STELLA;
OR, AT CROSS PURPOSES.

CHAPTER XVIII. (CONTINUED)

CECILY'S SOLITARY WALKS.

They were walking side by side now in the direction of the park. Cecily was quite cool and self-composed, and unconcerned; Mrs. Finch was trembling with rage and spite. She was, moreover, considerably out of breath with trying to keep up with her companion's pace; for Cecily amused herself by walking fast, and her long steps carried her over the ground faster than Mrs. Finch could, with due regard to dignity, follow her.

"If I were to tell Mr. Allingham the way you spend your mornings, Miss Cecily, you would find yourself in a pretty scrape."

"You are welcome to tell him anything you like. As there is nothing to tell, it will be a pleasant exercise for your inventive genius."

"I could put him up to several things if I chose," said Mrs. Finch, threateningly.

Cecily turned round upon her sharply.

"Good gracious, woman! what are are you harping upon! Do you want me to bribe you?"

"I never was so insulted in my life!" cried out Mrs. Finch, indignantly. "How dare you talk about 'bribing,' and calling me *woman*, too!"

Cecily laughed.

"Does that offend you? I thought we were all women. Well, I won't say it again if it hurts your feelings. But I will give you a piece of advice, and that is, to mind your own business, and leave me alone."

For Cecily could be bold enough when the instinct of self-preservation was aroused. As to Mrs. Finch, she then and there vowed her destruction.

From that hour she watched Cecily more assiduously than ever. But Cecily had the advantage of knowing it, and she gave up her solitary walks—by daylight, at least—and Mrs. Finch was not able, for all her efforts, to find out anything further against her.

It was some few days later that Mr. King sent one day for his youngest granddaughter into his library.

She found that Norman was with him, and from the young man's disturbed and gloomy face, she knew that Mr. King must have said something unpleasing to him.

Norman cleared his brow with an effort at her entrance, and drew forward a chair for her.

"I have been telling Norman that your wedding day must be settled, my dear," said Mr. King, not unkindly.

Cecily gave an involuntary start; but cast her eyes down meekly, and answered:

"Yes, grandpa."

"I am getting an old man, and I should like to see you settled before I die."

"I am sure I hope that may not be for many a long day, sir," said Norman heartily; whilst Cecily only said again:

"Yes, grandpa."

"Well, well—I don't know; I'm afraid my life is not very good, but still, we never know these things. Shall we make the wedding-day this day month?"

Cecily again murmured "Yes," with dutiful submission; and Mr. King thought in his own mind, that she was stupidest girl he ad ever known.

"There; go then, now, both of you," he said, taking up his book again, and almost turning his back upon her.

When they were outside the door, Cecily turned round to her cousin. He was surprised to see how agitated she had suddenly become.

"I am not going to do it, you know, Norman," she said to him.

"Do what, Cecily?"

"Marry you in a month. My mother has not been dead a year. I could not think of being married yet."

Norman's heart gave a guilty throb of delight.

"I will not urge you to do anything you do not like," he said, not venturing to meet her eyes: "but had you not better go back and tell him so?"

"Who? grandpapa! what is the use of it he would only be angry, and he might alter his will. No, we will let him believe it, and he might die meanwhile, and we could take our time afterwards. I should like to have a gay wedding, you know!" she added, half laughing.

Norman looked up at her puzzled. It came across his mind to wonder if she really wished to be his wife. He supposed she did, else why did she not take this opportunity of breaking it off? He did not like either to hear her speak so about her grandfather; it was almost as if she wished for the old man's death.

"You ought to tell him your objections," he urged; "he will think you have settled it, and he will send out the invitations for the wedding!"

"What fun!" said Cecily, and burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, then suddenly a gush of tears filled her eyes, and her voice shook and trembled. "I cannot do it—I cannot do it!" she wailed, wringing her hands, and then suddenly turned and left him.

Norman felt absolutely bewildered; he stood still for a minute, half relieved, half dismayed, and then he moved slowly away, saddened and heavy-hearted, feeling acutely that the whole story of his engagement was a mistake. He neither loved nor understood the woman he was pledged to marry, and, alas! he feared that he both loved and understood the sister who, but for his own folly, might have been his by this time.

