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Filian's Promise,

DRAMA in THREE ACTS,

— BY —

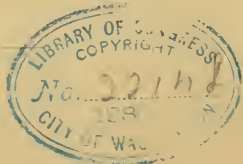
MRS. PAUL BREMOND.

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LILIAN'S PROMISE.

—BY—
MRS. PAUL BREMOND.

The Scene is laid in England at Rockmount Castle.



Houston, Tex

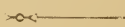
1880

LILIAN'S PROMISE.

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Dramatis Personae.

Lord Alcott, (a widower), - - - - Aged 60 years.
Hon. Gaston Alcott, (his son), - - " 26 "
Sir Arthur Thornbull, young man visiting the
Castle.
Lord Ernest Belgrade, young man visiting the
Castle.
Florence Alcott, niece to Lord Alcott, aged 22 years.
Lilian Alcott, " " " " " 18 "
Mr. Belton, the butler, - - - - " 50 "
Pierre, (French), footman, - - - " 25 "
Lottie, ladies' waiting maid, - - - " 20 "
Mrs. Marsten, a fisherman's widow, " 48 "
Tony Marsten, Mrs. Marsten's son, " 21 "
Tenants, Farmers, etc.



ACT. 1st.

Scene 1st.—A handsomely furnished parlor. Windows opening upon a terrace. Steps descending to a garden. The doors thrown open. When the curtain rises Belton and Lottie are on the stage. Lottie, dust brush in hand dusting the pictures on the walls and arranging the furniture, while Belton pompously superintends the work, and pretends to put the pictures straight, after Lottie has arranged them.

LOTTIE—(coming to the front and looking scornfully at Belton), I think, Mr. Belton, you may leave this room to me. I am quite capable, I should judge, of arranging it properly without your aid. There must be plenty to do in the butler's pantry, and my lord attaches a good deal more importance to the service of the table than to the arrangement of the furniture.

BELTON.—Never you fear, my pretty Lottie, no part of my service shall be neglected. I would not, for a sovereign, see a frown on my master's face to-day, the happiest day we've known for many years. But you were here, Miss Lottie, and you are aware of the attraction—. Directly, I shall go to the cellar to select the choicest wines, in which to drink the health of the young gentleman. The bottles are famously covered with cobwebs, I assure you, but who thinks of trouble on such an occasion as this?

LOTTIE.—(drawing near to Belton), do tell me all about it, Mr. Belton. Why is Lord Alcott so rejoiced at the return of his son?

BELTON.—Have you not heard the story? Well! What will you give me if I repeat it to you? I shall certainly expect to be paid for the trouble.

LOTTIE.—Oh! go on Mr. Belton, and do your talking, and we will see about the pay afterwards.

LILIAN'S PROMISE.

BELTON.—Well, here is the story then! It is now almost eight years since Master Gaston left the Castle. He was then, (*counting on his fingers,*) let me see, yes! about eighteen years of age. He went away to foreign parts, his parents knew not where. He was their only child, and his fond mother sickened, and pined away, until she fell into a decline and died.

LOTTIE.—This must have been a sad blow, indeed, to our lord.

BELTON.—Ah, yes! He nearly lost his reason. Miss Florence, who was brought to the Castle, a mere infant, and was tenderly reared by her aunt, did all she could to cheer him. But it was not until the arrival of Miss Lilian, about three years ago, that he appeared once more to feel an interest in what was going on around him.

LOTTIE.—No wonder. Miss Lilian is such a sweet, lovable creature!

BELTON.—I accompanied my master when he brought home his beautiful bride, such a happy, joyous lady she was—just like Miss Lilian. The old Castle was never gloomy in those days. Miss Lilian resembles her aunt in more ways than one, and I think that is the reason master loves her so dearly; he can scarcely bear her out of his sight.

LOTTIE.—Oh, yes! 'tis plain that she is his favorite, and that accounts for the jealousy of Miss Florence.

BELTON.—Just so! During the first few years of Master Gaston's absence, he wrote letters home, but far apart; sometimes there would be months between them. But since milady's death, no tidings of him had reached us, and we had all given him up for dead. And now, when least expected, comes the glorious news that he is returning to the Castle, and will be here almost as soon as his letter.

LOTTIE.—He had doubtless received the news of his mother's death, and in his sorrow, did not write again. But have I not heard it said that he was betrothed to his cousin, Miss Florence, when they were both mere children?

BELTON.—Yes, indeed! it was by my lady's wish that they should be united as soon as Mr. Gaston came of age.

Lottie.—(*jumping and striking her hands together*), Oh, I am so glad! Then there will be a wedding in the family, and we shall have some fun, after all these gloomy days.

Belton.—I should not be surprised. But now I have told you all; so pay me my fee, and let me go about my business. (*he tries to kiss her, but she pulls away from him.*)

Lottie.—Your fee! Mr. Belton; indeed I don't understand you.

Belton.—Yes you do. You knew very well that I should exact it after satisfying your curiosity in the way I have. So come now, don't be prudish; give me a kiss, that's a good girl, and let's away to work; there's lots to be done to-day, and master, you know, has no patience for idleness or gossip. Well! the kiss! (*he tries again to catch her in his arms; she dodges him.*)

Lottie.—Thank goodness; idleness and gossip are no failings of mine, oh no! But why don't you go? Don't let me detain you, pray!

Belton.—I go; but not until you pay the fee. (*in a sentimental tone*) It is so seldom that I get a chance to speak to you, nowadays, that I cannot tear myself away, and when I see you not, the sun has ceased to shine.

Lottie.—(*laughing heartily*) Ha! ha! ha! why you are becoming sentimental, Mr. Belton; ha! ha! ha! oh, fie! you have been listening at the door again. Whenever you launch one of those fine phrases, I know you have been behind the portiere listening to the pretty speeches made to our young ladies by their beaux, and I don't like anything at second hand, unless it is—in the shape of a Paris bonnet or a nice silk dress. (*during this phrase, Pierre appears at the center parlor door and advances on tiptoe, with a gliding step, and stops to listen, a look of annoyance depicted on his countenance.. He shakes his fists towards Belton, his finger at Lottie.*)

Belton.---(somewhat disconcerted) Well! again I say, don't be so prudish, and perhaps I may some day be able to give you Paris bonnets and a pretty silk dress to suit your neat, trim figure, when you will consent to be called Mrs. Belton. (he tries again to kiss her; Pierre suddenly rushes forward, steps in between them, straightens himself up to his full height, and looks fiercely first at the one then at the other. Lottie and Belton both jump aside startled; Lottie gives a scream.)

Belton.---(rapidly, aside) That cursed Frenchman again! will he never leave me in peace! to be interrupted at such a moment too!

Pierre.---[sarcastically] Mrs. Belton! en verite! you think that young, pretty mamselle go marry you! She wants young man like me; she wants handsome man like me; she no wants ole man like you. You no dance, you no sing, you no like fun, you walk this way, [imitating Belton's heavy tread] I walk this way, [tripping and dancing about the stage.] You big, heavy Hinglishman! me light, lively Frenchman. You no know how make love to pretty mamselle; me talk sweet and pretty to them; n'est ce pas, mamselle Lottie? [Lottie is looking at him laughing immoderately; he shakes his finger at her] Ah! you mechante Coquette! [he paces the stage with angry gestures, aside] Madam Belton, en verite! the ole fool! I teach him talk that way to mamselle. [during this phrase, Belton has looked at Pierre contemptuously, his hands in his pockets; he now shrugs his shoulders, and goes over towards Lottie who is still laughing.]

Belton.---Miss Lottie, we will resume this conversation on some other occasion, when that fellow will be out of the way, if such a chance be possible, for he is like your very shadow; impossible to be alone with you one moment, without his thrusting his unwelcome presence between us, and it is all your own fault, for you ever encourage his silly attentions.

Pierre.---[listening all the while] Mamselle Lottie will no see you alone, monsieur; will no like you, monsieur! she like me! she marry me! me take her to Paris; me buy her pretty things myself. You no

speak love to her no more, or me fight you; me Frenchman; me kill you! [*he puts himself in a fighting posture.*]

Lottie---[*frightened, springs between them*] Oh, peace! be quiet, pray. I hear master's voice; he is coming this way, and what would he say if he caught you both quarreling here in the parlor? Monsieur Pierre, I will never speak to you again, if you are so unruly and quarrelsome.

Pierre---[*with an entreating gesture to Lottie*] Oh! mamselle, you no mean that; you no be so cruel! I be quiet as *one mice*.

Pierre shakes his fist behind Lottie's back at Belton, who again shrugs his shoulders contemptuously. Lottie laughingly gives her hand to Pierre, who kisses it gallantly, then lookstriumphantly at Belton who makes a movement forward angrily. Lottie withdraws her hand, and goes toward Belton coquettishly.

Lottie---Mr. Belton, I will see you again; I will, meantime, take your proposition into consideration.

At which Pierre bristles up again and is ready to exclaim.

Lottie---Silence! here comes Lord Alcott and Miss Florence.

She goes away, left side, Belton and Pierre both following her; Belton with his usual heavy step; Pierre skipping and sliding.

Belton---(as he goes) That fellow must surely have been a dancing master to judge by the elasticity of his limbs.

Exeunt---Lottie, Pierre and Belton.

Enter Lord Alcott and Florence.

Lord Al.--- Yes, dear Florence, this great, this unexpected news quite unmans me. While counting the weary, sleepless hours of the night, I have read and reread these precious lines, scarcely daring to grasp this long lost hope, lest it should be again wrested from me forever.

Florence---Oh, dear uncle, do not allow a doubt to chill our happiness to-day. Such words can not

deceive. Gaston is returning to us, his heart filled with remorse for his past neglect, with sweet promises of affection and devotion for the future. [*pointing towards the letter*] See how nobly he expresses his regrets, how he assures us he has never betrayed the trusts we placed in him.

Lord Al.---You are right, my child, I should be all in joy, in smiles, and not allow my thoughts to dwell on the sad memories of the past, which can only serve to cloud the brightness of this day. But while life endures, I can never forget how his dear mother; my soul's loved companion, drooped and died of a broken heart for the loss of her only son, in whom all our hopes were centered, leaving me alone in my misery.

Florence.---[*reproachfully*] "Alone," dear uncle; was your little Florry nothing?

Lord Al.---(*taking her hand*) Forgive me, dear child, your affection has ever been to me a sweet solace, but this letter has so forcibly recalled all those bitter reminiscences of bygone days, that all else, for the moment, was drowned in the terrible vortex. But I must indeed try to shake off these harrowing recollections; for all in the Castle must wear a festive aspect, to-day, to hail the return of my wayward boy.

Florence.---Thank you, dear uncle; I expected nothing less of your kind, forgiving nature. I knew you could not retain an angry thought against that beloved son, who returns to you of his own free will. We must combine to make Gaston feel that *home* is the dearest, sweetest spot on earth.

Lord Al.---This task devolves chiefly on you, my child. Does not Gaston also declare, in his letter, that he comes to claim the promised bride of his youth, the charming girl of fourteen summers whom he left behind, his darling Florry, who has ever clung to him with a fidelity beyond her years. Surely the love of a life-time can alone requite such entire self abnegation.

Florence.---My patient waiting was the result of my inalienable faith. I never, for a moment, doubted

my Gaston's truth; my heart assured me that he would return.

Lord Al.---But you look pale this morning, Florence, and methinks your features wear a cast of sadness unusual to them. How is that? You, who chide my gloomy looks, should surely dress your own in gladness; the happiness of the heart within should reflect itself upon your countenance. Does anything trouble you?

Flo.---Indeed, I know not. I am happy, supremely happy, when I think of the great joy which is in reserve for us; but an anxiety I can not analyze gnaws at my heart, and sad forebodings mingle, in spite of all my efforts to discard them, with my most pleasurable emotions. I dread—I know not what. But fear not, uncle; the sight of Gaston, the joy of our reunion, will dispel all gloom.

A lively song is heard from the garden; Florence and Lord Alcott listen.

Song—Lilian—in the garden.

They name me airy, fairy Lilian;
 The birds, they answer to my call;
 The flowers give forth their sweetest perfume,
 To greet their queen, queen over all.
 { Yes! my name is fairy Lilian,
 { Queen of nature, queen of all— [bis]

L. Al.—(with enthusiasm) there she is, my darling, with her sweet, merry song, the bright, happy creature! I was wondering where she was this beautiful morning.

Flo.—(aside) Lilian! always Lilian! his darling!

L. Al.—Hark! listen! she sings again.

2nd verse—song—Lilian—still in the garden.

They name me airy, flitting Lilian,
 The sunbeams dance around my feet;
 All nature's robed in joy, in gladness,
 My ev'ry fondest wish to meet.
 { Yes! my name is flitting Lilian,
 { All nature comes my wish to meet! (bis)

L. Al.---Come, Florry, be joyous and free from care like your cousin; strive to cultivate her buoyant

spirit, not only for the sake of those who love and surround you, but for your own. Leave carking care to wrinkled age; it ill becomes the youthful brow.

Flo.---You would wish me, in all respects, to resemble Lilian; she is quite your *paragon*.

