KERSHAM MANOR.

CHAPTER VI.—(CONTINUED.)

Mr. Fairbairn went away angry, saying that that Denison woman was a proud, stuck-up creature, who would soon have to eat humble pie. But this did not prevent her from coming again, when the Denisons were leaving Woodbury, and with tears and sighs and lamentations thrusting a ten-pound note into Esther's hand with injunctions to give it to her mother and say nothing about it to anybody else. She was especially to be sure that Mr. Denison did not hear of it.

The congregation split into two parties over Mr. Denison's retirement. One, headed by Mr. Fairbairn and Mr. Neave, was for cutting off all connection with the heretic as soon as possible. Somebody spoke to Mr. Fairbairn about the minister's future life, and asked what were his prospects. Mr. Fairbairn delivered himself of an answer with a pithy promptitude which could not be surpassed. "Prospects, my dear sir?" he said. "Prospects? His prospects are to go to hell." And with a wave of his hand he dismissed the preacher to his doom.

But other members of the congregation resolved to "stand by" Mr. Denison. They liked his preaching, and they liked the man. They were headed by a grocer of considerable wealth, who had long pined for office and influence in the chapel. He called several meetings of sympathizers with the preacher, and led them to make a business-like proposition to him. There was a little disused meeting-house, once Baptist, once Uniterian, now almost in ruins, at a hamlet about two miles from Woodbury; they offered to take it, put it into repair, and guarantee him, at any rate, one year's modest salary, if he would become their pastor. "We want the Gospel, and we're willing to pay for it," said the grocer, inflating his manly chest. "I don't mean to go to the chapel any more, to have old Neave and Fairbairn crowing over me. If you won't be our pastor, sir, I'll go to church."

It was perhaps this dire threat that vanquished Mr. Denison. He yielded, and thought that he discerned the finger of God in the grocer's spite. He went to look at the hamlet, which was known as Kennet's Green. The Green was a rhomboid of common, surrounding a yellow pond, where ducks and geese disported themselves as they do in Caldecott's pictures; pollard willows bordered it at regular intervals, and behind the willows stood neat little houses in gardens bright with red and white daisies, yellow daffodils, and wallflowers. Some of the houses were fairly large and some were mere cottages. One of them, of medium size, was empty, and could be rented for twenty pounds a year, which Bingley, the grocer, offered to pay. Kennet's Green was not in Woodbury parish; it formed part of the parish of Kersham, a village between Woodbury and Kennet's Green—half a mile only from the Green, but a mile and three-quarters from Woodbury—and it had no church of its own. The little deserted chapel stood in a hollow near the Green. It was a low-roofed, miserable-looking place, overgrown with creepers, shadowed darkly by trees, poisoned by rank odors from a stagnant pond close by. To come from the pretentious red-bricked chapel building on the breezy Woodbury heights to the tumble-down little Bethel in a miasmatic swamp was a fall indeed. Still Kennet's Green was supposed to be a healthy place.

"You'll catch the Kersham people," said Mr. Bingley. "There's a lot of 'em don't go to Kersham church. But it's a haristocratic sort of a place, is Kershame; the pore villagers is led by the nose, what with the Vicar, and the Squire, and the doctor's families, and my lord living close by. Lord Kersham, that is. His place is between Kersham and Woodbury. He ain't at home much; but Lady Kersham does the soupcharity business and visits the schools. Then there's the Squire—Mr. Malet, he's a queer lot; and his younger brother, Sir Roland—odd thing for the younger brother to be a Sir, and the elder one plain Mr., ain't it?"

"How is that?" asked Mr. Denison absently.

"Well, Sir Roland was a big pot out in India, and got a handle to his name there. Governor or something. I don't know nothink about 'em, except that they're a skinny lot. A cousin of theirs—a fellow that was always at their house—ran away with old Neave's daughter some years ago, and then deserted her; ever hear that, sir? That little girl was their child."

"Ah! Will the Malets provide for her?" Mr. Denison was interested in hearing this morsel of gossip regarding the origin of Phillis Wyatt.