. . . . .

Now, there lived in the small neighboring town of Loughton a very clever medical man, who had been long in the habit of attending upon Mr. King, of Wrexham. This gentleman was a bachelor, and lived in a small house on the outskirts of the town, and there was a short cut across the fields, which made it barely a mile distant from Wrexham to a pedestrian.

Late that evening, that is to say about nine o'clock, Dr. Graham, happening to be at home and disengaged, heard the loud ringing of the night bell.

It was such a very common occurrence that he was in no was startled by the loud and noisy peal; somebody, of course, was ill, and had sent for him, he supposed.

"Better send round to the stable, John," he called out to his factotum, who came along the passage outside his sitting-room door at the summons; "I'm sure to be wanted. I'll have the old mare to-night; Thomas can put the saddle on."

John stepped back to the kitchen to send out the necessary order, and Dr. Graham began instinctively getting on his hat and gloves, and reached his thick riding Ulster from its peg behind the door.

Two minutes later John opened the door.

"Well?" said the master.

"I don't think you will be required to go out, sir; somebody wants to speak to you," and to Mr. Graham's intense surprise, a very pretty young lady, with only a light cloak flung over her evening-dress of black gauze, was ushered into the room.

CHAPTER XIX.

HER GRANDFATHER'S LOVE.

Cecily was playing a very difficult game. Like most people who forsake the straight roadway of truth and honesty, and who betake themselves to the tortuous paths of deceitfulness and double dealing, there were times when she was bewildered, even in her own mind, as to the dangers and uncertainties which surrounded her.

No one had seen her slip out of the house after dinner, on her way to Dr. Graham's house, nor did any living soul ever know what it was that the tall young lady in evening dress had to say to the old doctor. In his own mind, although he answered her questions civilly and to the best of his powers—and although he was, even at his discreet years, somewhat impressed by the graceful girl, with her winning manner and her anxious and interested looks — Dr. Graham never quite settled satisfactorily to himself what it was that had made Mr. King's granddaughter pay him the furtive evening visit. He never knew whether the anxiety of affection or the workings of the basest self-interest had prompted her close and searching questions concerning the state of her grandfather's health, and he was a little ashamed afterwards that, being so overcome by the novelty and charm of the situation, he had been taken off his guard, and had answered her questions more fully and more unreservedly than he had felt it quite right to do.

As to Cecily, she went home with glittering eyes, and a smothered excitement of manner, which she had some difficulty in concealing.

Long that night she paced up and down the narrow limits of her little bedchamber, think over what she had determined upon doing.

Once, stopping suddenly short before her dressing-table, she caught sight of her own face in the glass; there was a hard, fixed look of malignant triumph upon it, that involuntarily made her recoil from her own image.

"What am I going to do?" she said, to herself, shudderingly. "What name would any one give this thing I am thinking about?" And then she laughed aloud to herself. "Pooh! what a goose I am! After all, I am doing him no harm! He has heart-disease, the doctor says; at any moment he may drop down dead. He is an old man; he has lived his life; he is quite prepared to die; he will not live a couple of months at the most, in any case—is that *my* fault?—and a week sooner or a week later, what can it matter in such a case? Dr. Graham said—he said—that any sudden shock—any disappointment — any little trifle to upset him——"

And then she stood still suddenly, and held up both hands to her head, and was silent; for there are some things that are best unwhispered even in the remotest depths of our own hearts. After that Cecily jumped into bed, pulled up the clothes round her head and slept as soundly and as sweetly as any child of three year old. The next best thing for one's peace of mind to having a good conscience is certainly to have none at all.

The next morning Cecily met Norman on the stairs, on her way down to breakfast, and laid a detaining hand upon his arm. she did not notice that there were dark rings round his eyes, and wearied and careworn lines upon his face. Mr. Allingham certainly had slept neither soundly nor sweetly.

But Cecily did not see these tokens of distress in her cousin's countenance, because her own was cast down becomingly and modestly.

