STELLA;
OR, AT CROSS PURPOSES.

CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED.

VARIATIONS FROM "NORMA."

"Can you never be serious?" she says, earnestly; "do you not see that what is play to you may be almost death to me?"

"Who told you it was play to me?"

"It never can be anything else," she answers very sadly.

"Lily, you know that I mean to make you my wife——"

"And you know that such a thing can never come to pass," she cries almost wildly; "think of the gap that divides me from you; of the difference between us; of your mother's anger. No, no, it is impossible. You yourself would regret it in a week. I will never bring humiliation upon you, nor be the cause of dissension between you and your family; let me go, Sir Edgar, and for pity's sake be manly enough to leave me in peace for the future."

"You are, for a small woman with antelope-like eyes, the most obstinate specimen of your sex I have ever come across," answers Sir Edgar, half-laughing, half-vexed, drawing her nearer to him.

She trembles and shivers beneath his strong hands.

"Please—please!" she entreats in a terrified whisper "If any one should tell your mother——"

"Who on earth is to tell, you silly little woman? Who is it you are frightened of?"

"I am frightened of Maud."

"Of Maud? A child like *that*—pooh."

"Indeed, she is less of a child than you think; she sees everything; even now I feel as if she may be listening at the door. Please let me go. Oh! Edgar—Edgar!"

In her terror and agitation she drops the "Sir," which always offends him so mightily; he laughs triumphantly, and draws her once more upon his breast.

"So you won't be my wife, Lily?"

"No."

"Then I shall go on asking you till you consent, and I shall go on kissing you whenever I get the chance."

She is quite quiet now, lying for a few delirious seconds at peace within his arms whilst he rains down kisses upon her flower-like face. At her heart she does not believe that he means more than to while away a few idle hours with her; she does not credit him with very good intentions towards her, for she has knocked about the world a good deal, and she has learnt to disbelieve in the vows that men make to friendless and penniless girls, who are but waifs upon life's stream. She tells herself, even as she suffers his caresses, that he is in all probability false and fickle like all other men; but even while she is thinking it she is happy, for she loves him, and when he kisses her she is weak enough to be glad of it. She has told him that she will not enter into any engagement with him, because, knowing how great is the social distance between them, she does not believe he would ever honestly perform any engagement towards her; and yet, believing this of him, she is not strong enough to help being happy in his presence, or to forbid him from taking the conviction of her love by force from her trembling lips.

And as she rests thus happy for one brief instant in his embrace the door behind them softly opens, and then closes again rapidly; but not before Maud, coming back ready dressed for her walk, has been treated to a full view of the governess reclining in the arms of her eldest brother.

Maud retires hurriedly into the passage. She is genuinely horrified, but also unfeignedly delighted.

What a delicious little piece of scandal to tell mamma when she comes home! is this young lady's gleeful thought, and she feels quite proud and puffed up with self-importance at the idea of being able to relate such a flagrant breach of propriety on the part of her governess.

She waits, however, till her brothers and sisters come down, and then all four children come into the school-room together, by which time Miss Finch is putting away the lesson-books, and Sir Edgar Dyson is standing discreetly at the farther side of the table.

"Dear me! aren't you ready Miss Finch?" says Maud, with prim displeasure. "I thought you would have been dressed long ago."

"I am going directly, Maud. I shall not be a minute," murmurs Lily, apologetically.

"Who can this be coming up the drive?" cries Willie, who is dancing about by the window.

Lily looks up.

"I am afraid," she says quietly, "that you children will have to go out by yourselves this morning, for here is mamma come to see me."

"Yes, it's Mrs. Finch, and Mr. Allingham is with her. Perhaps he has brought me the marbles he has promised me," says Tom.

"Very likely," says Lily, smiling, and trying to look as if she were pleased.

But Sir Edgar Dyson mutters a very naughty word below his breath, and makes his escape from the school-room hurriedly, with a brow as black as a thunder-cloud.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TURNIP MACHINE.

Mrs. Finch comes into the school-room at Barfield by a side door, Norman Allingham making his way round to the front of the house to join Sir Edgar in his library.

