A DEFIANT BEAUTY.

CHAPTER VI.

"Thou troublest me; I am not in the vein."

He accepts the ungracious permission, and together they stroll toward the glass-houses, where McFarlane's famous roses are still in all their glory, though Autumn is close upon us. Something the girl had said to him a moment ago about them and dinner is now rankling in Dalrymple's mind, and presently, after a firm, inward resolution to die rather than approach either of those subjects, he turns abruptly to her and asks the one question that of all others he had forbidden himself:

"Who is dining here to-night?"

"The Maxwells, the Moores, Sir John Amory and Lord Dartford."

"Dartford! I thought he was not to return until September."

"He has come, nevertheless. He arrived last night. I told grandpapa about it, and he desired me to send him a card."

"If he only arrived last night, how did you send him a card?"

"This morning, of course, and had an acceptance this afternoon. Anything strange about it?" with a saucy little glance from under her long lashes at his frowning face.

"Rather more than strange, I think. For instance if he only came last night, how did you know he was in the country?"

"Why, that is the simplest part of it all. He wrote me word of his intended return last week. From Paris he wrote, I think."

"You correspond, then!" His face is white, now, and there is a curious expression on his lips. "Does your grandfather know that, too?"

"I don't know," nonchalantly, "I daresay not. You can tell him."

Colonel Dalrymple, catching her by her arm, swings her lightly round so as to face him.

"Once for all," says he, "you are a girl, I know, and I am a man, but understand at once that you shall not insult me."

"What a temper you are in," says she, shaking herself free of him, with a little rapid movement, "and all because you lost that game of tennis."

"If that was all the loss I am ever to endure!" saye he in a voice now low and subdued, but very sad. He seems ashamed of his late violence.

"Still, you don't like it," says she. "You hated having to play with me, for one thing, because you know I am uncertain with my balls. Yes, I quite undestood what you meant by 'that depends,' when Dickey called out to you, and said that he would give you a 'licking.' You wanted to play with Mary."

"I really don't believe I gave the matter a thought," icily.

"However well you play tennis, you certainly play the lover badly," says she with a scornful laugh. "If you had been sensible, you would have given me a thought. Not that I wanted it. I much prefer Dickey as a partner—but still it would have been more graceful than to show openly what a bore you thougtht me."

"Did I show that?"

"Well! I leave it to yourself. Of course, I know Mary plays beautifully, and that I am very inferior to her in every way; but there is a certain amount of courtesy, that—I think," she says quickly, perhaps at heart a little ashamed of using her best friend as a medium of her desire to torment her cousin, "I think Mary is the sweetest thing alive."

"Miss Sylvester is charming, as all the world allows," says Dalrymple with warmth. The warmth has its principal source from the anger that is still burning hot within him; and is so pronounced that involuntarily Nell turns her eyes to his. It is not the answer she had expected, and somehow—for a moment—it startles her. How, or why, she could not have explained.

"Yes, all the world," says she, slowly, "and—you."

"It is really a matter of no importance to her," says Dalrymple; "but she certainly stands very high in my estimation."

"When she marries," says Nell, still staring at him, "I shall lose my best friend."

"I hardly see that," says he, "but if you do lose her, she will be, I should think, a real loss to you."

"You admire her very much," says she slowly, yet with much vehemence.

"As I have said," shortly.

"Well! You can't marry her either!" cries she, with all the careless anger of a spoiled child. "Because she is going to marry John Amory!"

"Nell!" says Colonel Dalrymple, sharply, as if shocked, as indeed he well might be. "Don't speak to me like that." He lays his hands upon her shoulders and presses her back from him, and as she thus looks into his eyes, something in them should have touched her—but it doesn't. "I have no desire to marry Miss Sylvester, or any one—unless'——

"Ah! there we are equal," interrupts she, quickly, not heeding the end there might be to his sentence. "That's just how I feel. We are companions in this one thing at least. I don't want to marry any one, either."

"Don't you?" says he. "Well, but I do; so we are not such close companions as you thought. And yet, all my desire lies that way. For, as you are tired of hearing no doubt, I would be your companion always."

"Don't make me quite hate you," says she, with a fierce little wrench that leaves her free of his grasp.

Dalrymple, as though effectually silenced, walks on beside her without a word. It seems to him, that if he was ever so eager to pursue the argument, no language is left him in which to do it. She has killed within him all spontaneous thought. A dreadful chill seems to have fallen into the heat of the summer day, and indeed as he looks round him in a half-hearted fashion, it occurs to him that day is gone, and evening is already here. The warmth, the vigor of life, has faded, only the ashes of it now remain. And so with his life.

