Through Storm and Sunshine

CHAPTER XV.

Sir Arthur did not feel quite sure whether his wife's intelligence pleased him or not. Still he said nothing to that effect to her, but bent down and kissed her pretty young face, and muttered something about happiness. It was vague enough, yet it pacified her. She was quite content.

Was he pleased? If he should have a son, his beautiful, noble daughter would no longer be heiress of Lancewood. She would never fill the position for which she had so well qualified herself. Her life would be completely spoiled. Sir Arthur understood her, and he knew that her desire to inherit Lancewood was not so much for the wealth or the importance that would accrue to her, but because she had lofty ideas of adding to the luster of her name, of doing good to all in the estate—because she would carry out needful improvements for which he had no inclination. He had often said to himself what a noble mistress Vivien would make for Lancewood, and had thought himself most fortunate in having such a daughter to succeed him. Now, if he should have a son, all hopes of Vivien's succession were of course ended. He could give her an ample fortune, but he knew her well. No fortune or money could compensate her for the loss of Lancewood. He knew that she would rather be mistress of Lancewood than Queen of England. It would be a terrible blow to her. The bringing home of a young wife had been bad enough, but that would seem trivial in comparison with the loss of Lancewood.

Another thing—if he had a son, it was almost improbable that he could live to see him reach manhood, and, if he did not, who would train him—who would teach him all that Vivien had so aptly learned? He did not say so to his wife, but in the depths of his heart Sir Arthur hoped that a little daughter might be born to them, and not a son. If that were the case, the evil would be changed into a blessing. A daughter could be amply portioned out of the estate, and would not interfere with Vivien's claims.

He did not tell Vivien the news. "It will be time enough for her to know it," he said to himself, "when all the world knows it."

Vivien wrote to say that when the Smeatons left London they were going to Germany, and had asked her to accompany them, which she very much wished to do. Sir Arthur gave his consent.

"Who knows, poor child, to what kind of home she may return?" he said. "It may have passed from her hands never to be entirely her own again."

So Vivien went to Germany, little dreaming of the news that would follow her thither.

Lady Neslie was expecting the hour of her triumph. She had never admitted to herself that she might have a daughter instead of the son she longed and prayed for. And one hinting ever so remotely at such an idea incurred her severest displeasure.

One day she summoned Mrs. Spenser, the housekeeper, to a consultation. She wanted to know which of the rooms had been used as Miss Neslie's nursery. Mrs. Spenser told her "the large room, with the oval window on the first floor."

"That will not do for me," said her ladyship, decidedly. "I prefer a room on the ground floor. Stairs are always dangerous for children, and boys are so much more mischievous than girls."

"But," interrupted the housekeeper, incautiously, "your ladyship might have a daughter."

"I shall have nothing of the kind," said Lady Neslie, angrily; "my son will be heir of Lancewood—a daughter would be——" "Useless to me," she was about to add, but prudence came to her aid and checked the words.

The housekeeper went away with a smile on her face.

"It is easy to see," she said, "that miladi wants a son, so that Miss Neslie shall not have Lancewood. I pray Heaven she may be disappointed."

Lady Neslie herself never seemed to have a doubt.

"Arthur," she said one day to her husband, "I have been looking over the family annals, and I have found a name for my little son."

"Indeed! What name have you chosen?" he asked.

"Oswald. It seems to have been a favorite name in the family. I counted ten Oswalds, and they all seem to have been famous men."

"Yes," observed Sir Arthur, dreamily—"Oswald is a famous name with us, and we have had some gifted men called by it. If I had a son, I could not wish for a better name for him. I often wonder, if I had another name, whether it would have inspired me to be a greater man."

He spoke regretfully, like one who felt that he had missed some road in life; then, suddenly looking at his wife, he said—

"Valerie, you make very sure of this son of yours. What if, after all, you should find yourself the mother of a little daughter as pretty as you are yourself?"

She looked up at him excitedly.

"I should be so terribly disappointed," she said, "that I should almost hate her."

"Hush, Valerie!" he cried, shocked at her words.

She perceived her imprudence.

"It is your fault, Arthur—you make me say what I do not mean. My whole heart is bent upon a little son. Why do you contradict me?"

Indeed it was useless, as he well knew. He said no more, but he hoped and prayed with all the fervor of his soul that the expected child might not be a son and heir.

There was great consternation one evening—a sweet dewy evening —for the young mistress of Lancewood was suddenly taken ill. The doctor was summoned in haste, and he sent at once for another. There was distress and dismay, for Lady Valerie was sick unto death, and it seemed a terrible thing that one so young and beautiful should die.

There were long hours of suspense, when the doctors consulted with grave faces, and the servants whispered in low voices. "It would be strange," the latter said, "if this Lady Neslie too should die;" and there were hundreds of wishes expressed that no son might deprive Miss Neslie of her birthright.