"Not they. Old Neave wouldn't take help from them, even if he wanted it. But he's a warm man, old Neave. Close-fisted too, and can hold his tongue. I don't suppose the Malets even know that Harry Wyatt's daughter lives in Woodbury."

"They are all church people, I suppose?"—as if making an accusation.

"Every man-jack of them, sir. They're a bigoted lot, and will hunt us down if they possibly can. Like the place, Mr. Denison? We can do the chapel up a bit, you know. I don't like to see the sanctu'ry in ruins. But we'll mend all that."

Mr. Denison agreed with him. From that moment his fate was decided. Kennet's Green was to be his home. From Kennet's Green he would thunder forth the truth to an unconverted world, on a salary of fifty pounds a year. The artisan's cottage was henceforth to be called the Parsonage, and the chapel dignified with the name of Evangelical Universalistic Church. Mr. Bingley insisted upon these names. "You won't catch the populace, sir, if you don't have a big sounding name," he said. "It can't be too big and it can't be too long for 'em. 'What's in a name?' you say, as Milton or some of them chaps said afore you. Why, says I, everythink's in a name. The people flocks to a name like flies to a honey-pot."

"I'm afraid that I shan't attract them so much; the simile's an ominous one for me," said Mr. Denison, with a smile and a shake of his head.

"Never you mind that at present, sir. I'll stand by you, and we'll see what I can do," said Mr. Bingley. He certainly meant to be a mighty pillar of the newly established church. And Mr. Denison was glad to have even Mr. Bingley on his side. Curiously enough, scarcely one of the more educated members of his flock had seceded with him from Woodbury chapel. Those whom he carried away were for the most part illiterate men who saw a chance of making themselves important.

So the Denisons removed from Woodbury to Kennet's Green. They had not much furniture to put in their cottage, poor things. In their previous career chairs and tables had been always provided for them. But Mr. Bingley and his wife loyally did their best. They sent of their own household stuff all that they could spare, and others did the like. It used to make Mrs. Denison cry when poor men and women, who had "got good" under her husband's preaching, as they said, came with humble offerings of pots and pans, rag carpets, and cushions filled with goose-feathers, a hop-pillow, or a darned and netted antimacassar, because they had heard of their minister's destitution. Mrs. Sims, the char-women, brought a big wooden spoon. There were some costlier gifts, without name, which Mrs. Denison fancied must have come from Mrs. Fairbairn; but of this she could never be sure She returned the ten pounds which the corn dealer's wife had given to Esther. She was a meek woman in appearance; but she had her pride. She might take gifts from those who loved and were grateful to her husband; but she could not take money from the wife of her husband's enemy. She was jealous for his honor, although she did not sympathize with his peculiar views.

Esther and Phillis met no more for a time. Phil was taken away to the seaside by her grandmother, and could not walk so far as to Kennet's Green when she came back. So the children's friendship slumbered, if it did not die.

It was on a very wet afternoon in June that the Denisons left Woodbury. The rain had fallen all day: it came down steadily, persistently, as if it never would leave off. The Denisons drove away from the yellow-brown door of the narrow red-brick house in perfect silence. Esther thought with regret of the comfortable rooms, the garden full of roses, even of "the cross cat" that she had tried to love. As the cab rolled through the quaint Woodbury streets, now half obscured by driving sheets of rain, past the square red chapel, to which they had said good-by for ever, Mr. Denison leaned back in his seat and put his hand over his eyes. A sudden fear assailed him. Had he been wrong or right? He could not tell.

Esther was gazing out of the window. Margaret Denison took courage. She put out her trembling hand and laid it on her husband's knee, in a mute caress. He took it in his own and clasped it closely, forgetting to suspect her motive, secure in a new consciousness of her comforting pity, her hardly entreated love. His heart rose a little within him. Hardship and poverty they might encounter; but at any rate they were going to meet it hand in hand. He brushed a tear from his eyes and tried to smile.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE DOWER HOUSE.

"We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest:
The wealthiest man among us is the best."

WORDSWORTH.