"Norman," she said, with a pretty hesitation of manner, "I am sorry for what I said to you yesterday—about—about our marriage."

Norman laid his hand kindly upon hers. His conscience smote him often at times for his coldness of heart to the girl to whom he stood plighted, and who loved him—for of course she loved him!

"My dear," he said, "we all say foolish things at times. Tell me what it is you wish."

"I have been thinking, Norman, that our grandfather has been very good to us; it would be wrong and ungrateful not to do as he wishes; and if—if he has set his heart upon seeing us married soon, why—why——"

She paused, stammering and confused, as was natural and maidenly.

Norman's heart gave a great leap, and then sank down cold and sick within him; but he grasped her hand closely, and spoke out bravely.

"You are quite right; we will do as he wishes. We ought to consider him—it is our duty. You are a good girl, Cecily. I do believe that it will be a real joy to the old man to have this—this matter settled; and Cecily, I give you my word of honor I am not insensible to your sweet, yielding temper, and to the effort you have made to speak this to me It shall be the object of my life," he said, solemnly and earnestly, "to make you a good and devoted husband."

Norman spoke from his heart, gazing fixedly and gravely into her face. Never had he been more in earnest—never had he resolved more determinedly to fulfill to the very last letter the words he was speaking to this girl, whom he believed himself to be unconsciously wronging.

But he should never find it out. Never, he told himself—never as long as life lasted!

Judge, then, of his surprise and bewilderment, when Cecily's only answer was a smile of such intense amusement, that it rippled up uncontrollably all over her face in a mood of suppressed merriment! He dropped her hand, and felt deeply disappointed. He had spoken from the depths of his soul to her, and she seemed to consider it as a good joke! Would he ever understand this girl, or have one sympathy in common with the woman who was to be his wife!

After all, it was Stella, and not Cecily, whose task it was to tell the old man that he was to have his own way about the marriage that was his darling object.

Stella, who stood behind his chair white and fixed, as though she were speaking her own death warrant, and said to him, tremblingly:

"Grandpapa, they have told me to tell you that—that——"

"You are strangely timid, Miss Stella!" said Mr. King, irritably, twisting himself round in his chair to look at her. "What are you stammering and stuttering for? and why do you stand behind me as if I was an ogre? and who are *they*, pray?"

"How am I to answer three questions at once, grandpapa?" cried Stella, with a touch of her old sauciness, and a little laugh that even to the old man's ears sounded hollow and unreal. He drew her round to the front of his chair, and she knelt down by his side.

"Is it Norman and Cecily whose business you are upon, Stella? I suppose they were afraid to speak themselves."

She rested her elbow on the arm of his chair, and shaded her face with her hand.

"They wished me to tell you—the marriage shall be as soon as you like."

He was silent for half a minute; then he sighed contentedly.

"Thank Heaven!" he murmured, fervently, "I shall see it before I die, and I shall have done justice to your father's child; for I was harsh to him, Stella—very harsh. May Heaven forgive me!"

And then suddenly he took Stella's face between his two hands, and lifted it up, so that she was forced to look at him.

"My little girl, if it could only have been *you!*" he said, brokenly.

"Oh! *don't*, grandpapa!" burst with a cry from her white lips, and the sudden pain and anguish in her face smote upon him with all the force of a revelation.

He kissed her hurriedly.

"But you will stay with the old man, won't you, dear?" he said, drawing her tenderly to him. "We will send Finch away—I hate her—and you and I will live together. We will never be parted, Stella—you will never leave me, will you?"

"Never, grandpapa — never!" she answered, impulsively, casting up her arms about his neck, whilst tears that she could not restrain—tears of pent-up misery and despair—burst forth freely at his woods of kindness and affection.

It was a strange thing, this love that had sprung up between the hard-hearted old man, with his crabbed temper and his well-nigh withered heart, and the girl who, so lately a stranger to him, had crept into the emptiness of his loveless old life, softening, and purifying, and melting the frozen current of his soul.

How she had done it was a mystery both to himself and to her. She had never tried to win him; indeed, she had thwarted, unconsciously, his dearest wishes, and yet Cecily, who was about to realize them, was nothing to him, whilst Stella was everything.