Sir Arthur, walking up and down the broad corridors, tried to understand his own heart, and failed. Then they came to him, those grave-faced doctors, and told him that he had great cause for rejoicing—a son and heir was born to him—a strong, healthy boy. But there was one drawback—Lady Neslie was in great danger. He asked if he could see her; and they told him "Not yet—she was too ill."

A son was born to him! When the doctors had gone away, leaving him alone, he went to the window that looked over the Hyde woods. The moon was rising over the trees, the sky was without a cloud. The fair domain of Lancewood looked unwontedly fair. The undulating, well-wooded park, the hills in the far distance, the dark, picturesque masses of trees, the moonlight silvering all—it was a home for a man to be proud of and to love.

A son was born to him! This fair domain would never be his daughter's—it would never belong to her; it belonged now to the little child whom he had not seen, and Vivien was disinherited. As he stood there he thought of his first wife — Vivien's mother—of how, during her short life, she had talked of the time when her daughter would inherit Lancewood. He thought of Vivien and of how she had spent her life. She had not cared for romance or sentiment; the light, pretty occupations of other girls had no charm for her. She had fitted herself to be mistress of Lancewood, as she would have done to be queen of a great kingdom. He could remember her enthusiasm over the grand old trees. How she had loved them! How she had gloried in the fact that, although they might die of old age, they could never be cut down! He remembered, as he stood there watching the fair domain that was not to be hers, how she had planned a picturesque bridge to span the river, and a boat house lower down. Now she would never plan again. Tears dimmed his eyes, partly in gratitude for the son born to him, and partly in sorrow for the daughter who had lost all through his birth.

Then he reproached himself. It was too late, he said, for thoughts of that kind — too late for regret; he was married, and a son was born; there was nothing to be done but make the best of it.

Soon afterward he saw the little babe—a strong, healthy boy, with his mother's eyes and hair—a bonny, beautiful boy—and his heart warmed to the child.

"After all, there will be some satisfaction in being succeeded by a son," he thought; "this boy will be Sir Oswald Neslie of Lancewood."

He stooped down to kiss the tiny rose-bud face, and then he went quietly to his wife's room.

She looked so ill and weak. She had fainted, they told him, two or three times in succession; but she recognized him now, and called him by name.

"Arthur," she said, faintly, as he bent over her, "they will not let me speak; they will not tell me."

He saw her face flush with triumph, ill as she was.

"A son, heir to Lancewood—I am so glad!" she whispered. Then, looking into his earnest face, she said — "I shall not die, Arthur; I shall live now that I have a son."

Then he left her, and she lay still, saying to herself over and over again—

"Sir Oswald Neslie, heir of Lancewood, Thank Heaven, I have a son."

They brought the boy into the room for her to see. It was no sweet motherly instinct that prompted her questions, "Is he well?" "Is he strong?" "Is he healthy?"—no motherly instinct, but the longing that he might live to inherit Lancewood. The moment that the little child cried she waved it impatiently away; she did not want that—she wanted nothing but to know that he was living and well. They wondered much — those who were with her — that she so seldom desired to have the child with her; if he was well, she was content.

Sir Arthur saw her smiling one day as she looked at the child's face—she was recovering rapidly then.

"Why are you smiling, Valerie?" he asked.

"I was just thinking," she replied, "that after all I might have my own way, and see Lady Valerie's Drive made just where I wanted it."

Again, they were looking over some fine views of the castle, and she saw amongst them one of the Dower House. She showed it to him with a smile of triumph.

"I shall never have to live in that dreary old place now," she said.

"How do you know that, Valerie?" he asked.

"I am quite sure of it. I need never leave Lancewood, because my own son will be here, and there will be no need."

"But suppose he marries, Valerie—what then?"

She laughed the merry, happy, light laugh that had so long been hushed.

"He cannot marry for twenty years to come, at least," she said; "and when he does, I will choose his wife — she shall be one after my own heart."

And as he listened Sir Arthur wondered which love was the stronger in her heart—the love of Lancewood, or the love of her child.

CHAPTER XXII.

The ending of a human life is but as the falling of a leaf from a tree. Sir Arthur Neslie was dead; and when those who had cared most for him summed up his life, there was but little to record about it. He had lived and loved—had made mistakes, and had despaired of rectifying them. The noblest trait in his character had been his love for the fair, noble wife whom he had lost years before; his character had seemed to deteriorate after her death. Now he too was placed in the family vault where the Neslies of Lancewood slept. The day of his funeral was one not soon forgotten at the Abbey. There was no sunshine, but a cold, drizzling rain. The world looked gray and disconsolate, there was not even a gleam of blue in the sky.