A nearly level road led from Kennet's Green to Kersham, between rows of tall elm-trees and hawthorn hedges, behind which a park on the one side, meadows on the other, bespoke a tranquil solitude. Before entering the village two large houses and their grounds were seen to face each other on either side of the road. One, the smaller and sooner reached, was of red brick, ivy and clematis draped; the grounds were exquisitely kept, but screened from the vulgar eye by lofty palings and a hedge. The privacy of the other house was still more strictly preserved. A high brick wall hid it so completely that nothing but a row of upper casements and a sloping roof with stacked chimneys and dormer windows could be seen. The high wall enclosed a courtyard, a small flower-garden beneath the windows of the house, and the house itself, behind which the grounds and park stretched away for some distance. This house, a red-brick mansion with white windows, was known far and wide as Kersham Manor. The smaller building facing it was called the Dower House and belonged to the Malets, but was at present occupied by their cousin, Mrs. La Touche, whose husband was at a military station in India. Passing by these houses, a triangular open space was reached, flanked by small shops, the church on a piece of rising ground, and the churchyard. The base of this triangle was formed by a long white road, which in one direction went up-hill to Woodbury, and in another wound between two long straggling lines of cottages to the open country. Buildings were dotted about for some distance also along the Woodbury road, but they did not form a continuous line. The saddler's shop the blacksmith's forge, the village schools and a few cottages stood on the one hand: the village inn upon the other, with garden and bowling-green attached. The larger shops adorned the sides of the triangle; they were mostly red-brick buildings of the pseudo-picturesque order. In the village streets and back lanes the houses were of paler hue and less conventional pattern. The Vicarage stood on higher ground near the church, and scarcely a glimpse of its rose-clad gray walls and brown roof could be obtained from the village street. From the height on which it stood—a height crowned by a fir plantation which gave the whole scene a strongly marked background of shadow—Kersham could be viewed, lying snugly in a hollow, with its warmly tinted, dark-red roofs embosomed in clustering green. The church-spire seemed to dominate the valley; there was a silvery gleam of water, an impression of purple hill country in the distance. It was a homely, sylvan scene, such as grows very dear to the hearts of those whose fathers have lived and died beneath those humble roofs, and lie in serried ranks beneath the shade of the ivy-mantled church. It called up ideas of rest, of perpetuity. The whole world might change; kingdoms be lost and won; but Kersham would always be the same.

So Sir Roland Malet thought when he came home after a sojourn of twenty years in the far East. He had judged and governed; he had been almost a king in his own domain; he had written books and achieved a European reputation; and now he had come back to his native soil, to the house where he had been born, where his forefathers had lived for generations. Statesman as he had been, and used to the life of courts, nothing pleased him better now than the Kentish meadows and hop-gardens, than the stately quietness of the old manor-house, where life seemed scarcely to have changed for generations. His health was far from strong, and for this reason he went little into society. At times, guests came to him from London and elsewhere: names of great celebrities were spoken by him familiarly, as he held their owners by the arm, or loitered with them over the velvet lawns inside the high brick walls; but, after all, he relapsed gladly into the quiet studious life which suited him best, and smiled at the invitations to sally forth into the great blaring, flaring, boisterous world again.

Sir Roland did not despise or hate the conflicts of public life, but he had been into the thick of them and won name and fame; the time had come for him to rest. He was of a studious, contemplative turn. Left to himself he might have grown into one of those intellectual epicures who spend life in estimating the choice aroma of a sentence, the flavor of an epigram. But he was forced out into the world at an early age, and the student had been merged in the man of action. *On revient toujours a ses premiers amours.* In later life he had become a student again. Hence perhaps his predilection for quiet, sleepy little Kersham and Kersham Manor, where he was now living the life of a recluse.

He was not the Squire of Kersham. There had once been three brothers, Stephen, Roland, and Goring Malet, and of these three Stephen was the eldest and the owner of the Manor. His wife had died early, leaving him childless. Roland had never married. Goring and his wife died young, bequeathing their only son, Sebastian, to his uncles' care. The squire was fond of him and, it was supposed, would make him his heir. The boy was brought up at the Kersham Manor and treated as the future master of the place. At ten years old he had been sent to school. But school was not thought to suit him, and he was taken home again and committed to the care of private tutors until he was thirteen.