Maud and the younger ones just stop to shake hands with their governess's mother, and then they take themselves off out of doors into the garden.

Mrs. Finch is in the habit of coming over from Wrexham once a week to visit her daughter. Directly, it was through Mrs. King's kind offices that Lily obtained her situation in Lady Dyson's family; but, indirectly, Mrs. Finch had worked and schemed for it secretly for a long time, for Mrs. Finch thought there was a good deal more to be done in this part of the world by a pretty girl, with a clever mother to put her up to things, than the mere teaching of geography and history to four awkward and uninteresting children.

"So Lady Dyson is away, I hear," says Mrs. Finch, as she unties her bonnet-strings, and responds, somewhat coldly, to her daughter's kiss.

"Yes, she went up to town yesterday, but she is to be back to-morrow morning."

"Well, I think it will be a goood opportunity for you to come over to Wrexham with me to spend the afternoon. You can easily give the children a half-holiday.'

"I think I had rather not leave them whilst Lady Dyson is away, mamma. Another day will do quite as well for me to come."

"No; that is just what another day will not do. These French cousins are coming to Wrexham—one of them has telegraphed to say she will arrive to-night. It is your last chance."

"My last chance of what, mamma?'

"Why, you foolish child, of getting Norman to yourself. Who knows what harm this girl may do when she comes."

"But I don't at all want to get Norman to myself," answers Lily smiling. "And, indeed, I had much rather not come to-day. I don't think Sir Edgar——"

"What on earth has Sir Edgar to do with it?" cries the mother, sharply. "I hope, Lily, you are not such an utter goose as to fancy that he is likely to take any notice of you."

Poor Lily crimsons painfully, and looks down in silence.

"Now, Lily, if you have been silly enough to allow your thoughts to dwell upon Sir Edgar, I shall be very angry with you indeed," continues her mother. "Did I not warn you when first you came here to keep out of the way of those two men? All the Dysons are alike. Why, Walter Dyson is a regular black sheep; they say he makes love to every woman he meets and then ill-treats her; then he cannot speak a word of truth."

"Well, mamma," said Lily half-laughing, "I don't see why you should scold me about *him*. Why, he has been in Paris for more than three months; he has only been at Barfield twice since I have been here. I have hardly ever spoken to him."

"I have only mentioned him to show you what sort of men they are, and the character they bear. His brother is just as bad—false and deceitful."

"That I am sure he is not!" cried Lily, indignantly, blushing furiously.

Her mother looked at her sharply.

"If you have been so foolish as to allow Sir Edgar to flirt with you, Lily, you have done a very silly thing, and my advice to you is to put a stop to it at once. He will make you pretty speeches, and flatter you; he may even presume to kiss you; but he will never woo you honestly nor make you his wife. Child, I knew the Dysons before you were born; I knew their father. They are all alike."

And Mrs. Finch had reason to speak as she did; for years ago, before her heart had grown hard, or her life had become turned into the miserable groove of mercenary cunning which was now her only object, she, too, had been a governess at Carfield to a Miss Dyson, now dead and gone, and there had been fair and false words spoken to her in that very room by Sir Edgar's father—words that had spoilt and altered her whole life. It was no wonder that she hated his sons!

As to Lily, she was almost in tears. At her heart she believed that her mother was right, and that Sir Edgar meant nothing serious by the fine words and caresses which she, alas! had been weak enough to allow; but it was hard to be warned against him, and to be told how false he was.

"If you have anything to tell me about him, Lily, you had better make a clean breast of it at once," said the mother.

"I have nothing to tell you about him," she answered slowly. Not for worlds would she have confided her poor little story to her mother.

Mrs. Finch thought it best not to pursue the subject.

"Very well," she said, "I am glad of it. For instead of wasting vain thoughts on Sir Edgar, you will be doing far better if you turn your attention to Norman Allingham, who is a good, honest fellow, and will really be far better off than Sir Edgar, who is but a poor man after all, with a mother and a whole family of brothers and sisters on his hands. Now, Norman would never make up to any woman unless he meant to her to be his wife."