"How can any one ever have called grandpapa hard and unkind?" said Stella, to herself. "He has the warmest heart and the tenderest sympathy of any one I ever met."

And Stella, who, poor child! had so little to love, loved her grandfather with her whole heart and soul.

But though he loved Stella the best, Mr. King was not ungrateful to Cecily for her prompt consideration to his wishes.

When he met her at lunch time, he took her hand kindly, and kissed her forehead.

"My dear, I am glad you have consented to let things be as I wish. You know I have set my heart upon this marriage, and you are acting rightly in allowing me to settle the time of it."

Cecily murmured an inarticulate reply: she was rather nervous in her manner, and Mrs. Finch, who was watching her closely, noticed that her hands shook with agitation.

Norman stood by her side and received her grandfather's thanks and good wishes also. Mrs. Finch was certain there was false play somewhere.

"She is playing a double game—I am convinced of it," she said to herself. "Who was it that she met in the Park the other morning? Could it have been Sir Edgar? For I am not such a goose as to suppose it was Norman! I must keep my eye upon you, young lady!"

But aloud Mrs. Finch only said to Cecily, with the sweetest smile, as she took her place at the luncheon-table:

"Let me give you a glass of sherry, dear Miss Cecily, for you look quite overcome; and will you have some chicken or a cutlet?"

"You had better order the invitation cards for the wedding," said Mr. King, cheerily, to her, as he sat down opposite her; "and the wedding breakfast must be thought of. It is to be the 1st of May, Mrs. Finch, so mind you are in time with the preparations. Here is your very good health, young people!"

None of them had ever seen the old man in such a good temper nor in such radiant spirits.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW LILY FAINTED.

The children had all gone up-stairs to put on their hats and cloaks, but Lily lingered still in the school-room. Ostensibly she was putting away the books and slates; but who will blame the poor child that the excuse was but a very hollow one? It was the time Sir Edgar used so often to look into the school-room for five minutes, and for many days Lily had waited, and hoped, and longed for him to come; but she saw very little of him now

Her eyes were full of tears as she slowly and wearily put away the litter of objects that cumbered the table.

"I suppose he doesn't care to come now," she said to herself; "he must be getting quite fond of Lady Honoria, and I ought not to be sorry for it. Oh! no, I could not be so wicked as to be sorry, for as mamma told me, he never could have meant to marry me; but I did not expect that. It was happiness enough just to see him now and then: but perhaps it is better not—only it is very hard to bear!"

The door opened slowly behind her, and Lily turned round with a face radiant with sudden delight—only for an instant; in the next, every ray of pleasure had vanished out of it. It was Walter, not Edgar, who entered.

"All alone, lovely Lily?" cried the intruder, with a tone of bantering familiarity that was an insult in itself.

Lily colored deeply, but did not answer. She had already resented Walter's bold and disrespectfully expressed admiration; her pure instinct told her that he was not a good man.

"It is the first time I have had such luck since I have been in the house! Why do you always run away from me?" he asked, coming close to her.

"I have no wish to do so, Mr. Dyson," said Lily, quietly, though she was trembling very much; "but I am afraid I must go up-stairs now, the children are getting ready for their walk; I must not keep them waiting."

She moved towards the door, but Walter stood in her way.

"Nonsense! you are not going away just yet; you are going to stay and talk to me a little. Don't you know that you are very pretty? It's a shame of my mother to keep you mewed up in the school-room all day! Why don't you come into the smoking-room in the evening sometimes? You would always find me there alone; I go there directly after dinner, while my mother and brother are hanging over Lady Honoria and her everlasting singing. That sort of thing bothers me, you know. I'm not musical, and I'm not in love with Lady Honoria. I get away into the smoking-room with my pipe. Suppose you slip in there to-night and have a talk to me?"

"I don't think the smoking-room would be at all the proper place for me, Mr. Dyson."

"Any more, I suppose you mean, than the school-room is the proper place for *me!*"

Lily was silent for a minute, then she said, very quietly:

"Please let me pass, Mr. Dyson. I really must go up-stairs."

