched his restless face. "Old-fashioned copy-books say, mother, that, 'to be happy, one must be good.' I have not been good," he said, with a slight smile, "and I shall never be happy."

In the faint, waning light, through which the snow gleamed strangely, mother and son sat talking. Lady Earle told Ronald of his father's death, of that last yearning cry when all the pent-up love of years seemed to rush forth and overpower him with its force. It was some comfort to him, after all, that his father's last thoughts and last words had been of him.

His heart was strangely softened; a new hope came to him. Granted that the best part of his life was wasted, he would do his best with the remainder.

"And my children,' he said-" my poor and happy with you."

Then taking advantage of his mood, Lady Helena said what she had been longing to say. "Ronald," she began, "I have had much

to suffer. You will never know how my heart has been torn between my husband (Continued on seventh page).