L. Al.---No more of this foolish jealousy, Florence; it is unworthy of your really generous, noble nature. It is the only fault that mars the loveliness of your character; you should strive to overcome it.

Flo.---If such be the case, you should not find it strange, uncle, for Lilian has ever stood in the way of my happiness since her arrival in our midst. She at once, without any effort on her part, ingratiated herself in your affections, assigning to me a place of secondary importance—to *me*, who until then had permitted no one to vie with me in those little attentions, by which I sought to lure you back to the domestic circle. (*L. Al. makes a sign of denial.*) You need not deny it, uncle, my heart assures me it is so, and the loving heart never deceives. And you are not the only one who feels the influence, the glamour of her child-like loveliness. See how our visitors crowd around her, laughing at her silly jests, following her from to flower to flower, as she trips lightly through the garden paths, as if she really were, as she sings, some “fairy queen” surrounded by her courtiers.

L. Al.---That is all true, darling child! The gladness and sweetness of her loving nature diffuse themselves on every object with which she comes in contact. She is like a bright sunbeam, bringing hope and gladness to all it shines upon. No more befitting title than that of “fairy queen” could be given her, as she says, in her own sweet song; I could find none more appropriate.

Flo.---You have taught me, uncle, to place intellect above all other advantages; the cultivation of the mind, you have said, formed one of our greatest attractions. In this respect, I who have studied under your own skillful guidance, feel myself vastly superior to this untutored child; yet, on every occasion,

she becomes the cynosure of all eyes, and her playful prattle attracts the attention of even the great and learned. Tell me, I pray you, wherein lies the charm?

L. Al.—[*taking her hand in his with tenderness*] I will tell you, my child; it lies in those very qualities I have ever advised you to cultivate; that entire forgetfulness of self, wherever the happiness of others is concerned; that joyousness which springs from a pure, loving heart; she knows no artifice, fears no guile, and in her confiding innocence is ever seeking to impart happiness to all around her. Jealousy could take no root in such a generous nature. But no more of this; here comes my little sunbeam. (*he draws Florence towards him, and kisses her brow.*) Be true to your own noble self, my child, and I shall then entertain no fears for your future happiness.

Flo.—I will strive, dear uncle, to obey you in this as in all things. (*she walks to the rear of the stage, left hand, and gazes from the window; Lilian enters singing gaily with flowers in a bosket, which she places on the table, then runs to her uncle and clasps her arms round his neck; he embraces her tenderly.*)

Lilian.—Good morning, dear, dear uncle; you look so very happy to-day that I can scarcely contain myself for joy. Oh! I am so glad our dear Cousin Gaston is so soon to be here, it affords you so much delight, and I so long to see him!

Flo.—(*with displeasure, aside*) She so longs to see him! her dear Cousin Gaston!

Lil.—But then you will no longer have so much room in your heart for your poor Lilian, who loves you so dearly, and if you love *him* more than you do *me*, I know *I* shall not like him.

L. Al.—Fear not, my darling, the old heart is still capacious enough to enshrine you both. None shall usurp the throne of my Fairy Queen, as all style you. But where has my pet hidden herself this morning? I missed her sweet welcome, without which, the sun's bright rays, the songs of the birds, all that is lovely in nature, seems incomplete.

Flo.—(*aside*) How he dotes on her!

Lil.—See, dear uncle, I have culled the choicest flowers to decorate the house as if we were awaiting the arrival of a prince. But he is more than a prince to us; is he not? and although I have never seen him, I feel that I shall love him *dearly* for your *dear* sake, my uncle.

Flo.—[*aside*] A still, prophetic voice already whispers to me that *she* will love him. And Gaston?

Lil.—(*taking up the bouquet from the table*) Look, dear uncle, at this bouquet; is it not lovely? I have ransacked the whole garden in search of these flowers, the *prettiest* I could find, to deck my Cousin Gaston's room with, for he surely loves flowers; who does not!

Flo.—(*springing forward with flashing eyes, as if to seize the bouquet*) Lilian! (*she meets her uncle's eye and reproving gesture, and suddenly stops*)

Lil.—[*turning to Florence*] Why, Florry, are you here? Pardon me; I had not noticed you, or I should have wished you *good morning* also. [*she approaches her*] But what is the matter, dear? Have I again unwittingly offended you? I am such a silly, thoughtless girl, always doing something I ought not. But Florry, on a day like this, you may well overlook my short-comings and blunders. What! tears in your eyes! Tell me, I entreat you, what distresses you; have *I* caused you pain? Uncle, pray tell me, what have I done?

L. Al.—Nothing, my child; you are, what you always are, my little innocent, joyous pet [*he passes over to Florence, saying in a low voice*] Control yourself, Florence, have you already forgotten my advice? Your foolish jealousy renders you most unreasonable. [*aloud*] Come, my children, I will leave you to your fanciful arrangements; for myself, I am too restless to remain within doors; I will walk down the avenue to meet my son, for it is right I should be the first to welcome him, as he places his foot on the land of his forefathers. (*he retires, making an imperious gesture to Florence and a loving one to Lilian.* *Exit*

Lord Alcott. Florence seats herself near the table, leaning her head upon her hand in a sorrowful attitude. Lilian observes her for a moment, then takes a low stool and seats herself at her knee, takes her hand and caresses it.)

Lilian.--(caressingly) Come, Florry, our uncle has gone, we are quite alone; look at me, darling, and tell me what it is that grieves you thus? [after a pause] Still silent? You know not, Florry, how you pain me. Oh! tell me at once, are you vexed with your silly Lilian?

Flo.--[looking around sadly at Lilian] No, dear, not vexed; anger has no part in my emotions.

Lil.--What is it, then? Be frank, and tell me all. Do not think because I am such a giddy, thoughtless girl, that I am incapable of comprehending you. I can be very serious and sensible, at times, I assure you; just give me a trial and see if I am not worthy of your confidence.

FLO.--[with sudden impulse] Well, if you *will* know the cause of my uneasiness, I will tell you: Lilian, I am jealous of you!

LIL.--[laughing heartily] Jealous of *me*, of *me*! Why, Florry, how perfectly ridiculous! Is this all that troubles you?

FLO.--I thought you could be so "very serious and sensible at times," and it is thus you receive my first expressions of confidence, with your usual levity and ill timed hilarity; however, it is no more than I anticipated.

LIL.--You are right. Pardon me, Florence, and I will be as serious as you could desire. But the idea struck me as so preposterous; that you, beautiful, talented, accomplished as you are, could for an instant be jealous of such an insignificant little body as myself.

FLO.--Insignificant, Lilian, as you are pleased to style yourself, are you not aware that there is a subtle charm about *you* which I possess not; *you*, the "Fairy Queen," as they all call you, and which renders you so irresistible to those you seek to please, as indeed, to all others?

LIL.—This is mere folly and exaggeration, a phantom of your imagination. Florence, I seek to please no one besides our dear uncle, for I do love *him* so dearly! Surely you are not jealous of *his* affection, you, who are so soon to be united to the man you love?

FLO.—I have been, but let it rest; that weakness is past. I am only too glad, now, that he will have your love and devotion to cheer his path through life when I am gone. You will then supply my place, and I shall not be missed. But if you desire to see me truly happy and cheerful, you must make me a promise, Lilian.

LIL.—A promise, dear? Why, certainly, anything that can make *you* cheerful and happy, Florry. You could ask me no promise that I could not grant; so, unheard, I pledge my word to comply with whatever you may demand of me.

FLO.—The promise, then, that I expect of you, is, that, fairy-like, you will not spread your wiles around our Cousin Gaston to lure him to your feet, as you have, unconsciously, I know, charmed and subdued so many others. I can endure no rivalry in his case, for I have loved him, it seems to me, all my life-time. He is my *very own*; I want *him*, at last, all to myself. You are welcome to all other homage; but my Gaston's homage can not be shared.

LIL.—What a strange promise, Florence, and how unnecessary, it appears to me, that you should exact it of me! But be it as you wish. I have already pledged my word to do all that you desire of me. Would you have me avoid my Cousin Gaston, be cold and distant to him, and make myself as stupid and uninteresting to him as possible? Say, is this the part you would have me perform?

FLO.—Yes, my darling Lilian, (*caressing her*) and while I acknowledge the generosity of your guileless nature, I blush at the exacting weakness that demands such a sacrifice.

LIL.—It is no sacrifice, although it will perhaps seem strange to me to curb my hitherto unfettered

will, to dissemble my most natural affection towards one who is so near to us. But say no more. I am glad your confidence and affection are restored to me. I will strive never to forfeit them; I have been so pained by your displeasure.

FLO.—your probation shall not be long; for our uncle desires the wedding to take place as soon as possible, in a month's time, I believe he said, so that his son may at once have some fixed purpose to attach him to the land of his inheritance, and thus wean him from those roving propensities which have caused his parents so much uneasiness.

LIL.—Again you have my promise, Florence; let your mind be at ease. And to begin the part I am to play, take this bouquet, Florry; you will be better pleased to decorate our Cousin Gaston's room with your own loving hands. But first, let me place one or two of the sweetest flowers in your beautiful hair, for you must look your best to-day, to charm and welcome your betrothed. (*she places some flowers in Florence's hair*).

FLO.—(*pointing to the clock*) See! the hour advances. My beloved will soon be here. Let us hie to our rooms, dear, and prepare ourselves to meet him. [*playfully*] Come, let's away! [*she encircles Lilian's waist; Lilian returns the caress; they walk towards the right side door; as they are about to disappear, Pierre enters with two cards on a silver salver; Florence returning, takes the cards.*]

FLO.—Sir Arthur Thornbull and Sir Ernest Belgrade?

Pierre.—Yes, mamselle; they say they wish see the ladies on very special business this morning.

FLO.—Ah! show them up. [*Exit Pierre.*]

LIL.—(*also returning to the front*) How tiresome! I feel in no mood to rattle off nonsense and talk *horsy* with Lord Ernest Belgrade. I know I shall be as stupid as an owl. But we will hurry them off. I wonder what brings them here so early?

FLO.—Hush! here they are.

Enter Sir Arthur Thornbull and Lord Ernest,

(center), they bow, and wish the ladies good morning; Sir Arthur goes toward Florence, Lord Ernest towards Lilian.)

Sir Ar.—We have to apologize for this early call, but the excitement of the chase led us in the direction of your domain, and, like the knights-errant of old, we could not resist the temptation of pausing a moment to pay our homage to the divinities within.

L. Er.—(in a drawing tone) Yes! you know, is not this the enchanted Castle of which we read so much in our childhood, inhabited by beautiful fairies, who, with their wiles and fascinations, entice the unwary traveler to their festive halls, then turn them into stone if the luckless wight have the misfortune to offend. [in a low voice] I declare, Miss Lilian, I sometimes feel as if that fate were reserved to myself, when so irresistibly attracted by the magic of your charms, then chilled and almost petrified by your coldness and indifference.

Lil.—(laughing) Oh! then beware, my lord, how you displease me, lest I be tempted to transmute you into a beautiful statue to adorn our parterre, you

L. Er.—Oh, you fairy! 'tis ever thus you jeer and flout me, though you know so well that I have laid both heart and hand at your dear little feet.

Sir Ar.—But apart from the enjoyment we ever derive from a visit to Rockmount Castle, we had another motive for this morning's call. There is to be a meet at Elwood Park to-morrow, and Lord and Lady Elwood requested us to solicit your attendance with Lord Alcott.

L. Er.—(with enthusiasm) You must not fail to be present; there will be "high jinks," I assure you. There will be a magnificent collation for the guests, you know, and a hunting breakfast for the tenantry. The hounds are in splendid condition, and the whole thing will go off in fine style, you know.

Flo.—You forget that I am an unskillful rider, and far too timid for a huntress—quite unlike Lilian, who is never more at home than when in the saddle. But we can neither of us accept the invitation—

L. Er.—(*interrupting*) Don't refuse, I entreat you; the hunt will lose half its charm if Miss Lilian is not there. A lovely girl, with such a seat in the saddle, and such a light hand for a horse's mouth, is, to me, little less than a divinity; 'twas thus she enslaved my heart. Miss Lilian and her horse, with the eager hounds clustering around her, form the finest group, I ever beheld, in painting or in statuary.

Lil.—More than half the beauty of the picture belongs to my beautiful Lightfoot; was he not a magnificent Christmas present?

L. Er.—Yes, indeed! I believe there is nothing that your fond uncle can deny you; [*in a low voice*] I don't see how he could, Miss Lilian! [*aloud*] But you have no idea what fun it is to see Miss Elwood at the hunt; she is the most desperate plunger I ever met, since she has turned the corner of 30, she has given up waltzing, and goes in, heart and soul, for hunting; 'tis the finest thing you can imagine, to see her take a five barred gate as if it were the merest trifle.

Lil.—You need not speak of my skill after such daring exploits as those.

L. Er.—I had a splendid race with her last week. We went for it neck and neck, and dashed right through chesnut hollows, and rode up the steep approach to the house of the M. F. H., where the meet was to be held. There were several beautiful women present, who had come to see the hounds throw off. We had not long to wait, you know. The mellow horn rang out loud and clear, the cheery halloas caused every heart to leap, and every nerve to tingle with excitement. The whole field burst away in the direction the fox was leading us.