As if in passionate protest against this mournful desire, he throws up his head, and compels himself to enter once again into conversation with the wilful beauty walking in stubborn silence by his side. He will talk generalities to her—anything—everything—if only to show her that he is not altogether slain by her bow and spear.

"Warm day," says he, making this brilliant remark with all the force that it requires.

"Warm evening," corrects she, sweetly.

"Dull in the country, isn't it?"

"Is it?"

"Seems absurd, the monotony, after the incessant change of town."

"I'm afraid you are very unhappy. Why stay here? I am sure grandpapa will excuse you if you wish to return to the sweet, shady side of Pall Mall."

"Oh, no, thanks; my solicitude was all for you. As for me; I like monotony—and all the rest of it."

"Am I the rest of it?" She laughs provokingly as she says this, and, plucking a flower next to her, holds it up before him, and then second by second advances it, until it is right under his nose. "You are cross," says she, with a tilt of her chin; "and with me. Give it up. What good will it do you?"

"None, none," says Dalrymple, with an inward groan and much conviction. "Why I let you triumph over me as you do I can't imagine. But what I can imagine is, the folly of your caring for so cheap a victory. Why not let me go?"

"God heavens! One would think I was holding on to your coat-tails," says the spoiled child, with a little laugh. "I'm not, anyway. You can go, when and where you please."

Is that man going to play your accompaniments to-night?" asked Dalrymple, abruptly.

"What man?"

"You know very well—Dartford."

"I don't know him very well, as it happens. But—yes—I daresay he will."

"You must know him uncommonly well to be on letter-writing terms with him."

"What an extraordinary sentence! 'Letter-writing terms!' Why not say 'as you correspond with him'?—so much prettier!"

"You are very clever at evading an accusation," he says, with a sneer.

"And who attempts to accuse me?" demands she, hotly, stung by his tone. "You? And why, then? Where lies your claim?"

"I am your cousin, at all events. After your grandfather your nearest relative. I have no intention of standing idly by and seeing you make a fool of yourself."

"Really, Noel," says she, as calmly as possibly, though she is positively choking with indignation; "permit me to say that you go sometimes a little too far. There is a line that must be drawn. A joke is a joke, and I presume you were attempting one when you called me a fool, but one can be sometimes too funny."

"It was no joke," gloomily.

Somehow this reply, which should have increased her anger, touches in an odd way her versatile nature, and compels her to laughter.

"It was not, indeed," says she, giving way to mirth. "Well, don't do it again, that's all, or I sha'n't let you off so easily. Oh, there's McFarlane"——

"Stay, Nell—stay one moment. I don't often ask a favor of you, but—don't let Dartford play your accompaniments to-night."

"And if I say 'yes,' who will play them—will you?"

"You know I can't," says the young man, reproachfully.

"You know what you would have," says she, disdainfully. "You would have me give up music altogether. You hate that precious violin of mine. You would break it into a thousand pieces if you dared. Come; deny all that if you can."

"I can't," says he, slowly. In truth, wise and able man as he is, he would gladly wreak his vengeance on that harmless instrument. Not even Dartford—though latterly he has begun to think of him with deep suspicion—is so dangerous a rival in the path that leads to the heart of this capricious maiden as the violin she so dearly loves.

"Good boy! Go up one! The truth before all things! Well, you sha'n't demolish it, be sure of that, so long as I'm alive. As for Lord Dartford—I beg you won't demolish him either until I can get a substitute. I don't think he has got an understudy ready, and in himself he is so incomparable that I can't afford to let him go."

"I see," says Dalrymple, with a strange glance at her. He is evidently on the point of saying something more—a good deal more—but by a supreme effort controls himself. Presently he says, quite quietly, "You like him?"

"Why not? He is a good musician—he understands me."

"He understands you!" almost violently.

"My playing, at all events. Concede so much to him."

"I concede nothing to him."

"You are, as I have said, illiberal; you would deprive me of my friends, and of my art. You would leave me—only"——

"What?" defiantly.

"You!" with even greater defiance.

He is silent, staring at her, wondering perhaps a little at her audacity, and a great deal at her beauty. Good heavens! What an insolent, michievous, adorable creature; with a heart that might contain so much love, and yet will hold not one small grain for him.