"Mamma, I don't care in the very least for Norman Allingham, and I am quite sure he does not care for me."

"If so, it is because you have neglected every opportunity you have had. I am determined that you shall marry him."

Poor Lily looked as frightened as if her mother had had a licence ready drawn up in her pocket, and was prepared to marry her out of hand to Mr. Allingham, with or without his consent, within the next hour.

"If you will do as I tell you, and leave everything to me, I will manage the whole business for you, Lily."

"But mamma, I would rather do anything than marry him. Indeed I don't want to marry anybody; I am very happy as I am," said poor Lily, piteously clasping her hands together; for it was shocking to her more refined and delicate mind that her mother should deliberately plan to capture a husband for her. But before she had time to plead her dismay and dislike to the whole scheme, the door opened, and the two young men entered.

"You must come down to the farm and see my new machine for chopping turnips," said the baronet cheerily, shaking hands with Mrs. Finch. "All the children are coming, and your daughter has said she will come too."

"Thank you, Sir Edgar; but I am thinking of taking my daughter back to Wrexham this afternoon," answered Mrs. Finch, rather stiffly.

"Oh! but there is plenty of time for you to come round by the farm first; indeed, I cannot take a refusal."

Edgar Dyson had a pleasant, winning manner—it was almst impossible for Mrs. Finch to decline the expedition.

Sir Edgar did not, however, gain much by the proposed walk. The four children went on in front; Lily, out of modesty, shrank behind; whilst Norman, with an easy familiarity, took his place by her side, so that the baronet was perforce obliged to walk before them, with Mrs. Finch for his companion—an arrangemen which, much as that lady herself approved of it, was hardly to his own satisfaction.

Norman and Lily walked on for some minutes in silence.

They had not much to say to each other; thep saw each other frequently, and they called each other by their Christian names. There was a sort of cousinship between them which warranted the familiarity, the defunct Mr. Finch having been a second cousin of old Mr. King's. Norman thought Lily a dear, sweet-tempered little thing, without much to say for herself; Lily liked Norman because he was kind to herself, and took pains to be more civil to her mother than his grandfather was, otherwise she thought very little about him. There never had been the slightest symptom of love-making between them.

"So your cousins from France are coming to live at Wrexham, I hear," said Lily, at length, more for the sake of something to say than because she took any particular interest in the unknown Miss Kings.

"Yes, one of them arrives to-night."

'Is she pretty?' asked Lily listlessly, with her eyes fixed upon Sir Edgar's broad back in front of her.

A sudden flush swept over Norman's fair face; but Lily did not see this because she was considering deeply whether she would ever have strength of mind enough to prevent the baronet from behaving to her as though he were her lover. Something, however, in Norman's voice, as he answered her, made her look up at him.

"She is more than pretty, she is lovely," he said slowly.

"Oh! I am very glad of that," answered Lily heartily. "You like her, of course?"

"No; I don't think anybody could like her," answered Norman coldly. Lily opened her eyes. "Because," he continued, "she has what is a fatal blot upon any woman's beauty and charm—a terrific temper.'

"Really? what a pity!" said Lily, with some interest.

"A bad-tempered woman is like a distorted flower; nothing can be more repulsive to meet with than mortal ugliness where one expects to find nothing but beauty and harmony. I think a man, whose wife has a violent and ill-controlled disposition, is very much to be pitied. You, Lily," turning suddenly to her, with a smile, "you have the sweetest temper I have ever met with; I have often noticed it and admired it."

Lily blushed a little with a vague sense of uneasiness, and turned slightly away.

"I am sorry your cousin is so unamiable," she said, to divert the conversation from herself; "and the other one?"

"I have never seen Cecily, and she is not coming to Wrexham just yet," he answered, rather shortly.

Truth to say, the whole subject of his two cousins was rather distasteful to Norman just now. He was angry with Cecily for not coming, and angry also with Stella for coming alone; for, in spite of his indignant condemnation of her temper, he knew that at heart her beauty would very probably disturb his peace. And then Norman was angry with his grandfather for limiting his choice of a wife to these two sisters, and was half-disposed to determine that he would marry Lily or any other girl whom he might meet, if only he could throw every other consideration to the winds and follow his own fancy in the matter. Not that he cared about Lily, only she was neither Stella whom he had seen, and who troubled his dreams; nor yet Cecily, whom he had not seen, but who seemed to take a malicious pleasure in avoiding his presence.