Lil.—How very exciting it must have been! how I wish I had been there! *(To be omitted)*

L. Er.—I was again at the side of Miss Elwood; on we went together. There was a stiff thicket ahead; I saw at once that 'twas an awkward leap, so I lost sight of my companion, and gave all my attention to working up my hunter, and cleared the hedge finely. When I found myself safely over, I looked back to

see what had become of the graceful amazon. By Jove! there she came, tearing along, and lifting her beautiful sorrel high in the air, went over like a bird. I joined her, and we were again neck and neck, and got in just in time for the death. She received, of course, you know, the brush as a trophy of her daring exploit, and was highly complimented on her plucky feat. By Jove! I could adore that woman, if she were ten years younger, and I had never met (*in a low voice*) you know who, Miss Lilian.

Lil.---(*with animation*) I should have enjoyed it beyond measure.

Sir Ar.---The weather promises to be favorable; I think we shall have a cloudy day and south wind. The scent will lie; you must not refuse to join the hunt.

Flo.---It is impossible! We are hourly expecting the arrival of our long absent cousin, Lord Alcott's only son. My uncle has gone to meet him; they will doubtless soon be here.

Sir Ar.---Your uncle's son! Why it is generally understood that he died abroad some years ago.

Flo.---Sir Arthur, I pray you give me your attention for a few moments; there is an explanation due to you, and must not be deferred. (*Sir Arthur and Florence are seated on one sofa, Lilian and Lord Ernest on the other; the two latter rise and walk toward the terrace.*)

LIL.---(*as she goes*) I am so sorry that I can not go to the hunt to-morrow; in a few days, we, too, will have "high jinks," I promise you, to celebrate the return of our cousin, and we shall expect you and Sir Arthur to be present on that occasion. (*they chat gaily and examine the flowers.*)

FLO.---Sir Arthur, I have never spoken to you of my Cousin Gaston, nor of my early childhood, nor of our solemn betrothal to each other when I was only 14 years of age, for I knew not whether he was still living, nor whether we should ever see him again. But he has written, his letter only precedes him a few hours, he will be home to-day, to ratify his promise, he says, and to claim me as his bride.

SIR AR.—And you, Florence, what are your intentions with regard to him whom you have not seen for so many years?

FLO.—There can be no hesitancy in my mind. I have loved him and waited for him during all these long years of absence and trial, and the joy of his return renews and strengthens my affection.

SIR AR.—(*springing up excitedly*) Oh! Florence, you can not mean this! Why have you never spoken to me on this subject before? You knew how passionately I loved you, how I have laid my life and fortune at your feet, and although I have never received from your lips the assurance that my homage was accepted, yet your whole demeanor was such as to warrant the hope that at some future day, I might call you mine. Take back your cruel words, Florence, they can not be true!

FLO.—(*also rising*) It distresses me to give you pain, Sir Arthur, but my lips have spoken only the truth.

SIR AR.—What, Florence! You the noble, the proud one, entrust your life, your happiness to such a man, a profligate who broke his mother's heart!

FLO.—[*with a deprecating movement and raising her head proudly*] Stop, Sir Arthur! I can not allow you to speak thus of the man whose name I am to bear. No one has the right to call him *profligate*, for none are acquainted with his actions since he left us.

SIR AR.—Pardon me, but you must listen to me for this once, though my words do cause you pain. I wish you to reflect well before taking this serious step; I wish you to weigh well in the balance the two conditions of life that are now open to your choice. I offer you a respected home, an affection that has known no change since first I learned to know and appreciate your worth. On the other side, a romantic infatuation of childhood to a cousin who attached so little importance to it, that, if I remember well, he abandoned his home, his parents, his standing in society, to gratify a selfish whim, a roving propensity. You know nothing of his pursuits

since he left you, nor of his disposition nor of his morals; he is an entire stranger to you; he may have changed completely from the youth you parted with. And it is for this man, Florence, that you are ready to sacrifice the sincere, loyal affection I offer you!

FLO.—Enough! Sir Arthur, I will no longer listen to such accusations against my cousin, the companion and lover of my youth. Were you to read the noble sentiments contained in his letter, you would not judge him so harshly; you would be convinced that my confidence is not misplaced.

SIR AR.—Time will prove, Florence, the value of my words. Under all circumstances, I shall ever be your steadfast friend, even as I am now your devoted lover. I will not resign you thus. (*Florence looks at him angrily*) I see I pain and anger you; I will say no more at present. But ere I take my leave, I will make this compact with you: I will give you *one* month, Florence, to know your own heart, to decide your choice between us. During that time, if you will permit me, I shall continue occasionally to visit the family circle, which has become so dear to me; I will not seek to see you alone, nor offer you a single expression of affection or of reproof. But at the end of the month, I will crave an interview with you, alone, as now. I will then renew my suit and solicit your hand. If I am again repulsed, I shall leave the land of my birth and seek in foreign climes the happiness I could neither find nor confer in England. Will you agree with this compact?

FLO.—Yes! I will! In one month from to-day.

SIR AR.—I thank you, Florence. Allow me to press your hand in token of forgiveness and friendship. (*Florence places her hand in his; he presses it to his lips, then turns toward the terrace from which Lilian and Lord Ernest are just returning. To Lord Ernest*) 'Tis time we should rejoin the hunt; we will have the honor of visiting the ladies this evening, with their permission.

FLO.—We will be most happy if you will do so. [*They bow. Exeunt Sir Arthur and Lord Ernest.*]

LIL.—Come, Florry, we have no time to spare; our uncle and cousin will soon be here. Come!

Exeunt Florence and Lilian. R

Enter Lord Alcott and his son Gaston Alcott.

L. AL.—Thrice welcome, my son, to Rockmount Castle, the home of your ancestors, the cradle of your infancy. [*pointing to the pictures on the walls*] Could these veterans of the past, whose glorious deeds have shed their lustre around our name, descend from their shadowy abodes, they would unite with me in welcoming to his home the last scion of a proud and spotless race.

GAS.—[*clasping his father's hand with affection*] Your kindness and generosity, my honored father, overwhelm me; it is more than I deserve! I, who for so many years have remained a voluntary exile from the paternal mansion! But where is my cousin, where is Florence? I am all impatience to embrace her.

L. AL.—I presume, woman-like, they are giving the last beautifying touches to their toilets. (*he rings the bell; enter Pierre.*) Tell Miss Florence and Miss Lilian that their presence is requested in the parlor. (*Exit Pierre.*)

GAS.—Miss Lilian, father! Pray who may she be? 'Tis the first time I have heard her name; or have I forgotten?

L. AL.—No, my son, you have never known this other cousin; she is the child of your Uncle Theodore, who married in the Indies, where he amassed a handsome fortune. Lilian became an orphan about three years ago, and on his death-bed, my brother bequeathed his daughter to my care, in words I shall never forget: "Take," he wrote, "this darling child to your heart; you will find her a pearl of inestimable worth; she will prove the solace, the joy of your declining years, a treasure to you as she has ever been to me." And indeed, she has, in every respect, realized the hopes her father inspired. Ah! here they come! No, 'tis only Florence. You need no introduction here.

Enter Florence; she eagerly approaches Gaston who advances toward her with both hands extended, in which she places both hers, looking at him proudly.

FLO.—Gaston! my cousin!

GAS.—Dear Florence!

L. AL.—Well, are you not going to embrace her, my son? At your age, I required no prompting, I assure you, to kiss *my* pretty cousins.

GAS.—If she will permit it. (*he embraces her*). It was difficult for me to recognize in this stately, beautiful young lady, the playmate of my boyhood, the indulgent companion of my youth. I scarcely dared take the liberty.

FLO.—Do you then find me so changed, my cousin? I should have recognized *you* in a crowd.

GAS.—No, dear Florence, not changed, but improved. Time has wrought no other change in you than to embellish what was already lovely. And dare I indulge the hope that the heart I considered *mine*, has known no greater change than those loved features that have remained so fondly pictured on the tablets of my memory?

FLO.—No, Gaston, my heart has known no change, no shadow of turning.

GAS.—And now, dear Florence, ere I claim the ratification of the promise that has been as a guiding star to me, ever pointing homeward, I wish to give both to you and my father an explanation of my past conduct, which must have seemed most heartless and unfilial during these long years of absence and supposed neglect. I wish to prove to you that I have never derogated from the principles of a gentleman! never for an instant forgotten the noble blood which flows in my veins! never brought dishonor on the name I bear!

L. AL.—Thank you, my son, for these assurances which relieve my heart of a heavy burden. Some day, you will give to Florence and myself full details of this painful past. But not now; our present joy must not be overshadowed by such reminiscences;

spare us the recital of all you have suffered, until *time* shall have made us realize more fully that our loved wanderer is indeed restored to us, never to leave us more.

FLO.—Yes! dear uncle, this day must be solely devoted to heart-felt thanksgiving and festive joy. (*Gaston takes her hand and presses it in his with affection.*)

L. AL.—But where is Lillian? She is not usually so long at *her* toilet. I will go myself in search of her. (*he goes toward the door. Enter Lillian.*)

LIL.—Were you looking for me, uncle?

L. AL.—(*placing her arm in his and leading her forward*) Yes, my darling! (*He leads her to Gaston and introduces her; Lillian looks up with a joyous expression and extends her hand to Gaston; but meeting the eye of Florence, lets fall her hand and only bows.*) Give your cousin the kiss of welcome, as Florence did; he is worthy of all our love and esteem.

LIL.—I doubt it not, my uncle; and my welcome is none the less sincere for not being ratified by a *kiss*. I am truly happy at your return, Cousin Gaston, and shall feel less strange towards you, when we become better acquainted.

GAS.—I hope that will be very soon, and that you will not then refuse me, as now, the sweet privilege my cousinship, I think, entitles me to. (*aside*) My father says truly, she is a charming creature. But why did she refuse to kiss me? Surely coldness or disdain could not bask beneath such smiles, nor can such a sweet face belie the loveliness of the heart!

L. AL.—[*watching Lillian. Aside:*] What is the matter with the child! I never knew her so constrained and reserved before. I must find out what it means. [*to Lillian*] What ails my little girl? She seems unlike herself today.

Lil.—Nothing ails me, uncle; I rejoice in every one's happiness.

L. AL.—You are so happy it makes you silent and sad, eh? Is that it? Hem! rather unnatural for you

to show your joy in this way. [*aside*] I'll engage that Florence is at the bottom of this; I will watch her closely.

GAS.--I am impatient to renew acquaintance with the dear old grounds and venerable trees so closely identified with fond memories of my childhood. Will not my cousins accompany me in my ramble through the woods?

Flo.--[*approaches Gaston to take his proffered arm*] I shall be delighted to accompany you.

Gas.--And you, Cousin Lilian, will you not also join us?

Lil.--[*clinging to her uncle*] No, thank you; I will remain with my uncle. He has had a long walk this morning, and, doubtless, feels fatigued; besides, he beat me unmercifully at chess last evening, and now I claim my revenge.

Gaston bows. Exit Gaston and Florence.

Lil.--[*running to get the chess-board, while her uncle seats himself on the sofa; she brings a low stool and places the board on her uncle's lap and her own*] Come, uncle, shall we have our game?

L. Al.--Whatever gives you pleasure, child.

Lil.--[*arranging the pieces on the board*] Now do your best, uncle; give all your attention to the game. I feel I am going to checkmate you!

Curtain falls.

ACT 2nd.

Scene 1st.—A garden; the trees illuminated with lanterns; groups of men and women; tenantry of the Castle, in holiday dress, in the background, Belton is running about giving orders; Lottie in the foreground.

LOT.—(*laughing*) Well, to be sure! these are fine doings, indeed, for this old castle that has known no sounds of mirth all these years that I have lived here. It seems to be waking up in good earnest. I suppose we shall have more “high jinks,” as Lord Ernest says, when the wedding comes off.

BEL.—(*coming forward*) Well, Miss Lottie, is this scene gay enough to please you?

LOT.—Heigh ho! how nice it is, to be sure, to be rich and young and admired and happy; to be flattered by every body, as if you were more than the common herd. I wonder if my turn will ever come? Life has made a sad mistake in my case.

BEL.—What! complaining of your hard lot, as usual? never satisfied? You had better accept my offer, Lottie, and I will do all I can to please you.

LOT.—I thank you, Mr. Belton, but my desires soar a little higher than any position you can offer.

BEL.—Oh, yes! a man of my inches is too low in your estimation. You must have, forsooth, a six-footer. I suppose Pierre is your pattern.

LOT.—Law! Mr. Belton, you talk like a goose; that comes of your jealousy; apart from that, you are quite a sensible, reasonable man.

BEL.—Well, you have not told me what you think of this *impromptu festival*, as they style it in the parlor. I take no little pride to myself for its success; for the arrangements are all of my contriving. The family seem too much absorbed in other thoughts to pay attention to the preparations. They gave me

no orders, except to spare no expense and do all I could to make everybody happy.