"You certainly shall not go until you've promised to come to the smoking-room after dinner to-night."

"I shall never promise that, Mr. Dyson," said Lily, firmly, wondering at her own boldness.

If she had had more knowledge of the world, she would have given the promise and have broken it afterwards. But none of the arts of deception lay in Lily's category of self-defence. She was frightened and indignant; but it did not occur to her to use guile or deception to escape from the man who was insulting her because she was poor and friendless.

She made another attempt to reach the door; but Walter Dyson placed himself so directly in her way, that, without a personal encounter, it was impossible for her to get at the handle.

"Mr. Dyson!" she cried, indignantly, "this is most ungenerous, most ungentlemanlike!"

"How pretty it looks when it is angry!" was the insulting reply.

Tears of distress and terror gathered in her eyes, and then all at once she heard an advancing footstep along the passage.

"For Heaven's sake let me go!" she cried, white with terror. "I hear some one coming—it must be Lady Dyson!"

"Then you shall give me a kiss before she comes!" cried Walter, and before she knew what he was doing, he seized her suddenly in his arms!

Lily uttered a faint cry! She was so paralized with terror and disgust that she had neither the strength to resist him or the courage to call loudly for help.

And then the door opened and she saw—not Lady Dyson, as she had expected—but Sir Edgar, erect, and stern, and pale, and for one startled moment, upon the threshold, ere, with a muttered oath, he turned angrily away, slamming the door violently behind him as he went.

Walter Dyson burst into a short coarse laugh.

"What fun! I've shocked the elder brother!" he cried.

But Lily heard him not. She slid from between his arms, as one who has got a death wound, and fell prone at his feet in a senseless, lifeless heap!

Walter uttered an exclamation of annoyance.

"Bother the girl! I hate a fainting woman! What on earth has she got to faint for?—squeamish little piece of propriety—why couldn't she just have a little harmless bit of fun like any other girl? If I had kissed her it would not have killed her! Well, I suppose I had better get out of this; there'll be every woman in the house here paesently with smelling-salts and sal-volatile! She'll come to fast enough if she's left alone."

And Mr. Walter, with no further thought or consideration for the unfortunate girl who, by reason of his unmanly and unprincipled conduct, lay now stretched, white and unconscious, on the ground, ignominiously departed as speedily as he could, without attempting to render the slightest succor to the unhappy governess!

Lily lay there still, and motionless, and white, like the flower whose name she bore. Afterward she found it in her heart to wish that she had never awakened from that death-like swoon.

Presently there came a buzzing in her ears, and that battling, choking sensation that accompanies the return to consciousness. And then a voice that seemed to speak to her out of a fog—calling her by name:

"Miss Finch—Miss Finch!" Then more whizzing whirring in her ears, and another dead, still interval of unconscious peace.

After that a violent pricking and stinging at her eyes and nose, which made her gasp and choke. Somebody was holding very strong salts under her nose; her head was being lifted up; and there was a splash of cold water against her face.

"She is coming to now, my lady," said one.

"Sprinkle a little more water over her forehead," said another.

Lily gave a shiver and then a groan; then suddenly she sat up on the floor, and looked bewilderedly about her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The man who produced some little commotion in Washington recently by waking up the servants at the British Legation and demanding aid, proved to be an insane Irishman of the name of Looney.

Army Punishments.

In different sections of the army, various expedients were resorted to for the purpose of correcting minor offences. What particular shape the punishment should assume depended very much upon the inventive faculty of the Field and Staff, or of such officers of the line as might have charge of the case.

Before taking the field, a few sneak-thieves were discovered prowling about among the tents. These were promptly drummed out of the camp to the tune of the "Rogues' March," the whole regiment shouting in derision as the miserable wretches took to their heels when the precincts reached the limits of the camp, where they were told to be gone, and never show their faces in camp again on pain of a more severe handling.

If, while we were lying in camp, a man refused to do his duty, he was at once ordered to the guard-house, which is the military name for "lock-up." Once there, at the discretion of the officers, he was either confined and put on bread and water, or else ordered to carry a log of wood, or a knapsack filled with stones, "two hours on and two off," day and night, until such time as he was deemed to have done sufficient penance. In more extreme cases a court-martial was held, and the punishment of forfeiture of all pay due, with hard labor for thirty days, or the like, was inflicted.