"Such a day to be buried on!" the servants said, as though the dead man could note the darkness of the sky and the absence of the sun.

The Abbey was cheerless within and without. There was no sound outside save that of the steady downfalling rain beating on the ground. Inside all was gloom. The blinds were drawn; the servants, dressed in deepest mourning, moved about noiselessly; there was the muffled step of the mourners; there were the depressing —almost terrible — paraphernalia that serve merely to add to the bitterness of death.

There were two who mourned the dead man; one was Vivien, the other Gerald Dorman. Lady Neslie did all that decorum could expect; she shut herself into her own room, where she was supposed to be undergoing paroxyms of grief, but where, in reality, she amused herself by reading a French novel. She professed herself too much overcome even to see any one. But she was able to study the effect of her mourning. "It became her"—and she clasped her hands in devout thankfulness.

"I was so afraid, Marie," she said to her maid, "that I should look horrible in black."

Master Oswald, in his nursery, passed the morning in a violent struggle with his two nurses, stoutly refusing to put on the black dress provided for him—"it was ugly, and he hated it"—which mutiny, on being reported to "miladi," caused her to smile and say—

"The dear child has so much sense; black is very unpleasant. But remember he is Sir Oswald now, and he must do as he likes."

The long black procession moved silently through the park, the rain falling on the waving plumes. So the late master of Lancewood passed from the home where his feet should never tread more while the daughter who had loved him as she had loved no one else lay weeping in her darkened chamber—weeping as though her grief could never grow less. She thought of what Lord St. Just had said about time. Would time ever bring healing to her? Would her terrible heartache ever cease? Would her awful sense of desolation ever depart?

Lady Neslie longed for the hour when the blinds should be drawn up. She had never left her room—no creature living had a greater dread of death and everything belonging to it than his gay-hearted lady. She paid no visits to the darkened room where lay the man who had loved her; she never saw him after he was dead; and the time seemed long to her while the house was all in gloom. She sat in her own room with her maid while Sir Arthur was buried and she was restless with excitement. A widow's cap lay on the toilet table—not the somber head-dress that sorrowing wives usually wear, but a pretty coquettish cap. "Miladi" took it in her hands.

"I shall not mind this so much," she said. "You have really made it very cleverly, Marie; it will not hide my hair."

She laid it on the glossy brown coils of hair, and viewed herself with great satisfaction.

It is positively becoming," she said "Marie, you are a perfect treasure. Hark! That tiresome child is screaming still. He must have a black suit on—for a time at least. We have to go to the library, Mr. Dorman says, to hear the will read."

"I only hope he may behave himself, but I do not think he will," observed the maid. She had not much heart herself, but "miladi's" total want of it disgusted her.

Lady Neslie walked restlessly to the window. She drew up the blind and looked out on the cold, cheerless scene.

"What a day!" she said. "The very earth and sky are full of funeral gloom. Ah, this foggy, miserable England, it has nothing to recommend it but its money!"

"England has been a good foster-mother to you, 'miladi,'" remarked Marie.

"I do not deny that, but look at the mist, the rain, the drizzle, the leaden sky—such a day for a funeral! If ever I am buried, I hope it may be when the sun shines."

"If ever!" repeated the maid. "You will have to die, 'miladi,' just as well as the rest of the world."

"That will not be for many years yet," she said, laughingly. "Now, Marie, I am going to enjoy my life. I did not care much about Sir Arthur, you know; he was all very well as regarding worldly advancement — I knew that I should never do better than in marrying him."

To be Continued

BOERS USING CHINESE TACTICS.

Masked positions so greatly adopted by the Boers were utilized by the Chinese against British forces, notably the Taku Forts.

MECCA'S HOLY CARPET.

Mohammed's Tomb Gets a New One of Silk Every Year.

Each year there is a new rug or silken carpet made in Cairo and carried in solemn pomp to Mecca and carefully hung over the sacred Caaba, above Mohammed's tomb.

There are two processions. The first carries the carpet from the citadel to the Saidna Husein mosque, where it is sewed together and lined and made ready for the pilgrims. This procession takes place on April 6, and the khedive, the ministers, high officials and notables all take part in the ceremony.

The train which conveys the holy carpet and its escort to Suez leaves on May 16, and usually presents a very gay appearance.

At Suez the carpet and its guard of honor are conveyed on board the pilgrim ship along with a fearful rush of ragtag and bobtail, who have no respect for government regulation concerning the Egyptian pilgrims.

In addition to the devout pilgrims, camels and horses there are always one or more beggars or buffoons, who accompany the caravan, and a man or woman to take care of the oats which are carried all the way there and back again.