"I confess it would be a poor change," says he, at last, in a sort of giving-up sort of tone. "I'm not worth the quarter of it—but," his strength returing to him, "neither is he—not a half quarter! A despicable fellow, to whom one would be ashamed to hold out the hand of friendship."

"I saw you shake hands with him at Ascot," says she, mildly.

"A man might go so far, but I cannot bear to think that you should regard him with even the barest civility. It is very hard to speak," says he, desperately; "but if you knew all"——

"If I knew 'all' about everybody, I dare say my acquaintance would be limited."

"That is true, of course. But Dartford is on a worse footing than most. There are people—in your own set," speaking with difficulty, and feeling how much easier it would be to put her on her guard were he not so entirely heart and soul her slave, "who have refused to receive him."

"What nonsense! You are imagining evil against him. Why, he was the most petted guest at the Darnly-Staines last Autumn."

"Ah, but those girls are so old—and, of course, he has money."

"It doesn't seem to cover his sins," with a short little laugh.

"He hasn't enough for that. It would take a Croesus to live down his reputation."

"He talks very kindly of you when he talks of you at all," says Nell, gently.

Having delivered this stinging little compliment, she moves on more briskly, and coming up with McFarlane, dismisses Dalrymple with a cool nod, and carries off the old Scotchman in triumph to the Rose House.

CHAPTER VII.

"Amid the golden gifts which Heaven
Has left, like portions of its light, on earth,
None hath such influence as music hath."

The room is rapt in a soft silence; the old man, Lord Carbyne, is drawing in deep, long sighs of contentment; great savage as he is to his domestics and those dearest to him, music hath charms to soothe his breast—and beyond all other music, that of his grandchild. She is now standing beside the piano in a careless, unstudied attitude, with a pretty flush upon her cheeks, and at all events, part of her heart in the sweet strains she is drawing from her violin. Now, most sad, most mournful they run, and now, wild with glad mirth, and now again, filled with a martial meaning that stirs the souls of those who listen.

Yet to Dalrymple, who has made her a study, unconsciously, for the past twelve months, it is plain that she is but coquetting with her violin; making use of it, as it were, to get through the present movement, with a view to another movement further on, rich in promise. His jealousy but too plainly points to Dartford as the one who is to bring that promise to perfection.

And presently, even as he is brooding unhappily over this suspicion, the music comes to an end, and Miss Fairfax, with a pretty word or two of thanks to the pale young man who had very inefficiently accompanied her on the piano, and an ill-suppressed sigh of relief, moves lightly across the room to where Mary Sylvester is sitting beside a very lean young woman, got up like a mediaeval saint. This latter she has indeed managed to acquire for public occasions, and an expression not to be matched for melancholy resignation, and is now shaking her short, tangled, flaming locks in Miss Sylvester's rather bored face. Eleanor, bearing down upon her, drops on one knee beside the saint and most irreverently chucks her under the chin.

"What's the latest craze, Sally?" asks she, gayly.

"Oh, not Sally, dearest, I implore!" cries Mrs. Mountby-Maugre, with a despairing moan. "Sarah—that beautiful old name. Not, not that terrible"——

She appears on the point of fainting, and gropes blindly for the vinaigrette that hangs by a long silver chain from her girdle.

"Why, it was Sarah last month," says Eleanor, unfeelingly.

"A month! What an eternity may lie in a month!" breathes Mrs. Mountby-Maugre. "How you talk of time! Precious Time! How much may not be accomplished in thirty-one days."

"A good deal, certainly," says Eleanor, springing to her feet with all the adorable elasticity of youth. "It has enabled you to get christened all over again!"

Somebody laughs as she says this, and turning her eyes quickly, she finds Lord Dartford at her elbow; a slight, spare man, with a dark complexion, heavy moustache and light-gray eyes. A man outwardly polished, inwardly dingy to a degree. Not vulgarly dissipated in appearance, but unmistakably so for all that. An excellent musician; a good talker; ever with a good-humored word upon his lips, or a jest, becoming or otherwise as his company shifts itself, without a particle of heart, and no character whatsoever.

That he is notoriously epris about Miss Fairfax is a fact now accepted by his set. Where she goes he goes, as often as is practicable—throwing himself in her path on all occasions. To the girl herself, he is nothing more than a most excellent interpreter of her favorite composers, and an invaluable ally when she wants some one to aid her in her musical triumphs. To the blase man of the world, accustomed to take things as they seem, the naive pleasure she displays in his society has but one meaning, that she has given to him her young heart's first love, and is pining to receive from him the assurance that the battered and hideous remains of what he is pleased to call his love has been graciously laid before her, to pick up, and cherish in her innocent bosom.