LOT.—You certainly deserve great praise; for your *fete* promises to be superb. See! my feet are dancing already; I can not keep them still. The music sounds so lovely in these woods. I can scarcely contain my impatience.

Pierre makes his appearance from the right side of the stage, coming from the garden, advancing, as usual, stealthily on tiptoe, listening, and watching Belton and Lottie

BEL.—You shall dance to your heart's content, this night, Miss Lottie.

PIERRE.—[*aside*] Oui! she dance beaucoup, but with me! with me!

BEL.—[*continuing*] I expect to be your partner for at least half a dozen of the round dances. I leave the waltzes to your favored admirer, Monsieur Pierre; dancing comes naturally to him, as to all Frenchmen, like spelling and reading, as Dogberry says.

PIERRE.—(*still unseen, aside*) Monsieur Dogberry he say true, he know. Me waltz with mamselle! oh, me like that. Monsieur Belton, he good man to-night.

LOT.—(*laughing*) Are you really going to dance, Mr. Belton? Well, rather than sit idle, I may grant you a dance or two, but I assure you my expectations rise far beyond either you or Mr. Pierre, this evening.

PIERRE.—(*with a start, aside*) Hem? vot she say?

LOT.—(*continuing*) As this thing has been gotten up so suddenly, there will probably not be many ladies present, so I shall stand a good chance of getting some of the gentlemen for partners.

PIERRE.—(*aside, with rage, shaking his finger at her*) Oh! the mechante coquette! when she Madame Pierre me teach her want to dance with the grand gentlemen!

BEL.—You silly girl! You had better take my advice, and keep in your own sphere. You remem-

ber my offer, do you not? (*on an ejaculation from Pierre, he turns round, and perceiving Pierre, makes a movement of disgust and anger*) That hateful Frenchman, again! I knew he could not be far off; he is forever dogging my steps, and some day, before long, I shall forget, I fear, my dignity and the respect I owe to my master, and pay that fellow back, once for all for his insolence and the constant annoyance he causes me. I shall show him then what "one hinglishman" can do, as he says. [*he puts himself in a boxing attitude*] Confound the rascal! I would like to hold him a few paces in front of me, in the woods somewhere, away from the light of your eyes, Miss Lottie, I would make him pass a few uneasy moments, I assure you. The arrogant, conceited clown!

PIERRE.—[*coming forward to the side of Belton*] Me ready to fight when you ready, monsieur. But Frenchmen no fight that way: [*imitating Belton's boxing attitude*] Frenchman fight with pistoles, with one sword, for their ladylove. [*He looks sweetly on Lottie; Belton shrugs his shoulders contemptuously, with a sneer on his lips.*]

PIERRE.—(*continuing*), Come, mamselle; come, avec moi, me make you much pleasure this evening. Me make you dance all you want. That ole man can talk, but he can't dance. No, no! me show you what dance is!

Bel.—(*scornfully; half laughing, aside*) I begin to think that fellow is not even worth my anger. A real bag of wind, like so many of his countrymen. I am sorry for Lottie, however; that she listens so complacently to his nonsense. But she will soon become tired of him and his boasting, and will then weigh the difference between this French idiot and myself. (*turning to Lottie*) Miss Lottie, do not forget our dances. But here come our gentlefolks; I hear their voices.

Pierre holds out his arm to Lottie, who accepts it, and he skips away lightly with her to the rear of the stage. Belton looks after them with a scornful expression; then turning to the musicians:

Bel.—Now, my boys, attention! the master comes! Music, strike up! Mind you do your best; I expect you to display your greatest talent on this grand and solemn occasion. Go on, now!

The band plays a march; Belton walks pompously to the rear, and shows himself very efficient in keeping the tenants back, to make room for the company arriving, and in giving directions in every quarter. Tony Marsten is in a prominent position in front of the men; the women are ranged on the opposite side. Enter, from left side, Lord Alcott with Lilian, Gaston with Florence. Belton makes a sign to Tony, and shouts are heard of "Hurrah! hurrah! Welcome home to our young lord! Long life and happiness to him!" Gaston waves his hand in token of thanks: Belton makes a sign to cease the shouts and music while Gaston speaks.

Gas.—Thanks, my friends, for these joyful demonstrations, which prove the goodness of your hearts and your fealty to your masters. 1—

Belton makes a sign; they again shout "Hear him! hear him! hurrah! hurrah!" Another sign from Belton to stop.

Gas.—I feel deeply touched by these evidences of your attachment, by your cordial welcome, and shall not forget it.

He bows to them, and they again shout: "Hurrah! hurrah!" Gaston beckons to Belton, who hastens to his side

Gas.—Belton, let a cask of ale and another of wine be dealt out to these good fellows whose throats must be dry with shouting. They will want to drink our health.

The crowd: "Yes! yes! hurrah! hurrah!"

Gas.—And now, let the dancing go on. We would not dampen the mirth of these joyous people by our presence.

On a new sign from Belton, dance music strikes up; the men engage their partners and stand as if

waiting before forming the quadrille. While this is going on, enter Lord Ernest and Sir Arthur who go forward and bow to Lord Alcott and the ladies; Lord Ernest remaining by Lilian's side.

GAS.—(turning round) What are the dancers waiting for? Why do they not commence?

Tony comes forward, somewhat awkwardly, pushed by the crowd; Belton seems annoyed by this unexpected episode, and stands watching him; Tony stands twirling his hat and bowing to the company.

TONY.—[embarrassed and stammering to Lord Alcott] Please your honor and the ladies present and the Honorable Mr. Gaston—I do not know—if—if I dare express—that is, if I dare take the liberty to express—to your lordship—

GAS.—[kindly] Speak, my good fellow; what can I do to give you pleasure?

The crowd: "Yes, speak! go on! go on!"

TONY.—[continuing] I wish to say to your lordship and these ladies here present—

The crowd: "Oh! oh!" Belton makes an impatient gesture to Tony to go on.

TONY.—(still embarrassed and stammering) Hi wish to say---that we would be so particularly happy---so extensively gratified---so mightily honored---if---

The crowd, with impatience, "Oh! go on! go on!"

BEL.—(laughing aside) I fear I shall have to run for a corkscrew to draw the words out of that fellow's mouth. A fine spokesman they have chosen, truly!

GAS.—Well, young man?

TONY.—If--if--(signs of impatience from the crowd) well! if you would open the dance with Miss Florence, your future bride--[turning to the crowd] There! I've said it!

The crowd heave a sigh of relief.

BEL.—[aside] At last! Well, he did get it out without the aid of a corkscrew, after all!

GAS.—[smiling] Certainly! with the greatest pleasure! Come, Florence.

Gaston takes Florence's hand, places her arm in his, and makes a movement to join the dancers; but stops on seeing Tony still standing in the same place, twirling his hat in his fingers.

LD. A.--(amused, to Lillian) Lillian, is not this one of your proteges, the fisherman's son?

LIL.--Yes, dear uncle, and such a deserving, good, honest young man he is! So devoted to his widowed mother and little sister. You would esteem him highly, if you knew him as I do.

BEL.--(aside, looking at Tony] Well, what more! I wonder what the young fellow is up to, now! This is an "impromptu" I had no idea of; but they all appear amused, so let it go.

GAS.--Have you anything more to say, young man?

The crowd: "No! no!"

TONY.--(still hesitating and stammering a little) Yes, your lordship---a little private business of my own---this time---

BEL.--Why, the fellow's tongue is getting a little more glib, all of a sudden; what the deuce is he after?

TONY.--I wish to request of Miss Lillian, sir, the excessive honor of this dance, if she will grant it me.

BEL.--(raising his hand in amazement) Well, I never! No wonder his tongue was loosened; a pretty girl was in the question. The audacious fellow! Miss Lillian, indeed!

LIL.--(rising with alacrity) Certainly, Tony, I will dance this quadrille with you, with pleasure.

LD. E.--Miss Lillian, you do not mean it! Surely you are not going to dance with that boor!

LIL.--And why not, I pray you? Lord Ernest, as noble a heart beats under that rude exterior as any gentleman may be proud of. (to Tony:) Here is my hand, Tony.

Tony takes her hand gladly and with much respect, and they walk toward the dance. The crowd shouting again: "Hurrah! hurrah! Long live Miss Lillian, our sweet young mistress!" Gaston

and Florence on one side, Lilian and Tony forming their vis-a-vis; Pierre skips forward with Lottie, and another couple from the crowd form their vis-a-vis; on a sign from Belton the music starts up; they dance.

LD. E.--(to *Ld. Alcott*, with concentrated anger and pointing to *Lilian*) Does your Lordship approve of this? Miss Lilian?

LD. A.--Oh, she is a privileged character, our Lilian; she cannot do wrong!

LD. E.--(shrugging his shoulders and seating himself; *aside*) But this was to have been my dance. Confound that fellow!

When Pierre's turn comes to dance, he skips round like a dancing master, to Belton's great amusement, who walks around the dancers, eyeing Pierre with a curious, critical expression; he stops at times with his hands on his knees or in his pockets, laughing in a subdued way.

BEL.--Well! that's what it takes, I suppose, to make up a Frenchman--a quick wit, shallow brains, and plenty of quicksilver in the pedul extremities. Ha! ha! 'tis the first one I have come in contact with. I wonder if he is a true specimen of his country? ha! ha!

The dancing ceases and the dancers return to their places, Lilian to her uncle's side; Florence, led by Gaston, to where Sir Arthur is seated, who rises as they approach; Belton makes the crowd retreat; dancing music continues behind the scenes; the shuffling of the dancers' feet is heard but all in a subdued tone.

GAS.--[to *Florence*] With your permission, Florence, I will leave you in Sir Arthur's care for a little while; I must have a dance with my Cousin Lilian, before she is carried off by others. [he goes toward the group] I think you promised me a dance, fair cousin, and I have come to claim it.

LIL.--[casting a timid glance toward Florence who is observing her] I should be most happy—but—Lord Belgrade— [Gaston looks toward Lord Ernest, who bows, and says:]

LD. E.—Certainly, sir; certainly! [*aside*] What a fool I am! to allow my promised partner to be carried off, first by that country boor, then by this high-born vagabond. I wonder if he thinks he is going to carry all before him, here. Scarcely a week has elapsed since his arrival, and he expects to make every one bend to his supreme will. (*Gaston has placed Lilian's arm in his, and leads her off gaily toward the dancing outside; Lord Ernest looks after them angrily*) This is a pretty piece of business, to be sure! Here I am to stand twirling my fingers, while she goes off with that top. The sweet girl must think me a perfect spooney to relinquish my claim so readily. I must keep a sharp look out, or he will carry off my intended bride in as masterly a style as he has my partner. Confound him!

LD. A.—How is it, Lord Ernest, I thought you were about to join the dancers?

LD. E.—I thought so, too, milord; but I have resigned this dance to your son. Miss Lilian will honour me with the next, I presume.

FLO.—(*seated on the opposite side with Sir Arthur, has followed all this scene with eager eyes; she seems abstracted in thought, and presses her hand to her heart, as if in pain and with a sudden pang exclaims, aside*) I knew it! I feel it! I cannot avert the cruel fate that awaits me!

SIR AR.—(*has watched her closely, and when he speaks to her, she starts from her reverie, and seems not to heed what he is saying*) Will not Miss Florence grant me the favour of a quadrille? Let us also essay the exhilaration of the dance, to dispel the gloom which hangs like an incubus over us both. (*with bitterness*) There is so much happiness afloat this evening, perhaps some small portion may fall to our share!

FLO.—Sir Arthur, I pray you to excuse me; I am weary with the excitements of the week. I shall not dance again, this evening.

SIR AR.—Florence, you are not happy; I read it in every line of your features. Once more I conjure

you, do not cast from you the sure happiness which awaits you, for a bubble which may burst in your hands. Florence, listen to me; reflect; there is still time—

FLO.—(*rising indignantly*) Your promise, Sir Arthur; have you already forgotten it? Three weeks still remain of the time you have yourself allotted for a final explanation.

SIR AR.—You say truly; but the sight of your pale and anxious countenance caused me to forget all else but your suffering. Three weeks, under certain circumstances, seems an eternity! (*on a movement from Florence*) Pardon me; I will not again incur your reproaches. (*they reseal themselves; Gaston and Lilian return to the front.*)

LD. E.—(*meeting Lilian as she advances and taking her hand*) It is my turn now, Miss Lilian, is it not?

GAS.—(*seeming to resign her reluctantly*) I resign you for a while, my little cousin, but we must have some more dances together before the evening is over. [*he goes over to Florence, while Lord Ernest and Lilian go out to join the dance*] What shall we do, Florence? I am entirely at your disposal. Shall it be a dance or a promenade?

FLO.—A promenade if you please, away from the mirthful crowd; the noise, the excitement fatigues me. I would fain be alone with you for a while; we have so much to talk over—so much to think over. Let us seek some retired nook where we can enjoy a quiet conversation and recall the reminiscences of our happy childhood.