One day, down in front of Petersburg, a number of us had been making a short call on some acquaintances over in another regiment. As we were returning home we came across what we took to be a well, and wishing a drink, we all stopped. The man in question, as was usual there, was not digging, but a barrel sunk in the ground; for at most places the ground was so full of springs that in order to get water, all you had to do was to sink a box or barrel, and the water would soon collect of its own accord. So there he was down and looking into the barrel in the bottom of the well, engaged in bailing out the water.

"What's he doing there in that hole?" asked one of our company.

"Why," said the guard, who was standing near by, and whom we had taken for the customary guard of the spring, "you see, comrades, our Colonel has his own way of punishin' the boys. One thing he won't have is to 'em do—he won't let 'em get intoxicated. When they do, they go into the gopher hole. The water there, is in the gopher hole now. That hole has a spring at the bottom, and the water comes in pretty fast; and if Jim wants to keep dry, he's got to keep dippin' all the time, or else stand in the water up to his waist—and Jim isn't so mighty fond of water, neither."—*From "Recollections of a Drummer-boy," by Harry M. Kieffer, in September St. Nicholas.*

A Disappointed and Disgusted Cook.

About 8 o'clock yesterday morning a man smoking plug tobacco in an old pipe walked out of a Michigan avenue restaurant with a rat in a trap. He looked neither to the right nor to the left until he had reached the middle of the street. Then he set the trap on the ground and whistled for a dog. If he had a dog, the animal did not respond, but the public did. In less than two minutes thirty men were rushing to the spot.

"Hi! there! Don't let him out till I get my dog," shouted one.

"Hold on! Wait for the dogs!" yelled half a dozen voices at once.

"Keep cool and form a circle!" commanded a policeman, as he took a firmer grip on his baton.

The man with the trap spread a handkerchief over it and waited. He was not a bit excited. On the contrary he was as placid as a ship sailing in the wake.

"Whar' did ye ketch him?" inquired a newsboy.

The placid man did not deign to reply.

"What'll ye take for him?" asked another, but his inquiry was treated with the same silent contempt.

Then four or five men came running with dogs under their arms, and behind fifteen dogs on foot following behind. It was a fight between a bull dog and a foundland, and there would have been between owners had not a second police appeared. Order was finally restored. The dogs were arranged in a circle and let their collars, and the placid man knocked the ashes from his pipe, looked carefully round, and then raised the trap and shook the rat out. All the dogs made a rush, but in ten seconds each and every canine walked off on his ear and seemed to be hurt in his feelings. A boy stepped forward and held the rat up to view.

"It's a crockery rat!" he yelled as he whirled it around.

"Yes, it vhas a groggery radt, and it cost me den cents," calmly replied the placid man as he walked off with his trap.

Women as Clerks.

Of late years the employment of women as clerks has greatly increased in England as well as in France; and in both countries it is generally agreed that the system works satisfactorily. At the Bank of France there are now 160 female clerks, who receive 3 francs a day to commence with, and whose annual salary, after a year or two of service rises to 1,800 francs; and at the Paris offices of the Credit Foncier, where also there is a large staff of woman, the remuneration, beginning at 3.50 francs a day, rises in some cases to as much as 4,000 francs, or $800 a year. In both establishments the hours of attendance are from 9 to 4 on 6 days of the week; and the male and female clerks work in different rooms—the women being employed intended by officials of their own sex, and thus enjoying the greatest possible degree of privacy.

Did not Ask.

Baby is very exacting at table. Her mother has, in consequence, been obliged to forbid her to ask for anything. The other day there was a dish of magnificent strawberries upon the table. Baby coveted them with longing eyes. She threw a supplicating glance at her mother, and another at her father, but this characteristic mimicry was unsuccessful. Baby was disconsolate. She uttered a deep sigh, and, leaning over to her father's side, in a way to be well heard, she said: "Papa, tell mamma that I have not asked for any strawberries."