The mahmal is a curious feature of the pilgrim train and perhaps the most striking. It is carried, like the ark of the covenant, at the head of the procession. It looks not unlike the elephant howdah, in spite of its pyramid at top. Its framework is square and its covering black brocade richly worked with inscriptions. The sultan's thumb mark and a view of the Caaba are embroidered on the front.

The mahmal is considered a sacred object by the faithful, who jostle the crowd in their effort to touch it with their hands. Women let down their shawls and head veils from the latticed windows in order that they may receive a blessing from contact with it.

Directly behind the mahmal there always rides a half naked sheik, who rolls his head from side to side incessantly.—Boston Globe.

THE MAN EATING LION.

He Uses Cunning and Takes No Unnecessary Chances.

When lions become man eaters, these inert and treacherous brutes take no unnecessary trouble to catch men, and while human beings are plentiful none of them undertakes perilous enterprises or proceeds on any haphazard expeditions. They know what to do and where to go in order that prey may be procured with the least amount of risk or exertion. Such a lion is well aware of who tills this cornfield or that mealie patch. He has informed himself of how many men accompany the village herds, where any outlying camps are situated and how they are guarded. There is no route by which travelers proceed or traffic is carried on that such animals have not studied with reference to the facilities for attack they afford and their own bodily powers. If otherwise good strategic positions present natural difficulties, the lion not only considers how these can be overcome, but perhaps practices his part beforehand. At all events, he has been watched while engaged in exercises that can only be explained in this way.

So puny a creature as man is, when unprovided with effective implements for offense, stands little chance against such a foe—an assailant having 40 times his own strength, backed by marvelous activity and an intense passion for carnage. Under these circumstances savages can only shut themselves up or assault their enemy in large masses. On the other hand, those precautions taken by a murderous lion might not seem to comport with that bold and often reckless temper attributed to this species. But such a discrepancy has no real existence. It only appears when a judgment is made without taking all the facts into consideration. This animal's intelligence, developed in man eaters to its highest point, together with an organic stealthiness of nature and proclivity toward unexpected attacks and stratagems, fully accounts for everything a lion does in the way of guarding against failure.—Dr. Porter in Outing.

The Joke on the Jockey.

A well known jockey relates with relish the following little story, though the laugh is decidedly against him. A few years ago he was engaged to ride the favorite in an important race. On the way to the post he found himself cantering alongside a rank outsider, the mount of a stable boy who had only just commenced riding.

"You'll have to be careful with that brute, B.," he remarked. "I've ridden him before, and you'll never be able to hold him."

B. thanked the crack for the hint and said that he would "do his best."

Half way through the race the outsider and another were in front, with the favorite close behind. Fancying that the others were in difficulties, the rider of the favorite shouted:

"Pull out, B——, and let me through! I've got the race in hand."

The crack was mistaken, however. Looking back, the stable boy replied, with a grin:

"I would, but I can't hold him!"

With which the novice let his horse have his head and shot away, the easiest of winners, to the chagrin of the crack, who finished second.

PEN AND CHISEL.

Marie Corelli's real name is Eva Mary Mackay. She is the daughter of the late Charles Mackay, LL. D.

George Meredith has produced little more than an average of one book in every two years of his writing life.

It is profitable to be a fad, and Bessie Potter, the sculptor, became that in Chicago, where every other woman of wealth had a bust of herself made by the young sculptor. "Sketchy little statuettes" they are called.

Rudyard Kipling once sat in a London club listening to a discussion concerning the existence of God. He said nothing until toward the last and then, with a vehement gesture, said, "I know that there is somebody somewhere who gives us our licks." "Lick" is a colloquialism meaning punishment.

How Rooms Are Rented In Mexico.

Strangers sometimes mildly wonder what newspapers or sheets of blank paper are tied on the windows or balconies of certain houses for. A sheet of paper thus arranged is a sign meaning that there are rooms to rent in the house on which it is displayed and is just as significant in its import as three golden balls over a pawnbroker's shop are in other countries.—Mexican Herald.

The Dear Child.

"What are you after, my dear?" said a grandmother to a little boy who was sliding along a room and casting furtive glances at a gentleman who was paying a visit.

"I am trying, grandma, to steal papa's hat out of the room without letting the gentleman see it. He wants him to think he's out."

Marriage Is a Serious Thing.

An Atchison mother's boy married recently, and his wife made him shave off his mustache before she would make him any soup, of which he was very fond. When he lived at home, he got his whiskers in the soup every day, and his mother took it as a compliment to her cooking.

The Method.

"Here's a case of a man who went to law in order to get the girl he loved away from her parents."

"Took out a writ of attachment, I suppose."

There are annually killed in Africa a minimum of 65,000 elephants, yielding the production of a quantity of raw ivory, the selling price of which is $4,200,000.

As early as the year 47 B. C. the great Alexandrian library contained over 40,000 valuable books.