Sir Roland returned from India when the boy was thirteen years old, and from time to time tutored him a little and made a companion of him a great deal. Sebastian was devoted to his Uncle Roland. He was very fond of the Squire too, a hale, white-haired man of sixty, a thorough country gentleman, with whom he had walked and ridden and hunted as long as he could remember; but his affection for Sir Roland was the adoring sort: he believed in him, adopted his modes of speech and thought, clung to him with all the affection of his nature. It was always a dark day for the two men as well as for Sebastian when the boy had to go back to school after the holidays. And although neither of them would have lifted a finger to keep the boy at home for his own pleasure instead of sending him to the place where he would receive education befitting his position in the world, each was secretly delighted when the doctor informed them that Sebastian, after a severe attack of the measles and whooping-cough during the summer holidays, would be better at home for a few months than at school. He was not quite strong enough just yet for school life, the doctor said. The two uncles could not but be pleased at the prospect of keeping him to themselves a while. So Sebastian was at home, not ill in the least, only "requiring care," which meant unlimited petting from all who knew him.

It was not to mean entire idleness, however. Sir Roland said that the boy should have a tutor. Hence came a discussion in the shade of the beech-trees on the Dower House lawn, one September afternoon.

Mrs. La Touche liked to have tea out-of-doors. She had a pretty garden, and was always complimented on her flowers. A shady garden-hat became her, and a scarlet parasol set off the complexion—always an advantage. Indeed there were many advantages in having tea in a garden. One could stroll about, or isolate one's self with a congenial companion. Men were less stiff out of doors than in a drawing-room. With a daughter growing up, these were things to be considered. At present Nina was only twelve not a great age, but at seventeen a girl is certainly marriageable. Mrs. La Touche wanted Nina to marry well, and marry early. There were three more girls coming on, Cecily, who was four, and the twins of two years old, Dolly and May. Her boy-babies had died, and four daughters, in these days, were really something of a luxury! Mrs. La Touche sometimes said that positively she must have them all taught a trade, so that they might never be a burden on dear papa.

She was still a pretty woman—especially in the evening. She looked well, too, as she reclined in her basket-chair in the shade of the beech-tree, with her rose-lined hat drawn forward over her white forehead. She had very beautiful eyes, dark and velvety; but the lines about them told a tale of years that she would fain have obliterated. Her face was delicate, but slightly wrinkled; her mouth straight as a line, with colorless thin lips. Her dress was becoming, and as youthful as it could decently be made for a woman of her age. Leaning back in her chair and playing with the rings on her white fingers, or the ivory paper-cutter that lay between the pages of the last Fortnightly (Mrs. La Touche was nothing if she were not "advanced"—in a ladylike way), she looked the embodiment of peace and refinement, and an utter contrast to the caller who sat opposite to her.

Miss Meredith was a gentlewoman of better birth than Mrs. La Touche; but she had peculiarities of appearance and perhaps of disposition. She lived in her own house at Kennet's Green, and was fairly well off; she economized in dress, as gentlewomen living in the country often do. She wore a mushroom hat on this occasion, and an old cape, a print gown and thread gloves; but she was quite unabashed by Mrs. La Touche's elegance of dress and demeanor, and was giving forth her opinions with determination and energy.

Sir Roland Malet sat near the two ladies, with a slight smile on his fine, worn face. He enjoyed a chat with Miss Meredith. He often joined Mrs. La Touche at the tea-table, where she was always delighted to see him. The little girls were flitting about the garden, here and there, like great white butterflies, and Sebastian had joined them at their play.

"Well," said Miss Meredith, continuing a story that she had begun, "the Vicar called yesterday on old Ball, and after talking to him a little, said, 'Would you like me to pray with you?' And Ball nodded and the Vicar prayed. But at the end of the prayer old Ball turned round and said, 'And now, sir, suppose I pray with you?'"

"I hope he did," said Sir Roland laughing.

"I don't know. Then he went to old Mrs. Bird, and read to her, and Mrs. Bird's niece said to her aunt that she ought to be very grateful to him for reading; and what do you think the old creature said?—'Well, it serves to pass the time. I dare say we're both glad o' summat to do.'"

Mrs. La Touche looked profoundly shocked.