GAS.—[*with hesitation and a glance toward the dancers*] As you wish, Florence; we will try the cypress grove. [*exeunt Florence and Gaston*]

SIR AR.—[*soliloquizing*] There is a misery in the atmosphere to-night; something prophetic in the sighing of the wind—in the murmurings of the river; above all the din and festive mirth which fill the air, I feel its cold, dreary approach. I am not given to fancies, but there is something unwonted that damps my spirit, and makes me tremble for the happiness

of the only woman I ever sought to win. Alas! poor Florence! When the hour of trial comes, will she cling to me for support? Noble girl! her happiness must not be wrecked by a selfish, unfeeling hand. I will watch over and save her, despite herself. [*Sir Arthur turns to Lord Alcott who sits alone, seeming pensive:*] Are you not well, Lord Alcott? You are not looking your brightest this morning! Your feelings, like my own, can not, perhaps, attune themselves to the unusual sounds that greet our ears on every side.

LD. A.--You are right, Sir Arthur; each one of the gladsome bursts of laughter re-echoes painfully in my heart; the memories of these last sad years are still too fresh to be subdued; they will rush back at times with overwhelming force. But it is not right to impart our sadness to the youthful, joyous spirit of those around us. I will withdraw myself for a while from these gay scenes, and seek in the retirement of my library, a solace for the sadness that oppresses me.

SIR AR.--But will not the loneliness enhance the gloom?

LD. A.--Not so; in the companionship of the philosophers of antiquity, my thoughts will be diverted into another channel.

SIR AR.--If you will allow me, my lord, I will be your companion and share your studies; It is not good that sorrow should dwell alone.

LD. A.--I thank you for your kind offer, Sir Arthur, and will accept it. It will not be the first occasion on which we have sought together the teachings of the old masters.

Exeunt Lord Alcott and Sir Arthur. Enter Lilian; she looks around to see if she is not observed; she seats herself in a dejected attitude.

LIL.--Alone at last! I am so weary! My assumed gayety has quite exhausted me. Lord Ernest's untiring devotion has annoyed me beyond expression, and yet I would not wound his feelings, he is so kind, he bears so patiently all my rebuffs. But what

a contrast to my Cousin Gaston! *He* has seen so much of the world; every word of his is interesting; I could listen to him forever, while the conversation of Lord Ernest is vapid, insipid; he can speak of little else than hunting and horses. My Cousin Gaston is all fire and enthusiasm; there is a manliness, an appearance of protection in his look and manner. I am so glad for dear Cousin Florry's sake. She will find in him all that heart could desire. They will be so happy. *(she heaves a sigh)* I wonder where my uncle is? I must go in search of him; but I am so tired! *(she takes a miniature from her pocket and opens it)* My Cousin Gaston is decidedly handsome. This was taken ten years ago; he is not greatly changed—somewhat older and more serious, but the expressive eyes and well formed mouth are just the same. I found it on the floor in the library. My uncle must have dropped it; I must take it back. *(Gaston enters in the rear of the stage and pauses on perceiving Lilian, still contemplating the miniature)*

GAS.—*(aside)* At last I have found her. She has avoided me all evening and slipped away at my approach like a will-o-the-wisp. I am curious to discover the meaning of her conduct. Ha! a miniature! she steals away to contemplate it alone; her lover, I suppose. *(he approaches stealthily and peeps over her shoulder, and with great surprise exclaims)* My picture!

Lilian starts, utters a stifled cry, closes the miniature hastily, and rises as if to withdraw; Gaston seizes her hand and gently compels her to reseat herself.

LIL.—Oh, please do not detain me! I was going to seek my uncle. I am sure he is calling for me.

GAS.—I can not let you go just yet, my little cousin. I need some compensation for the famous chase you have given me. I fancied, at last, that I was pursuing an ignis fatuus which was luring me on to destruction. You so suddenly disappeared when I thought I had you just within my reach. Truly, you remind me of the words of the poet: "Airy, fairy

Lilian, Flitting fairy Lilian;" may I quote the rest, fair cousin?

LIL.---(*quickly*) It is not necessary; I am well acquainted with the lines, and *they are not AT ALL APPROPRIATE!* But to return to what we were saying. You need not be surprised at my thus evading your search; for you are not so familiar as I am with the resources of the forest.

GAS.---You cheated me out of all the dances I promised myself with you; why were you so unkind? I think you are prejudiced against me; I shall not let you go until you explain your conduct.

LIL.---(*laughing*) Well, if you insist upon an explanation. I will acknowledge that I indulged in a little game of hide-and-seek; but it was not you, alone, who instigated my flight. I fled from a gentleman whose persistent attentions become, at times, so unendurable; he poured such sweet nonsense into my ear, that I sickened of it. I could not rid myself of him, so I ran away.

GAS.---May I inquire the name of your adorer?

LIL.---I presented him to you on the day of your arrival--Lord Ernest Belgrade,

GAS.---Why, Florence told me he was an accepted suitor, that he loved you passionately, and that you returned his love.

LIL.---Oh! that was unkind and treacherous in Florence. I have ever felt kindly towards Lord Ernest, but Florence knows that I have declined his proffered hand on more than one occasion.

GAS.---Probably Florence was jesting, or perhaps I misunderstood the name. If, then, Lord Ernest is not the man of your choice, may I inquire the name of the favored one, to see if I approve of your selection?

LIL.---[*laughing*] You need not trouble yourself on that score, cousin; I have no love for any man, unless for my uncle. He possesses all the affection, the devotion of my heart; there is no room in it for more.

GAS.---I am delighted to learn that you cherish this filial love and devotion for my dear father; but

this will not always suffice to your young, loving heart, just awakening to all that is beautiful in nature; you will some day feel the want of a still dearer tie; when that day dawns upon you, child, thrice happy the man upon whom you will bestow your choice; upon whom will fall the inestimable blessing of your first, pure, entire love.

Lilian startled again, rises to go; Gaston gently detains her.

LIL.—Oh! Cousin Gaston you should not speak to me thus! (*aside*) What would Cousin Florence say! (*aloud*) I must go. I pray you detain me no longer.

GAS.—You little, gentle, frightened deer! Have I pained you? I would not for the world. Come and sit beside me for a moment; let your little weary feet rest a while, or I shall fancy you some mischievous sprite sent expressly to torment us poor mortals, to fascinate, bewilder for a moment, then disappear from sight. Lilian, I have traveled far and wide, over mountain range and sandy plain—

LIL.—(*interrupting eagerly, as if she felt relief*) Oh, yes! tell me of your travels. I would so like to hear the recital of all you have seen, of all the dangers you have encountered.

GAS.—You shall hear them all, my sweet maiden, but not now; the tale will serve to enliven the long winter evenings. But to continue what I was about to say: I have gazed upon nature in her grandest form, her most rugged aspect, her loveliest garb; I have climbed the most inaccessible slopes in search of some rare and beautiful flower; I have gathered the choicest flora everywhere; but the sweetest, loveliest flower I have seen—

LIL.—(*interrupting with naivete*) What was the name of that sweet flower, Cousin Gaston, I do so dote upon flowers.

GAS.—[*with hesitation*] It's name? It's name is Lilian!

LIL.—[*springs up with affrighted look*] Oh! Cousin Gaston!

He seizes her hand to detain her, but she disengages herself and escapes; Florence enters in the rear, from the center, observing him; he follows Lilian.

FLO.--Gaston! here alone! Whom is he looking after so anxiously? I see no one. His conduct this evening is more than strange. His mind seemed constantly absorbed by thoughts in which I had no share. Suddenly he left me, and I saw him no more. Where has he been all this time; and with whom? Could I but know he has been playing me false! that he loves me not! But no! away with doubts! I will not yield to their soul-harrowing influence that would mar the joy of our re-union. Lilian? no, it can not be; she is so truthful, and she has promised. I am sure of Gaston's love. Has he not assured me that he has never loved but me! (*she goes toward the tree where Lilian and Gaston had been seated; she stops and picks up the medallion which Lilian had dropped, and opens it.*) Gaston's picture. I have seen this before; it belongs to my uncle; he must have dropped it here; I will return it to him. [*she drops it in her pocket.*]

Enter Gaston; she approaches him.

LIL.—Have you been seeking me, Gaston?

GAS.—I missed you from the grounds, and thought you had retired. The night is far advanced. We must get some rest before the day dawns upon us. Let me conduct you to the castle. [*she takes his arm; exit.*]

Scene 2nd---A library in the castle; Lord Alcott is asleep in a large fauteuil, Sir Arthur asleep on a couch near a table spread with books; Lilian enters dressed in white, with natural flowers in her hair; she goes toward her uncle.

LIL.—Why uncle, surely not sleeping here at this late hour! The sun is high in the heavens, and we have all breakfasted. I thought you were slumbering soundly in your room, and that I would not awake you!

LD. A.—[*awaking suddenly and rubbing h's eyes*] Bless me! where am I? sleeping in the library, eh? [*laughing*] Yes, yes, I remember. Sir Arthur and I were discussing some rather knotty questions and we talked *ourselves*, or rather *each other*, into unconsciousness, I suppose. But where is he? he, too, must be asleep somewhere around.

LIL.—(*discovers Sir Arthur just awaking, laughing heartily*) Well, you must have passed a most delightful evening together to judge by the soporific effects of your learned conversation; it must have been entertaining to the last degree.

LD. A.—You forge, my child, that it was almost daylight ere we left the garden.

SIR AR.—(*rising*) Miss Lilian, I have the honor to salute you, this lovely morning, not more lovely than your bright self, however. You seem to bring with you all the dewy freshness and fragrance of the flowers you have been gathering, and which so well adorn your youthful brow.

LD. A.—Yes, my little morning glory is the first flower that blooms and sheds its sweet perfume around us. A little pale, this morning, my darling; too much dancing, too much pleasure, eh?

LIL.—Yes, dear uncle, that is all. I am quite unused to such late hours. (*her features assume a sad expression; she passes her hand across her brow*)

Enter Florence and Gaston who exchange the usual salutations; Lilian acknowledges the salutation of Gaston coldly, and strives to avoid him.

GAS.—(*in a low tone to her*) Are you displeased with me, Lilian? Do not treat me with such coldness. I will not be guilty of such indiscretion again. Pardon me, if I have pained you. Believe me, I deeply regret it.

Florence observes this apart: Lilian catches her angry look; looks displeased and exclaims to Gaston:

LIL.—Oh, hush, Cousin Gaston! Cease this folly, I conjure you. Do you not see that you are torturing me? (*Lilian seems about to faint*)

GAS.—[*aside*] What have I done to distress her thus?

Gaston stretches out his arm to support her, but Florence springs forward and interposes, pushes Gaston aside, and throws her arm around Lilian, who recovers herself, and passes over to Lord Alcott, and leans on him for support.

LD. A.—Sir Arthur, you and I had better adjourn to the breakfast room! I trust these keen young appetites have left us something to appease our hunger. Come at once.

FLO.—Oh, uncle, before you go, let me return this miniature, which you dropped in the garden last night. I know it is a precious souvenir; here it is. [*extending her hand with the miniature*]

LD. A.—[*taking it, and opening it*] Gaston's portrait! You found it in the garden, did you say? How came it there? I did not have it with me.

LIL.—[*innocently*] It was I who must have dropped it, uncle.

FLO.—[*pressing her hand upon her heart*] Oh! then it was *she* who was with him. My forebodings did not deceive me! (*she passes round to Lilian and seizes her hand violently*) False girl! you have betrayed your promise! I hate you! I spurn you! (*she casts her hand from her rudely*)

LIL.—Oh, Florence, you are unjust! (*she falls fainting in her uncle's arms*)

LD. A.—What ails the child? I saw that she was pale, and had a look of suffering this morning. The excitements of the day and evening have proved too much for my little girl.

Lord Alcott bears Lilian tenderly in his arms and places her upon the couch; all crowd around her except Florence, who gazes upon the group with angry, scornful eyes; Gaston kneels by her side while he clasps her hand; Florence seems about to rush towards them, when Sir Arthur lays his hand upon her arm and arrests the action.

SIR A.—(*goes over to Florence; in a low tone*) Be prudent, Florence! Control your emotions! Your feelings are too strongly depicted on your countenance; others may read them, as I do. [*Florence makes a movement of impatience*] Remember, Florence, when all else fails you, I am still your steadfast friend. (*Florence repulses him with angry gesture*)

LD. A.—My pet, my darling, are you better?

LIL.—(*gradually recovering*) My dear, dear uncle! (*seeing Gaston kneeling near her holding her hand, she withdraws it angrily, and strives to rise from the couch, saying:*) Oh! uncle, take me away from here! Anywhere, anywhere, I care not whither!

LD. A.—(*encircling her with his arms; in an angry voice*) What is going on here; who is tormenting this innocent, joyous child? (*turning to Florence*) Is this your work, Florence? (*Florence turns aside and drops her head*)

LIL.—Oh, no, dear uncle; Florence is not to blame. Do not speak unkindly to her; it is all my fault, if I am feeling badly this morning; 'tis the result of last night's fatigue. The fresh air will soon revive me. I am feeling better already.