"You are cruel!" whispers he to her now, drawing her a little away from the affronted saint, who has now conjured up a martyred air. "And not only to her." This with distinct meaning; but Miss Fairfax misses it.

"No, to myself, also. Could anything be more murderous than the way Mr. Morgan treated that last scherzo? It was horrible. Yet I endured—I lived. I am now talking to you!"

There is nothing beyond a pretty compliment to his superior powers as accompanist conveyed in these last words; but Dartford, who has been a good deal spoiled by a certain class of women, mistakes her.

"Do you think I am not sensible of that?" says he, with considerable empressement and an earnest look that has done considerable service off and on. Miss Fairfax stares at him, and then, as if a little uncertain as to his meaning, but charitably supposing that it is not nonsense, but an absurdly humble tribute to her genius that has actuated the enigmatical reply, says, kindly:

"Well, it's very good of you, I'm sure."

"Eh! What?" says he, pausing as one might who is partly deaf and has failed to comprehend. If he had been enigmatical to her, she has been doubly so to him!

"You are very good, too good," persists she, secure in her own reading and feeling so ashamed of such praise from a man who really understands music. After all! What is she?"

The world has yet to prove her a genius, or merely talented.

"Oh, ay! just so," says Dartford, still at sea; and now with his usual beaming smile that has so little in it. "By Jove! it's the first time I've been told that."

Somebody coming up to Eleanor at this moment, and touching her arm, she impatiently turns to her right. Dalrymple, his face paler and sterner than usual, is standing beside her.

"Mrs. Maxwell is so anxious to hear Lord Dartford sing, that your grandfather has sent me to you, to—to ask him to do so."

There is something in the grave reproach that is so very near to anger in his eyes that enrages Miss Fairfax, she gives him but curt reply.

"Certainly," she says. "He is so kind, so agreeable always, that I am sure he will not refuse."

She turns a cold glance from Dalrymple to let a beaming smile fall on Dartford.

"Have you heard?" she says. "Mrs Maxwell will be unhappy until you have sung to her. Go. Put her out of pain. Sing to her."

"Not to her, to you," says he, softly—so low that Dalrymple cannot hear the words, but can mark the lover-like look and attitude, and can feel the pang that contracts his heart.

"It is a compliment!" says Eleanor, prettily, but utterly without sentiment, and presently Dartford's well-cultivated voice is sounding through the room. He has chosen a quaint little love-song, as simple as possible, and into the last verse he throws as much devotion as he dares, hoping Eleanor will accept it for herself.

"So that our hearts be one,
So that our love be true,
The world may laugh or frown
For me and you.
Men may be wise or fools,
Stars may die out above,
We ask of life no gift
But love—but love!"

It is a distinctly passionate little effort on Dartford's part, but, unfortunately, Mrs. Maxwell, a little, light-hearted, half-pretty woman of thirty-five or so, who has a passing tenderness for him, and who had asked him to sing, takes the devotion, the words, the subdued passion, entirely as her own.

"What a heavenly song!" says she, waylaying him as he rises from the piano, and, berding forward, in a little fashion of her own, to glance up at him from under her lashes. "And how true! Oh," rapturously, "love, love!"

"Love—that makes the world go round," says he, curtly, making a pretence of filling up her sentence. "That's about as near rubbish, you know, as they make it, now-a-days. It's money that makes the world revolve. That's the true axis. You take my word for it."

There is something a little brutal about the man—a little vulgar. Having thus, without regard to the smallest courtesy, "choked off," as he would himself have said, this woman, with whom he had dallied many an hour and oft, he crosses the room to where his latest fancy sits smiling kindly at old General Maxwell.

"I am telling Miss Fairfax that she has been a little unkind to us to-night," says the General, looking up at Dartford. "We so seldom have the chance of hearing her divine interpretations of our favorites that she should not grudge us a good deal of her violin when we do meet. And you, Dartford, I have heard you accompany her. It was a treat. Might," turning gallantly to Eleanor, "an old man plead for such another perfect half hour to-night?"

"You have a silver tongue, General. What is it I could refuse you?" says Miss Nell, sweetly. "Are you in the vein, Lord Dartford? Come, then, we will do our best to charm this cleverest, if kindliest of critics." She smiles down at the General, who, in truth, has a fine knowledge of music, and a love for it, passing all others.