"What business had she to stay in France when he wanted her in England," he said to himself irritably. And, for the time, both the sisters were odious to him, and Lily's attractions stood out forcibly in contrast to them.

Meanwhile they had reached the farm, and Sir Edgar turned round to called them into the covered shed where the machine had been drawn up.

Farm machinery was a hobby of Sir Edgar Dyson's, and although not one of his hearers knew anything about the subject, or cared very much about it, he took a great delight in explaining and expounding the workings of all the different wheels, and cogs, and joints of the machine. Only Lily listened intently, with her soft brow puckered up eagerly, trying hard to understand where the turnips were put in and what happened to them inside, and how they managed to come out of it chopped up, giving her whole mind to the process as though the breaking up into pieces of the homely vegetable were the one thing on earth she was most anxious to learn about. But that was because Sir Edgar was interested in it, and every true woman tries to share and enter into the tastes of the man she loves.

Somehow it came to pass, that in spite of all Mrs. Finch's vigilance, these two came to be separated a little from the others. It is difficult quite to know how it happened. Alice called Mrs. Finch to come into the poultry-yard and look at her own special white hen, of which she was very proud; and Norman, at the same minute, happened to wander away to the shed where the other children were busy inspecting the cows. Suddenly Edgar looked up, and perceived that he and Lily were left alone in the barn with the machine; he instantly ceased his essay on turnip-cutting, and took hold of her hand.

"I suppose your mother has been setting you against me, as usual?" he said, rather roughly.

Lily looked pained.

"Indeed, Sir Edgar, I think she is quite right," she answered with tears in her eyes, "and I think you will end by driving me away from here."

They were the hardest words she had ever spoken to him.

"So it has come to that—that you think me a brute—that you are afraid of me? I don't think much of your love, Lily."

She tried to draw her hand away, but he held it tightly and would not let it go.

They neither of them heard the stopping of a carriage, close by the farm, nor the advancing steps of a lady who came towards them across the yard.

All at once a voice behind them made them spring guiltily apart.

"Dear me, Miss Finch, how very extraordinary! Where are the children, pray, and how came you not to be at their lessons this morning? I heard voices and stopped the carriage to see who was here; and, dear me! can I believe my eyes?"—turning towards her son, as if she had only just perceived him—"*you*, Edgar!" It is impossible to describe the mingled amazement and horror with which Lady Dyson spoke her son's name.

But as to Lily, if the earth could only have opened and swallowed her up, she would have been very thankful.

CHAPTER X.

STELLA LOSES HER TEMPER AGAIN.

Wrexham Hall looked very gaunt and dreary as Stella King drove up alone to it in the dim gleam of the winter evening. Everything about the long facade, with its ponderous rows of white columns and its imposing Grecian portico, looked wealthy and solemn and intensely respectable; but was scarcely calculated to impress confidence or cheerfulness within the heart of the desolate girl who had come alone to find a home beneath its roof.

As the fly which had been thought good enough to bring her and her modest luggage from the station drew up noisily upon the stone flags under the porch, Stella's heart sank within her, and she could not help thinking bitterly of Cecily's selfish desertion of her.

Two powdered footmen, splendid creatures in crimson and black, flung open the doors to receive her, and ushered her into the large and well-lighted hall. No one else was there to welcome her.

Her heart sank within her as she followed one of them down a long corridor; and when the man entered a door at the further end of it, and told her respectfully that she would find Mr. King there in his study, Stella plucked up her courage, and determined to meet her grandfather with that spirit of independence and self-respect which was natural to her.

The old man was seated by his table reading by the light of a shaded lamp. He rose at her entrance, and Stella thought his long, angular figure would never come to its full height as it raised itself slowly out of the depths of his low, leathern arm-chair. In all her life he had never seen anyone so thin and tall.