LD. A.—Come, then, my child; [*he places his arm around her*] no harm shall reach you here. In these arms you shall ever find shelter and protection. [*he walks proudly out with Lilian, casting an angry look towards Florence, who bows her head meekly. Exit Lord Alcott and Lilian.*]

SIR A.—[*aside, going out*] The storm I predicted is gathering fast around us. How many hearts will bleed, or perhaps be broken, ere its fury is allayed. [*Exit Sir Arthur*]

Gaston seats himself by the table, leaning his head upon his hand as if in deep thought.

FLO.—[*observing him*] Not one word, not one look for me—his affianced. [*after a pause*] This silence is dreadful. I can not endure it! Better his displeasure, his anger than this utter disregard. [*she advances toward the table*] Gaston!

GAS.—(*startled and rising*) Are you here, Florence? Oh, excuse me! I thought myself alone, or rather, in the confusion of my brain, I had forgotten my own identity amid the painful thoughts that assail me. Florence, my return, I fear, has been fraught with misery to all; instead of being the harbinger of happiness, it seems I have destroyed it. Better, far better, that I should again turn my back upon my home, than remain to cast a shadow—perhaps despair on these young lives, which, until now, have glided on so peacefully, so joyously beneath its protecting walls.

FLO.—(*clinging to him with tears in her voice*) Oh! Gaston, do not speak thus. Would you leave *me* your *affianced bride*, so soon to be called *your own*! In three short weeks, when we shall be united, we might seek together the excitement of that other life you still seem to cling to. Have you forgotten, Gaston, that your father, with your approval, has fixed our marriage day for the 14th, just three weeks from the present day?

GAS.—(*aside*) Our marriage just three weeks from today! (*aloud*) Florence, listen! When we parted years ago, we were mere children, not knowing our own hearts; all was hope and sunshine; life was clouded with no doubts, no fears; but now, Florence, that our hearts and minds are more matured, we can not assume such engagements lightly. The marriage tie, with its sacred obligations, presents itself in a different aspect; its solemnity demands more time for reflection. Separation has somewhat estranged us. Our dispositions may have undergone great changes. We need time to become acquainted again, to learn to love and appreciate each other. *One month* is too short when the happiness of a life time is at stake. Am I not right, dear Florence? Does not your own noble nature and good sense approve me?

FLO.—Oh! Gaston, what cruel words are these! My heart has ever been the same towards you, patiently waiting, faithfully hoping. It needs no

month's delay to teach me if I love you, if I am willing to accept you as the partner, the companion of my life. You love me not, Gaston, or you could not reason thus; your heart is estranged from me—] perhaps you love another. [*with a cry of despair*] Lilian! Lilian!

GAS.—(*turning quickly and seizing her hand*) Hush! Florence, not that name! (*aside*) Poor child! Could I bring sorrow to that sweet, innocent life! It must not, shall not be! Sooner will I bid farewell to my home forever! [*turning to Florence*] Forgive me, Florence! Let us say no more at present. Some other time, when our emotions have subsided, which we can not now sufficiently control, we will speak of it again. I will go for a ramble in the forest, with my gun upon my shoulder. The cool, refreshing air, the harmonious warblings of the birds, will calm and soothe my perturbed spirit. Alone with nature, its voice may counsel and console me. We part not in anger, Florence?

He holds out his hand to her, in which she places hers; he contemplates her thus sadly and silently for a moment then drops her hand gently, and goes slowly out. Florence presses her hand to her brow, as if in despair, and sinks on a chair, exclaiming in an agonizing voice:

FLO.—Oh! 'tis plain it is not ^{me} he loves. No! no! it is not ^{me} 'tis Lilian, Lilian who has robbed me of his heart, after all those years of unchanging love and all abiding faith.

Lilian appears at the door as Florence utters the last words. She is very pale and comes towards Florence; she kneels beside her and entwines her arms around her.

LIL.—Florry, dearest, look at me; 'tis Lilian who loves you, and will ever be true to you.

FLO.—[*repulsing her*] Leave me! leave me, faithless, heartless girl! You, alone are the cause of all my misery. You have robbed me of the heart I prized more than life; and do you come to me now

to inflict some keener suffering on my aching heart! or to deceive me by some new promise? Go! go! I will trust you no longer. Go to him your lures have won. Exult in your victory, and leave me to my wretchedness.

LIL.—[*still clinging to her with tenderness*] You wrong me, Florence. I have broken no promise. The word I pledged remains unshaken in its integrity. Your Lilian could never stand in the way of your happiness. You will see, darling, what an artful little fairy I am. I will bring it all about, just as you desire. Oh! do not doubt me. Gaston shall be your husband—only trust in me.

FLO.—Your projects are in vain, dear Lilian. Gaston loves you; has he not told you so?

LIL.—No, dear Florence, never have such words passed his lips. He does not, *shall not love me*. Be comforted; he is all your own. But come, let us banish all these corroding doubts. Lord Ernest with our ponies is waiting for us at the porch. When we have galloped a few miles and jumped a few ditches, our troubles will sit more lightly on our shoulders. Come dear cousin, let us profit by the lovely morning.

Lilian puts her arm around Florence's waist to lead her off; as Lilian and Florence approach the door they meet Lord Alcott and Sir Arthur coming in; Lord Alcott shows pleasure at seeing them thus together; he clasps them both in an embrace.

LD. A.—Bless you, my children! It gladdens my heart to see you thus reunited as of old. How is my little girl now? Pale and languid yet? Go, my children, your ponies are at the door, go enjoy this bright, bracing weather, and return to me with glowing cheeks and joyous looks.

SIR. A.—Miss Florence, if you will permit me, I will be your groom upon this occasion, and assist you in your mount; or, I would crave a still greater favor and beg you to allow me to join the cavalcade, to assist Lord Belgrade in watching over your safety. Miss Lilian is such a dauntless rider she will require all his care.

FLO.—We will be most happy to avail ourselves of your kind offer, Sir Arthur. *(they go out)*

Lord Alcott, solus, stands looking after them.

LD. A.—Despite her effort at cheerfulness, there is something in Lilian's expression that speaks of sorrow and sacrifice. Her innocent happy look has fled. She seems suddenly to have grown into a woman. What can it be? I must question her. Sorrow shall find no abiding place on the brow of my darling, if I can prevent it.

Curtain falls.

ACT 3rd.

Scene 1st.—The theater represents a closed parlor; time, evening.

When the curtain rises, there is no light in the parlor; Belton is seated in his master's arm-chair by the table, snoring; he holds a corkscrew in his hand. Enter Pierre and Lottie; the former with lighted candelabra which he places on the table; they both spy Belton still asleep and stand looking at him, Lottie holding her sides with laughter, Pierre dumbfounded.

PIERRE.—Vy, Mamselle Lottie, that Monsieur Belton! he take life easy, n'est ce pas? See, see! *(holding up Belton's hand in which is the corkscrew)* me understand; he put de good vine in de bottles for de vedding to-morrow. Ha! ha! and he taste too much de good vine! he like de good vine, and he keep it all for himself, de ole rogue! *(he shakes Belton violently)* Halloa! you dignified *Hinglishman!* Wake

up, vake up! If master catch you here, he make you dance one time. Halloa! vake up, vake up! He sleep sound! (*Lottie looks on laughing, heartily enjoying the joke*)

BEL.—(*arousing, and shaking himself*) What's the matter? What's the matter? Is the house afire? (*stretching out his arm*) Why, what is the matter with my arm! I remember, some one was punching me. I'd like to know who dared! why, it fairly aches! [*he looks around and spies Pierre laughing; he jumps up and tries to grab him; Pierre skips aside and evades him*] You French scoundrel, you! Did you dare lay your hands on me? You better get out of my way, or I will teach you the weight of a Hinglishman's fist, and you will never return for a second trial. [*Pierre skips around to evade Belton's blows; Belton chases him*] Get out of here, you French dog! and don't let me see you in this room any more when I am in it. Go! go! [*he tries to drive Pierre from the room, but he skips around to Lottie's side and pulls her by the dress*]

PIERRE.—Mamselle Lottie, you no stay here vit that angry man, you go vit me.

LOT.—[*her hands in her pocket, courtesying to Pierre*] No, sir, you go; I wish to stay here; I have something important to say to Mr. Belton. [*turning her back to Pierre and looking at him over her shoulder*] Go, now! Go!

PIERRE.—[*with entreating gesture*] Oh, Mamselle Lottie! you no send me away; me be so quiet; me no speak. Me stay! me stay!

Lottie turns around, stamps her foot, and looks at him fiercely, whereupon Pierre slowly retreats backwards, making imploring gestures to Lottie all the time; he disappears at the door, but again opens it softly and looks in, but upon an angry gesture from Lottie, disappears, and does not return.

BEL.—Bravo, Miss Lottie! that is the most sensible thing have done yet. I still have hope that you will one day be called Mrs. Belton.

Lot.—(*shrugging her shoulders*) Don't you be too sure of that! I don't marry men who fall asleep in their master's parlor, a *corkscrew* in their hands. No, not I.

BEL.—[*embarrassed*] Hem! hem! [*approaching Lottie*] hem! Did you really think, Miss Lottie, that that poor, innocent *corkscrew* had anything to do with it? You never made a greater mistake in your life, I can tell you. The fact is, I was up late last night making preparations for the wedding, which is fixed for to-morrow, the 14th; there is now a month since our young lord's return. I was tired and fell asleep, I suppose, while resting a few moments in this comfortable seat; where's the harm? It certainly does invite to slumber.

Lot.—Well, I suppose I must take your word for it, but (*laughing saucily*) you had better leave the *corkscrew* behind next time, or malicious people—might suppose—you understand, Mr. Belton? (*he turns away with evident annoyance*) Not that I doubt your word in the least—but—

BEL.—[*walking towards the table*] What are all these boxes, pray? Where did they come from?

Lot.—These are the wedding presents, I suppose. They have this moment arrived; just in time, for to-morrow is the 14th, the day fixed for the wedding. I say, Mr. Belton, can you tell me what is going on here? I never saw anything so mysterious. Here we are on the eve of the wedding day, and not a single preparation has been made, no orders given to decorate the house, not a word said about the approaching event. The young people are all sad, and strive to get out of each other's way. Mr. Gaston spends his days in hunting. I never heard of such courting as this. I know it would not suit me. But the quality have always a queer, unnatural way of doing things.

BEL.—You are quite right, Miss Lottie. I can not understand it any more than yourself.

Lot.—Why, the old castle is more gloomy than it was before Mr. Gaston came home.

BEL.—And the strangest part of all is that my old master seems as much puzzled to make it out as any body. I judge so from words he dropped when I was waiting on him. But his greatest anxiety seems to be concerning Miss Lilian. He said this morning: "She looks like a hangel about to take her flight to another sphere." And indeed she does. She goes about like one walking in a dream; and Miss Florence is not much better; and as for Mr. Gaston, he lives in the open air. Well, I suppose they understand what they are about, and it will all come right in the end, but the deuce take me if I can guess what it all means.

LOT.—Don't you know, Mr. Belton, these grand people have such odd notions about propriety and all that, instead of getting married at once and done with it.

BEL.—That's so, Lottie. Their style wouldn't suit you. They are not like you and Pierre, running after each other from morning till night, billing and cooing like two turtle-doves.

LOT.—Fie, Mr. Belton! That is sheer invention. Suppose I was to talk of all you drink in the cellar, when bottling the Master's choice wines? If you have sharp eyes, so have I, you perceive.

BEL.—Hush! hush! Some one might hear you. [*he walks around the room peeping through the doors and windows*]

LOT.—What are you looking for?

BEL.—I am looking to see if that confounded Frenchman is not lurking in some corner with those long ears of his, as he often does when I am talking to you.

LOT.—(*mischievously*) You were not so afraid of being overheard a few minutes ago! But I will be silent, if you will. Secret for secret.

BEL.—Never fear; I'll not betray you. I'll be as blind and mute as a dormouse. But I must go about my business. (*Exit Belton*)

Lilian appears at the door and advances with a languid step; Lottie approaches her with an air of sympathy.

LOT.---(*aside*) Poor young lady, how sick and pale she looks! I wish I could do something for her.

LIL.---Thank you, Lottie, I require nothing at present.

LOT.---(*aside*) One would almost believe she can read to the very bottom of one's heart, she is so sweet and good. (*aloud*) Miss Lilian, these packages have just arrived for Miss Florence, her wedding presents, I should judge. (*she raises a round box*) This one, from its shape and size, must be the bridal wreath. Oh! Miss Lilian, a bridal wreath is such a beautiful, delicate thing, (*with a sigh*) and only to be worn once in a life-time. How lovely it would look on your fair brow! Will you not try it on?

LIL.---(*an expression of pain crosses Lilian's features; she speaks almost angrily to Lottie*) Replace the box, Lottie! You may leave me; I would be alone.

LOT.---Shall I tell Miss Florence the boxes have arrived, and that you would like to see their contents? And may I return, please Miss?

LIL.---(*smiling*) Yes, Lottie, you may return. Your curiosity is on the alert, I perceive, and will not be satisfied until you have examined the contents of all these boxes.