Moving across the room beside Lord Dartford, she happens to pass her cousin, and, mindful of his warning of the morning, the malicious sprite that has kept closely at her side all the evening prompts her to throw him a defiant word or two.

"We are going to give you something to dwell upon," cries she, with grown to regard the unconscious Elradiant sauciness, looking back at him over her shoulder, while, with one hand lifted, she trifles with the amber beads around her neck. "Something to remember. Don't lose a note. I feel I am going to excel myself! Lord Dartford has inspired me."

It is an audacious little speech, and but for the extreme childishness that characterizes her, might be termed bold. It makes her nothing, however, save a naughty child. Dalrymple returns her provoking gaze steadily, with an unsmiling eye. He is worth ten thousand Dartfords, but, unfortunately, is so much in earnest that he gives himself away a good deal, and permits her to see only the uncomfortable side of him. Beyond the glance, he makes no reply.

"You are so entirely a person to be congratulated on every point," says Dartford, as they move on, "that one crumpled roseleaf cannot afflict you greatly. I should say that cousin of yours is it."

"How?" says she, with suspicious innocence, looking quickly around.

"Surly beggar, eh?" says Dartford, secure in the knowledge that she had given Dalrymple a rather angry glance when he had refused to answer her.

"I think I have gathered from him that you are not a very intimate friend of his," says she, coldly, annoyed without knowing why. Truly, she tells herself, Dartford, though unrivalled as an accompanist, is a little trying at times, and, of course, it is always in bad taste to abuse one's relations to one's face.

"What shall it be?" says she, looking down at the heap of music on the stand near the piano.

TO BE CONTINUED.

COREAN MARRIAGES.

Girls in That Country Would Envy America's New Woman.

Corean girls, according to Mr. H. S. Saunderson, after enjoying freedom till they are eight years old, are consigned to the women's quarters, where they live in seclusion till they are married, at sixteen or seventeen years. After marriage the woman is allowed to see no man but her husband. The boys on the other hand, are taught that it is undignified for them to enter the women's part of the house.

They never see their brides till the wedding day, all having been arranged for them, often when both bride and groom are infants. The marriage ceremony is very simple. The bride and bridegroom invite their most intimate friends to assist them in dressing their hair in the manner befitting their new estate.

Then the bridegroom mounts a white pony, which is led by two servants, while two others on either side support the rider in his saddle.

Thus he proceeds to the bride's house, accompanied by his relatives. At their destination they find a pavilion erected in the courtyard of the house, in which the bride and her relatives are awaiting their arrival.

A goose (the Corean symbol of fidelity), which the bridegroom brings with him, is then produced. The bride, who has to cover her face with her long sleeves, and the bridegroom then bow to each other until their heads almost touch the ground. This they do three or four times, and are then man and wife.

A loving cup is passed around, and then the bride is taken off to the women's apartments of her husband's home, where she is looked after by her mother and mother-in-law, while the groom entertains his friends. Fidelity is imposed on the wife, but the husband is under no such obligation.

He can marry but one wife, it is true, but he is allowed as many concubines as he can afford. These, however, never inhabit the same house as his principal wife.

The husband is forced to maintain his wife properly and treat her with respect. Marriage is the great event in a Corean's life, for he then attains man's estate. Before marriage, no matter how old he may be, he is treated as a boy, and has to maintain a deferential attitude toward the married men, even though they may be only half his age.

A Cure for Toothache.

In Staffordshire and Shropshire, England, they have a most extraordinary cure for toothache. The sufferer watches a mole's runaway with a spade and traps, and, as soon as he succeeds in capturing one of these reputed eyeless little animals, cuts off its paw and quickly applies it to the aching molar. In order to make the cure sure and effective, the paw must be amputated while the mole is yet alive; furthermore, if the aching tooth is on the right side of the jaw, a left-hand mole paw must be used, and vice versa. A similar toothache superstition exists in the Cape Verde Islands and also on the Canaries.

Nest in a Clock.

A curious incident has just occurred at Birchington Parish Church, England, immortalized in the "Ingoldsby Legends." In commemoratian of the Queen's jubilee a clock with a skeleton face was placed in the church tower. The other day the clock unaccountably stopped, and upon inspection it was found that a house sparrow had built its nest between the projecting VIII. and IX. so firmly as to prevent the clock from working. The nest was promptly removed, only to be rebuilt a day or two later in the same unique position. Once more the face has been cleared and the opportunity taken to regild the figures. The sparrows so far have not made another attempt to build there.