"How d'ye do?" he said, not very graciously, holding out his long, claw-like hand to her. "Why didn't your sister come with you? I think she ought to have come; I am very much displeased that she should have begun by disobeying me."

"I am very sorry that you are vexed, grandpapa. I think, too, it would have been better if she had come her; but she had such a tempting invitation so Paris, and she is very young——"

"There—there! that will do," he interrupted, irritably, "I don't want to hear a whole list of excuses. I suppose your mother has brought you up like French girls, to do just as you please, and go your own way."

"I dont think French girls go their own way at all," said Stella smiling. "As a rule, they are kept far more strictly than English girls."

Mr. King looked a little surprised. It was rather astonishing to him to be answered and contradicted by this slight, fair girl. The young lady seemed to have plenty of self-confidence, at all events. Perhaps the old man did not think any the worse of her for it.

"Come here and let me look at you," he said, shortly, prudently dropping the discussion concerning the education of French girls. He drew her near to him, and held up the lamp so that it fell full upon her lovely face. He was evidently not displeased by what he saw, for his expression softened a little.

"So you are the young lady who refused to marry my heir, Norman Allingham?" he said, rather roughly.

Stella colored with a little natural indignation. "I certainly refused him," she answered composedly.

"Well, I'm sorry you didn't hit it off, for you have your father's good looks. Is your sister as pretty as you are?'

"I am sure I don't know," answered Stella, and she could not help laughing a little at this strange catechism through which the old man was putting her, "we are considered alike.'

"Humph!" He dropped her hand, and put the lamp down again upon the table "You were a goose to refuse him," he said, shortly; "it's so much the worse for you, and so much the better for her. I shall only allow her to stop in Paris a month. You children don't seem to have understood that I am your natural guardian, and as long as you are under age you are bound to obey me—do you here?" looking at her rather savagely—"to *obey* me."

"Yes, I hear you, grandpapa, and I will do my best to be dutiful," she answered, quietly, adding, however, after a moment's pause, "as long as you only require from me what is right and reasonable."

She was a brave girl to have said that, and after she had said it she was half afraid he would be angry. But this odd old man only laughed with a sort of a little inward chuckle, as though he were very much amused. Her fearlessness was rather fascinating to him, and all unknown to her, reminded him of her dead father, towards whom his withered old heart had softened when he had heard of his death.

"What on earth made you come at such an hour?" he said, changing the subject. "Dinner has been over long ago; it is a most awkward time of day to arrive."

"I could not held the boats and the trains," said Stella, smiling.

"Well, I couldn't keep dinner waiting for you; I never alter my dinner hour for anybody. I suppose you are not hungry?" looking at her sharply as though he dared her to own to such a thing, But Stella was quite undaunted.

"Indeed, I am very hungry indeed. I hope you will allow me something to eat.'

"What a dreadful thing a young appetite is! you children eat at all hours and destroy your digestions for life," he said grumblingly. "When you are my age the coats of your stomach will be gone."

"As long as I have a coat to my back," began Stella, laughingly; but her grandfather opened his eyes at her so alarmingly for daring to turn his words into a joke, that her harmless little jest died away upon her lips.

"Go and find Mrs. Finch, and ask her to get you something to eat," he said sternly.

"Who is Mrs. Finch, and where am I to find her?" inquired Stella.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

HEALTH FOOD.

By Bill Nye.

While trying to reconstruct a telescope spine and put some new copper rivets in my lumbar vertebræ, this spring, I have had occasion to thoroughly investigate the subject of so-called health food, such as grape beef tea, inundations, toasts, oat meal mush, bran mash, soups, condition powders, ham gems, ground feed, pepsin, lard, mush, and other hen feed usually put into the invalid who is too week to defend himself.

Of course it stands to reason that the reluctant and fluttering spirit may not be won back to earth and joy once more lit in the leaden eye, unless due care be taken relative to the food by means of which nature may be made to assert herself.

I do not care to say to the world through the columns of the *Free Press* that we must woo from eternity the trembling life with pie. Welsh rabbit and other wild game will not do at first. But I think I am speaking the sentiments of a large and emaciated constituency when I say that there is getting to be a strong feeling against oatmeal submerged in milk and in favor of strawberry short cake.