"What is the meaning of this sudden outbreak of independent thought in the village?" asked Sir Roland.

"Oh," said Miss Meredith briskly, "it must be that new man at Kennet's Green who quarreled with his own congregation at Woodbury, and has taken the little chapel in Kennet's Lane and calls it the Universalistic Church. It's a Methodist split, I believe."

"How disappointing for the poor Vicar," said Mrs. La Touche.

"What was the quarrel about?" Sir Roland inquired. He was always interested in odd people; it was one of the things that Mrs. La Touche liked least about him.

"Eternal punishment. The man couldn't make things hot enough for his congregation at Woodbury, so he had to leave. He has taken a little cottage on the Green; his garden adjoins mine. The wife looks delicate, and so does he, for the matter of that. Heaven knows what they're going to live upon!"

"Is he clever?"

"They say so—but one can never tell. He has a clever face. I believe he wants to get pupils—mathematics, literature—all that sort of thing."

"Would he do for Sebastian?"

"Oh, my dear Roland!" exclaimed Mrs. La Touche, "why, the man can't be a gentleman! A Dissenting preacher!"

"He seems to be suffering for conscience's sake," said Sir Roland, with some amusement at Mrs. La Touche's horror. "I should like to see the fellow. He must be in earnest."

"Don't say that I recommended him to you, mind," said Miss Meredith. "I know nothing about him— neither his morals nor his manners nor his mathematics I dare say they're all shaky. Perhaps there's drink or something of that kind at the back of it. I'm only sorry for the wife, who looks a quiet, refined sort of person, and a rather nice little girl, who trots about the garden with a book. I spoke to her over the fence one day, and asked her what she was reading. You'll never guess. Mrs. La Touche."

"A lesson-book?" said Mrs. La Touche, with her superior smile.

"Not a bit of it. Chalmers's Mental and Moral Philosophy. And the child's not thirteen years old."

"Did her father make her read it?"

"Not he. She said that she wanted 'to know things.' I asked her if she never read story-books, and she said yes, she had read Adam Bede and Jane Eyre."

"My dear Miss Meredith—" Mrs. La Touche looked ineffably shocked. "Where did the poor, miserable child get books of that character?"

"Out of the Woodbury Circulating Library, I believe. But she seemed a nice, straightforward little thing; not at all unchildlike. I was busy gardening, you know I can't afford to pay a gardener, so I have to look after my flowers myself; and she asked whether she couldn't help me. I was just re-potting a whole lot of new things that had come from Sutton's, and she was no end of use to me. Oh, she's all right; but I know nothing of the father."

"She is probably educating herself," said Sir Roland, "and getting a good education in the process." He looked thoughtful as he spoke. Something had touched him in the picture of the heterodox preacher and his lonely child.

"You don't mean that, Roland!" cried his cousin. "Would you like Nina to be educated in such a way? For my part, I now scarcely ever read novels, they are so bad for the mind. And for a young girl, surely, of all books, George Eliot's should be kept upon the shelf. They are so distressingly atheistic in tone; and really—for a girl—not quite—quite—what one would wish. It is such a pity that young people's minds should be sullied before their time!"

Sir Roland, with a murmured excuse, here walked away, and Miss Meredith could express her opinion with the ease that usually characterized her remarks.

"Well, I don't know that their minds need be sullied by whatever they read," she said. "I know I read any book I wanted to when I was a child. I'm not aware that my mind is particularly sullied as yet."

"Oh, but you—dear Miss Meredith—you!—" Words seemed to fail Mrs. La Touche at this point but her lips wore a smile of ineffable sweetness. Then hurrying on a little, as if anxious to change the subject, she resumed. "I mean to take dear Nina up to London this winter for those charming concerts in St. James's Hall on Saturdays. I see that Madame Schumann is to play. Do you not love—actually love—her playing?"

"Never heard her," said Miss Meredith.

"No? Really, you surprise me! I thought that you heard everything. Her playing is so sympathetic. And then you feel that she is a lady; and it adds so much to one's pleasure in listening, to know that she is a lady, don't you think so?"