LOT.---(*delighted*) Thank you, Miss Lilian, I will run for Miss Florence. [*Exit Lottie*]

LIL.---[*alone*] Florence's bridal wreath! I wonder what it looks like? (*laying her hand on the box*) I do not think I have ever seen one. I may indulge my curiosity for this time without reproach, for I shall never behold one again on this fair earth. [*she takes the wreath from the box, holds it in her hand, and contemplates it with deep sadness*] How lovely it is! So white, so delicate, so pure; no orange blossoms shall ever adorn my brow. I, too, had hopes and strange yearnings for love and happiness awakening within me, but they must be crushed forever in the silence of my own soul. No eye, save one, [*she raises her eyes and hand to heaven*] must know the love that fills my heart. I have struggled against it; I have repulsed, with disdain, the looks of ardent affection

that have sought mine; I have met with cold reserve the impassioned words to which my own heart would have responded with tenderness and devotion: but the struggle is beyond my strength; I can no longer endure it. I can no longer conceal from myself that Gaston loves me. 'Tis no mere passing fancy, but a deep, impassioned love—a love that fills my heart with joy unutterable, yet drives me to despair. Strange paradox of the human heart, where all the emotions are at variance. To-morrow is the day appointed for their nuptials, but not a word has been spoken by either of them on the subject; both shrink from every allusion to it. Florence looks as if her heart was breaking. I will no longer stand in the way of her happiness—I must go. But what pretext can I find for leaving the castle? My uncle seems to divine what is passing in my mind. He watches my every movement, he will scarcely allow me out of his sight. Poor, dear uncle! what will become of him, deprived of his Lilian! This thought rends my heart, and makes a coward of me. But I can delay no longer. To-morrow's sun must find me far beyond the walls of Rockmount Castle—but whither shall I go! Heaven guide and protect me! [*she takes up the wreath, and gaze: on it sadly*] Beautiful orange blossoms, to your white purity, emblem of truth and innocence, I will entrust my last farewell to my beloved Florence; may you prove to her a talisman of happiness and faithful love; may your chaste loveliness, your sweet freshness, be only tarnished by kisses, never by tears! Whisper to her when I am gone, that her poor Lilian died in the first bloom of her youth, to fulfill her promise, to secure her happiness. And now, sweet flowers, farewell! farewell!

Lilian presses the wreath to her lips; she then replaces it in the carton. Enter Florence, Lottie following; Florence has an air of listless indifference, she walks towards the sofa opposite Lilian; Florence remains standing, with downcast eyes, as if lost in thought.

LOT.—[*excitedly going towards the boxes and touching them*] Here they are Miss Florence, shall I open them and show them to you?

FLO.—[*with a tone of indifference*] Not now; I will see them oye and bye. You may go, Lottie. (*Lottie l'ngers*) Did you not hear me, Lottie? I said you might go.

LOT.—Yes, Miss, but please, Miss Lilian said I I might stay and see the opening of the boxes. I do so love to look at pretty things.

FLO.—Oh! that is different if Miss Lilian said so. Satisfy your curiosity, then leave the room.

LOT.—[*opening the boxes*] Oh! Miss Florence, Miss Lilian, do look! I never saw anything so splendid in my life! diamonds; are they not? How they do glitter! How lovely they will look on your white neck! You will wear them to-morrow with this beautiful bridal wreath, will you not, Miss Florence?

FLO.—[*starting up as with a sudden pang*] To-morrow! My bridal wreath!! [*turning to Lottie*] Leave those things; I will not see them now.

LOT.—[*in a tone of vexation, aside*] Did any one ever see such indifference? Wouldn't I love to show them around, if they were mine! Well, I declare I can not see into it! This is more vexatious than ever; but, you may depend upon it, I'll ferret it out. (*Exit Lottie*)

Enter Lord Alcott with Gaston; Lord Alcott seats himself near Lilian and takes her hand, with an expression of deep anxiety, as he scans her looks; Gaston pauses opposite Lilian, gazes at her for a moment, then breathes a sigh, and approaches Florence.

LD. A.—[*with forced cheerfulness*] My children, do you know that to-morrow is the 14th of October?

FLO.—[*with bitterness*] I have not forgotten it, uncle.

LD. A.—This day has ever been a memorable one in the annals of our house. On this day, many centuries ago, one of our ancestors was knighted by our

sovereign's own hand, on the battle field. Another on the anniversary of this day won glories that have shed a halo on our escutcheon. The day has never since passed unnoticed by our family; and for ages past, some great and glorious event has always added new lustre to our name. In later years, we have maintained the good old custom by celebrating our marriages on this day, (*turning to Gaston*) and it has been my prayer, my son, to see you, like your forefathers, lead a lovely bride to the altar, on this glorious anniversary. And—a strange coincidence—it was on the 14th of October that my darling child, my little Lilian was delivered to my care, and never sweeter blessing rested on the old mansion than when I accepted the precious charge.

LIL.—(*aside*) Alas, dear uncle! could he but know!

LD. A.—(*passing over to Florence and Gaston*) For this reason, my dear son and my dear niece, I have indulged the hope that your union would take place on the eventful day. Am I to be disappointed? There is no barrier between you; you have loved each other for years; why, then, postpone the happiness that awaits you? Florence, have you anything to say?

FLO.—(*with much emotion*) No, my uncle, I am ready to obey your wishes.

LD. A.—And you, my son?

Lilian leans forward, and seems to await anxiously Gaston's reply.

Gaston FLO.—Father, do not question me. But I can not now unite my life to that of Florence. She is very dear to me, but it is too hurried for an event that is to shape all our future lives. We must first know our own hearts, and study each other's disposition. We have been separated so long.

FLO.—(*aside*) The same sad, chilling words he spoke to me a month ago!

LIL.—(*falling back in her seat as if in despair; aside*) Oh, there is no help! *I must go!* Poor dear uncle!

LD. A.—Well, my children, you know best, I suppose. Far be it from me to influence you, where the

happiness of your whole existence is at stake. It is a serious disappointment to me, but I leave it to your own good sense to decide. (*Lord Alcott returns to Lilian and draws her towards him; they advance towards the front.*)

LD. A.---Well, my cherished one, what shall we do to celebrate the day? Shall we have a big hunt? a ball? anything you wish, only say the word, any amusement that will make you happy and once more dress your face in smiles.

LIL.---Dear uncle, you are ever kind and thoughtful. (*aside*) Each word he utters cuts deep into my heart. What can I do! [*aloud*] No hunt, no dancing. I am not well enough to make merry to-morrow. We will enjoy ourselves in some more quiet way.

LD. A.---Whatever you will, my pet. [*he gazes at her with great sadness*]

Pierre appears at the door.

PIERRE.---Tony Marsten, sir, is below, and would wish to see Miss Lilian for a moment, if agreeable.

LIL.---I will see him immediately. [*aside*] This may prove the deliverance I was waiting for, and furnish the pretext for absenting myself.

LD. A.---Tell the young man to come up. Miss Lilian will see him here.

PIERRE.---Yes, sir. [*bows; exit*]

LD. A.---Tony Marsten! I have a recollection of having heard that name before; have I not? Let me see. Is not this the fisherman's son, who lives about one mile from the castle at the extremity of our estate?

LIL.---Yes, his mother. Mrs. Marsten is in very delicate health. She sent me word some days ago that her little girl was very ill; I hope that Tony is not the bearer of worse tidings.

Tony appears at the door, bowing awkwardly and twirling his hat.

LD. A.---Walk in, young man, and deliver your message.

TONY.---Please, Miss, my little sister is very bad ; my mother thinks she wont get through the night. In her fever, she raves about you, Miss, and begs for you to come to her. Mother thought, if you would be so excessive kind, the sight of you might ease the child's suffering, and perhaps save her life.

LIL.---(*with alacrity*) Certainly I will go.

She rings the bell, and Pierre appears.

LIL.---(*to Pierre*) Tell Lottie to bring my hat and cloak. I shall not return to-night. (*Exit Pierre*)

LD. A.---My child, I can not bear to have you expose yourself this cold, blustering night. You are not well, and I fear the fatigue of watching will be too much for you. (*Lilian makes a movement of expostulation*) Well, if you feel that you *must* go, I will accompany you. Tony, tell the coachman to put the horses to the carriage immediately. You can go with us.

TONY.---[*bowing*] Thank you, sir. [*Exit Tony*]

Enter Lottie with cloak and hood; she assists Lilian to put them on.

LIL.---[*exultingly, aside*] Ha! My liberty at last! [*goes toward Florence and Gaston, takes the hand of both and unites them, saying with tenderness*] Florence! Gaston! be united—be happy!

Lilian hurries off, and joining her uncle places her arm in his and draws him quickly out of the room. Gaston springs forward to the door with a loud cry "Lilian." Florence sinks on a chair, burying her face in her hands.

Curtain falls.

*I immediately rises on
the change of scene —*

Scene 2nd.—The river side, where small boats are moored; the boatman's cottage on one side; a large tree, around which is a rustic seat; the forest lies beyond; a rustic bridge crosses the river.

When the curtain rises, Tony is seated in one of the boats drawn up on the shore, mending his nets; he sings cheerfully in a loud voice. Enter from the cottage Mrs. Marsten and Lilian.

MRS. M.—Miss Lilian, when you have breathed a little fresh air, do come in and take a few hours' rest. The sun is just rising, and it will be some time before any one will come from the castle to fetch you.

LIL.—I will return to you bye and bye. I will rest here awhile, beneath this old tree. I love dearly the fresh, dewy, morning air. It will revive me, and give me new strength. The sun-rise and I are old friends.

MRS. M.—But how can I thank you as I ought, dear Miss, for your care and watchfulness all through the night of my little girl, who now seems quite out of danger. If ever a blessing will descend on your sweet, young head, Miss, it will be a mother's gratitude for the life of the child you have saved!

LIL.—Oh! dear Mrs. Marsten, do not attribute to me any such power; our lives are in higher hands.

MRS. M.—Yes, surely, but if ever angel did come in human form to comfort us, you are one of them.

LIL.—Say no more. I have really done nothing except to soothe the child, and tranquilize her nervous irritability.

MRS. M.—Oh! yes, Miss, the moment you touched her hand and caressed her, the nervous twitchings ceased, and as you sang that soft lullaby, she fell asleep, and the fever left her; she is sleeping still.

LIL.—Sleep was all she required. Do not disturb her. She will awake refreshed, and with careful tendance, she will in a few days be quite restored to health.

MRS. M.—May heaven bless you for all your kindness! I will return to the bedside of my child, and

prepare the breakfast for my son. I hope you will take some refreshment also, Miss, when it is ready.

LIL---Thank you, I may take a cup of coffee, later; I am not so inclined, at present.

MRS. M.---(*Mrs. Marsten enters the cottage, saying:*) Well, Miss, I am just here inside; if you want anything, you must give me a call. [*Exit Mrs. M.*]

Lilian looks around on all sides; she does not perceive Tony, who is now sleeping in the bottom of the boat. She throws her cloak on the bench under the tree, and seats herself.

LIL---Alone, at last! How grateful to me is this solitude, this calm which permits me to reflect upon the portentous step I contemplate. For the first time in a long month, I am really alone. I need no longer place a mask upon my features, smile, and affect joy, while my sad heart is breaking. I need no longer repress the burning tears that well up to my eyes in spite of all my efforts to restrain them. Nor need I tremble to give utterance to the thoughts, the feelings that inundate my soul with a sweet bitterness I can not define. Dear Gaston, how I love you! Despite my cold rejection of your tenderness, each word your dear lips have uttered, has sunk deeply in my heart, and in that soil has taken root forever. Ah! never again shall I hear those tones of love; never will he call me *his darling, his own*; never shall his eyes seek mine with looks of unutterable affection. But I must not dwell upon these sad, sweet memories, this ardent longing for a bliss that *might have been*; it would but serve to rend my bosom with regrets, and deprive me of my courage when I need it most. [*she pauses*] Ah, Gaston! Florence! you will never know how Lilian loved you! What better proof can she give than the sacrifice of her young life, which she is about to offer up on the altar of your happiness! (*she remains some moments as if lost in thought*) All night long as I watched beside the sick child's bed, strange fancies haunted my brain. Phantoms seemed to entice, to lure me to my doom; in vain I

tried to shake them off; they would not be dispelled. Then I recalled a sad tale that Florence and I had read together about a year ago. It was the story of a poor girl who had bestowed all the wealth of her young heart upon a worthless lover who deserted her and left her with none to comfort her. In the frenzy of her despair, she flung herself into an empty bark, unloosed it from its moorings, and drifted out to sea, beyond the reach of all assistance. And all night long I have seen this pallid spectre, and she beckoned me to follow her. I pressed my trembling hand to my eyes to shut out the vision, and when I looked again, it seemed *myself*, my *very self* floating onwards, onwards to the foaming billows. And thus the night winds whispered "thus only can you save the loved ones." [*she rises and paces to and fro along the shore, then approaches a boat drawn up on the sands; Tony springs up; she starts back in surprise*] Is that you, Tony? How you startled me! Were you sleeping in the boat?