I almost ate myself into an early grave April by flying into the face of Providence and demoralizing old Gastric with oatmeal. I ate oatmeal two weeks, and at the end of that time my friends were telegraphed for, but before it was too late, I threw off the shackles that bound me. With a desperation born of a terrible apprehension, I left and shook off the fatal oatmeal habit and began to eat beefsteak. At first life hung trembling in the balance and there was a change in the quotations of beef, but hope on there was a slight, delicate bloom on the wan cheek, and range cattle that had long escaped a long, severe winter on the plains began to apprehend a new danger and seek the secluded canyons of the inaccessible mountains.

I often thought while I was eating hot food and waiting for death, how the doctor and other invited guests at the post mortem would start back in amazement to find the remnants of an eminent man filled with bran!

Through all the painful hours of the long night and the eventless day, while the mad throng rushed onward like a great river towards eternity's ocean, this thought was uppermost in my mind. I tried to get the physician to promise that he would not expose me and show the world what a fool low mockery I had been and how I had deceived my best friends. I told him the whole truth and asked him to spare my family the humiliation of knowing that though I might have led a blameless life my sunny exterior was only a thin cover for bran and shorts and middlings, crushed wheat and pearl barley.

I dreamed last night of being in a large city where the streets were paved with toast and the buildings were roofed with toast and the soil was bran and oatmeal, and the water was beef tea and gruel. All at once it came over me that I had solved the great mystery of death and had been consigned to a place of eternal punishment. The thought was horrible! A million eternities in a city built of dry toast and oatmeal! A home for never-ending cycles of ages, where the principal hotel and the post office building and the opera house were built of toast, and the fire department squirted gruel at the devouring element! Never!

It was only a dream, but it has made me more thoughtful, and people notice that I am not so giddy as I was.—*Detroit Free Press.*

Summer in Crowded New York.

In the alleyway of a tenement in New York a baby nestled in the arms of a young girl. Its face was covered with red spots which the doctor said were due to defective nutrition. In the top of No.— a child was sprawled out on a bed, too weak to brush away the flies which assailed it. A child over the roof took the doctor into No.— A baby was convulsed with a cough. The doctor put his ear to its heart and after critical examination said it had a touch of bronchitis. Like a dead child a little girl lay among the bed-clothing in the front room on the same floor. Its hands were thrown over its head and it moved uneasily. On the top floor of the same tenement a child had been sick for eight days and no doctor had been called to see it.

Sewing-machines rattle from morning till night in a towering tenement at No. — Essex street. Hundreds of Poles live in the building and earn a living by making clothing. They work, cook, eat and sleep in the same rooms, which are far from cleanly. The children pant in the cooped rooms and pine for want of attention. In one room four men bent over the work of their machines, two women took irons from the fire and pressed the finished clothing while children cried on the floor. The men, women and children were sallow, and the heat from the stove made the atmosphere sicken. The people toiled unceasingly for the pittance which they earned to keep body and soul together, and had no time to find out the business of the intruders. Nor did they look up when accosted. On an upper floor a wrinkled hag crooned over a crying child. A woman sat on the ledge of the roof of No.— rocking a child in her arms. A little wind was stirring there and it was grateful to the little one. Below was a stone-paved court, upon which stagnant water stood in pools. A boy who had lost his feet drew himself over the roof in boxes fitted to his legs below his knees. "The Chinese have got a bad smell in their place down below," said he, "but this house is all right."—*N. Y. Times.*

Gentle Reminder.

Husbands are so stupid! The story of a man who went to town with his wife to do errands, and was sorely perplexed at missing something on his return, until he reached home and found he had forgotten his wife, reminds somebody of a women in Philadelphia who gave her husband six commissions to execute in New York. He telegraphed back that he had executed five and forgotten the last. It was an order for an illuminated sentence for a Sunday-school room. He was a good deal astonished when he received the reply: "Unto us this day a child is born—two feet wide and nine feet long."—EDITOR'S DRAWER, in *Harper's Magazine for August.*