"I never looked at it in that light; perhaps it does," said Miss Meredith, with some humor. "You are bringing Nina up to all the accomplishments, I see. Have you any plans for her? I see"—with a nod toward the lawn—"that young Sebastian is always here."

Mrs. La Touche's delicate skin suddenly reddened with anger. "Dear Miss Meredith," she said, with perfect sweetness, "they are brother and sister."

"That's all very well while they are children, but it won't do by-and-by, will it?" said Miss Meredith cheerfully. "Nina is growing up; and if a girl sets her affections on any one—"

"In our circle," said Mrs. La Touche, with a touch of ladylike severity, "in our circle, a young lady never gives her affection until it is sought."

Miss Meredith laughed. "And what about the human heart? But perhaps you exclude it from your circle?" she said, faintly mimicking Mrs. La Touche's intonation. She and Mrs. La Touche seldom met without a skirmish. But at this moment Nina was seen advancing, and the two ladies hastily changed the subject.

"Nina is growing very fast," said the girl's mother.

"How are you, Nina? Begun lessons again?" asked the visitor, holding out her hand.

"Oh yes, we've begun," said Nina rather languidly. She was a slender slip of a girl, with a mass of golden hair hanging loose over her shoulders. The sunlight seemed reflected in those glittering locks, on which she and Mrs. La Touche only knew how much time and trouble were expended every day. Her eyes were large and blue; her skin had the hue and texture of the most delicately tinted rose-leaves. Mrs. La Touche looked at her anxiously, noting an unusual increase of color in the fair, soft cheeks.

"You have been overheating yourself, darling," she said. "Take a book and sit down in the shade." And when Nina was out of hearing, "I want that dear child to keep her complexion. Mine was like it when I was eighteen, but years and trouble soon rob one of its freshness. I assure you that I take every precaution. Nina wears a veil and gloves when she goes out in a morning, even in the garden."

"Good heavens! Poor child!" said blunt Miss Meredith. "My little Methodist girl up at Kennet's Green doesn't do that; but I warrant you she'll turn out as pretty as Nina any day!"

Mrs. La Touche was too deeply disgusted to reply.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

ARMY DEVELOPMENT.

Some Interesting Facts Not Generally Known.

The ineffectiveness of mediæval cavalry is shown by the fact that it was always the slow moving part of the service, while all quick movements were executed by footmen.

The bayonet was invented by the French in 1640, was given to all the Austrian infantry in 1680, to the Prussians in 1690; the French adopted it in 1703, the Russians in 1721.

The distinctive Roman arm was the pilum or spear, 4½ feet of wood, 1½ of iron; it weighed 10 or 12 pounds, and when thrown at ten paces almost invariably proved fatal.

Athens had ten strategi, or draft commissioners; these levied the troops; and together with the phylarchs, or colonels, and taxiarchs, or captains, were elected by the people.

A Greek army was composed of the hoplitæ, or heavy armed infantry; the thetes, or light infantry; an intermediate class, the peltastae, and bodies of mercenary slingers and bowmen.

The drill of the Roman soldier was exceedingly severe. It comprised not only the use of weapons, but running, jumping, climbing, wrestling, swimming, both naked and in full armor.

During the time of Augustus the Roman army consisted of twenty-five legions—eight on the Rhine, three in Spain, two in Africa, two in Egypt, four in Syria, six on the Danube.

Frederick the Great revolutionized the cavalry of his time. All evolutions were executed at full speed, and the charging and rallying of the Prussian cavalry were deemed miraculous.

The equipments and arms of all modern armies are substantially the same, with differences in material and workmanship, the English, French and American arms being deemed the best.

After the time of Pericles the Athenian soldiers received two oboli a day as pay and two more for provisions; officers received twice this sum, cavalrymen three times and generals four times as much.

War chariots appeared for the last time during the Persian invasion of Greece. They were abandoned then because the horses got frightened, and running away, often threw large bodies of troops into confusion.

The flintlock was invented about 1640 and before the end of the century was in general use. Firing, however, was still very slow, and rarely more than twenty-five shots were fired by a soldier in the course of a day.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century a marked improvement had been made in the infantry, which had been so drilled to maintain steadiness that it was sometimes able to resist a charge, even of the heavy cavalry.

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