TONY.—Yes, Miss, I must av fell asleep over my nets that I was a mending. The night were a wakeful one for us all. Can I do anything for you, Miss?

LIL.—No, thank you. Is this the boat you go out fishing in?

TONY.—No, Miss. That old boat has done good service. It belonged to my father. I keep it as a sort of remembrance of him; but it is no longer of any use; it is full of leaks. I might have patched it up, if this river warn't so treachersome. There's a pretty strong current just beyont, and it takes a good strong boat to stem it, that is to say, in stormy weather. No, Miss, my boat for fishing is moored over there. (*pointing*) A safer boat never floated. Any fine day you would like to take a row, Miss, I shall be proud to serve you.

LIL.—Thank you, Tony. Are the fish plentiful in this river? Do you make a good living by your nets?

TONY.—Well, yes, Miss Lilian, I does pretty well; we gets along well enough, but you see my hamb-

tion has been to buy this cottage that we lives in, so that my mother and little sister might be sure of a home, in case anything hapning to me; but some-hows, work hard as I will, early and late, I does not seem to get ahead any. Sickness will come and take all our poor earnings; and that's how it is.

LIL.—It is indeed hard that such a praiseworthy ambition should not be rewarded. Oh! an idea strikes me! Have you a pencil and paper?

TONY.—Yes, Miss, I always carries them with me to take down the orders I receives for fish. I seldom trusts to my memory; I can not afford to forget. (*he draws a pencil and small sheet of paper from his pocket and hands to Lilian*)

LIL.—[*seats herself on a rock and writes, reading aloud as she proceeds:*)]

Dear Uncle,

On receipt of this, please make over to Tony Marsten, by a deed of gift, the property he now rents from you. Do this, dear uncle, for the sake of your poor

Lilian.

Thus will Tony's ambition be accomplished, and I will secure the happiness of this deserving family. I am thankful for this opportunity of doing a good act before I die. (*aloud*) Tony, take this letter, keep it safely for a week, then carry it to my uncle and await his answer. Do you understand? [*she folds the paper and hands it to Tony*]

TONY.—Oh! yes, Miss, I will hand it to Lord Alcott in one week's time.

LIL.—(*aside*) How shall I get him away from here. [*aloud*] Tony, you had better put the letter at once in some place of security, as it contains matter of great importance.

TONY.—I'll go right straight away, and lock it up in my chest.

LIL.—And Tony, had you not better remain and assist your mother in preparing the morning meal? She is well nigh exhausted with her anxieties and long watchings; she will be glad of your help.

LILIAN'S PROMISE.

TONY.—You are right, Miss, I'll go at once.

A shot from a gun is heard. Tony stops to listen.

LIL.—What is that, Tony?

TONY.—It must be Mr. Gaston, I think. He has been an early hunter and often comes this way in his morning walks with his gun on his shoulder. He has never been proud at all, as most of them great rich lords be; he will sit down here and chat with me as he used to do with my father, before he went abroad. He says my father taught him his first lessons in hunting when he was a mere lad.

LIL.—(*aside, with nervous excitement*) Gaston must not find me here, nor must he himself remain. (*aloud*) Tony, wait; I will go to your mother. You go and meet Mr. Gaston, and accompany him on his hunt for a while—do anything, but do not let him remain here, and do not speak of me!

Tony.—I will do anything you wish, Miss Lilian, anything to give you pleasure.

Lilian enters the cottage. Gaston crosses the bridge and advances; he meets Tony.

GAS.—Good morning, Tony, how is the child?

Tony.—Thank you, Mr. Gaston, much better, sir. We feel as if Miss Lilian's care had saved her, but she won't have us say so.

Gas.—Bless her kind heart! [*aside*] I hoped to catch a glimpse of her this morning, but she avoided me as usual. [*aloud*] How did Miss Lilian seem to be this morning; she was not well last evening; have you seen her yet?

Tony.—Oh! yes sir, she look very pale, sir, for she took no rest all night.

Gas.—Has she not been out of the house this morning?

Tony.—Yes, sir, she came out to breathe the fresh morning air, just at day-break. She said it revived her, yes! that is what she said. She was sitting under that tree yonder for nearly an hour.

Gas.—Did she speak with you?

Tony.—Only a few words sir. She looked wearied and sad as if she had some great sorrow which she

wished no one to see. When I think of her as she used to be, this very spring; she was as joyfulsome as the birds, always singing and laughing.

Gas.---Could I not see her for a moment? Will she not come out, Tony?

Tony.---No, sir, I think not. I believe she is gone to lie down; she needs rest. I never saw one more changed I have watched her closely since she comed here last evening. I have felt as if something terrible was hanging over her.

Gas.---(*grasping Tony's arm*) I, too, have experienced the same unaccountable dread. We will be two to guard her from harm. You will assist me, Tony, to watch over her?

Tony.---Aye, that I will, sir. Lord Alcott will soon be here to take her home, I spose; he said he would be early, when he left Miss Lilian here last evening. But she do not wish your presence here, Mr. Gaston, she told me to make you go away, immediately; she even wished me to go with you on your hunt. I will go and fetch my gun.

Gas.---(*looks around, espies Lilian's cloak; he raise it with tenderness, and presses it to his lips, saying:*) Her cloak! which enwraps her chaste and delicate form! (*he gently lays it down as Tony enters, his gun on his shoulder*)

Tony.---I am ready, now, sir.

They cross the bridge; as they disappear, Lilian comes from the cottage; she looks cautiously around.

Lil.---They are gone! There's no time to be lost. I must be quick; they may return. [*she hastens to the old boat, and tries to unloosen the fastenings.*] Ah! how hard these knots are tied! I never shall be able to undo them! What shall I do!! Oh, how my poor fingers ache! [*she carches in the boat and finds a large pocket-knife; exclaims:*] Tony's knife! How providential! Heaven surely approves the act and thus comes to aid me. I can cut these ropes though I could not unfasten them! [*she works with energy, and at last exclaims:*] The knots are all unfastened, the

boat is free! [*she pushes the boat, and it glides down to the water, then she springs lightly into it, seizes the oar, and pushes off; she raises her eyes and one hand to heaven saying:*] Farewell, bright world! Farewell to all I love on earth! Farewell, Gaston! My uncle! Florence! Farewell! Farewell!

The boat disappears. Tony re-enters from the forest.

TONY.—I left Mr. Gaston in the woods and did not care to follow him. Something seemed to pull me back to this spot. I can not understand what make me feel so queer. I never feel so before. How very strange! I feel as if something dreadful was going to happen! [*Tony goes to the cottage door and calls:*] Mother, is Miss Lilian up there with you? [*aside*] Mr. Gaston say I must watch her!

MRS. M.—(*opening a window above*) No, my son, Miss Lilian went out a short time ago. I feel quite worried about the dear young lady. I could not persuade her to take any breakfast. She said that all she needed was quiet and fresh air. She must be around here somewhere; she would not think of walking home, as she expects her uncle.

Tony looking around on every side, suddenly misses the boat; he rushes to the water's edge.

TONY.—Great God! where is the boat! The boat has gone! and she is in it! [*a feeble cry is heard in the distance*] That cry! it is her voice! I may yet be in time to save her.

MRS. M.—(*rushing out*) What is the matter? where are you going?

TONY.—Do not hold me mother, do not stop me. The dear young lady is drowning, and I will save her or die with her! Let me go! let me go! On your knees, mother, pray for us.

Tony hastily unmoors a boat, and rows away rapidly.

MRS. M.—[*on her knees*] Oh! my God! Save my son! save them both! (*she sobs aloud, burying her face in her hand*)

Gaston enters, goes up to Mrs. Marsten, and attempts to raise her.

GAS.—What has happened, Mrs. Margery! Why these sobs, why these tears? Is your child worse?

MRS. M.—[*choked with sobs*] Oh! Miss Lilian! poor dear Miss Lilian! Oh! oh! oh!

GAS.—[*frantic*] What about Miss Lilian? what has happened to her? Speak, woman! are you resolved to drive me mad?

MRS. M.—Oh! the dear young lady has gone and drowned herself! and Tony has gone to save her, or die with her! We may never see either of them again. [*sobbing*]

GAS.—[*with wild despair*] Oh, my God! my God!

He rushes toward the river as if about to plunge in, then suddenly stops aghast, pointing to an object beyond. Mrs. Marsten follows him, clasping her hands. Tony approaches, bearing the lifeless body of Lilian. Mrs. Marsten snatches the cloak from the bench and covers her. Tony lays Lilian gently down on the sand. Gaston kneels beside her, takes her hand, and kisses it passionately. Mrs. Marsten also kneels and sustains her.

GAS.—She can not be dead, I'll not believe it! Fate could not deal me such a blow. Go, Tony, fly for the doctor; life is not extinct. (*he applies his fingers to the pulse*) There surely is a faint movement, is there not, Mrs. Marsten? My own hands are so tremulous that I distrust my judgment. (*he places his hand upon her heart*) Yes, yes! I can not be mistaken; there is a fluttering here. I knew she could not be dead.

MRS. M.—Yes, I think there is hope. The beats are stronger, now; life is gradually returning. See, a shudder passes through her frame.

GAS.—Thank God! Oh, thank God! she is saved! How was it, Tony, did the boat capsize?

TONY.—Oh! no, sir; the good old boat could not capsize. It was old and leaky, and so I tell Miss Lilian. It hold out better nor I expected it would. The current was so strong, and carried it a good dis-

tance. It must have been filling with water and sinking, when the young lady gave that terrible scream that called me to her assistance. The water was most a covering her, and she must have fainted with the fright. In another moment she would have drowned.

GAS.—When the poor child saw that death was inevitable, her young life rebelled at the sacrilege.

TONY.—Never can I forget what I felt when I saw her, as I thought, without life in the boat, and knewed that the water would soon be over her. I feared I would not reach in time to save her, and just as I reached her, the old boat gave a swirl, and down she went. Mr. Gaston, she opens her eyes.

During this time, Gaston has raised her head on his knee, still chafing and kissing her hands, and uttering endearing names. Lilian gradually returns to consciousness, and gazes around her.

LIL.—Help! help! the boat is sinking! Oh, I die! Gaston, save me! save me!

GAS.—My beloved! I am here! Do you not know me? You are safe in my loving arms! Only look at me, darling! Love and joy await you; speak to me, Lilian, my sweet one!

MRS. M.—She still fancies herself in the boat; the shock and fright have been too much for her. Poor dear young lady, she is so sensitive and delicate! See, her wild, strange look is passing away; she is returning to consciousness. Speak to her again, Mr. Gaston, the sound of your voice will revive her more than all else.

GAS.—Lilian, my darling, look at me! your Gaston! speak to me! (*Lilian looks at him, utters a cry of joy, and clasps him around the neck.*) My Lilian, my own!

A confusion of voices is heard approaching. Enter Lord Alcott, Florence, Belton, Lottie and Pierre.

LD. A.—(*rushing frantically toward Lilian*) My Lilian! my child! where is my darling?

TONY.—(*making way for Lord Alcott*) She is here, my lord, she is safe. The danger is past.

Gaston and Florence raise Lilian tenderly, while Margery brings a chair from the house; they place her in it.

FLO.—(whispering to Lilian) My poor darling! I see through it all. 'Twas done for love of him, was it not?

LIL.—Forgive me, Florence. I could not help it, and I saw no other way to keep the promise I had made to you.

FLO.—When I exacted that promise, Lilian, I never dreamed that it would entail upon you such a fatal sacrifice. Why did you not open your heart to me, and frankly own your love for him?

LIL.—Would you have renounced him for my sake, Florence, you who loved him with such jealous devotion?

FLO.—You should have known my proud nature better than to suppose that I would accept a hand without the heart's accompanying it. I now know Gaston's heart, and I resign him. Be you his happy bride. I renounce my claim forever. [*Gaston seizes the hand of Florence and kisses it*]

LIL.—Dear, dear Florence!

LD. A.—What does all this mystery signify? I can not comprehend a word of it, nor how the sad accident occurred, that came so near depriving me of my darling child? Will some one tell me what it means?

GAS.—Not now, dear father, Lilian is too weak to talk much; at some other moment, she will tell you all. [*aside*] He must never learn the truth, it would kill him.

Lilian leaning on Mrs. Marsten's arm, enters the cottage. Enter Sir Arthur and Lord Ernest.

SIR. A.—The news of a terrible calamity has just reached our ears, and we have come in all haste to inquire into the truth of the statement.

LD. A.—A terrible accident, indeed, but thanks to the energy and courage of this young man, (*pointing to Tony*) our darling is restored to us, and in our joy we had almost forgotten to express our gratitude.

(*Tony turns to enter the cottage; Lord Alcott stops him, saying:*) Come here, young man. (*Tony advances modestly; Lord Alcott extends his hand to him and retains it*) Tony, no words can express my gratitude; but from this day forward, I shall ever consider you as having saved the life of my child. If there is any wish of your heart that it is in my power to gratify, speak; I can refuse you nothing.

TONY.—No, my lord, Miss Lilian she saved my little sister's life; I have saved hern. She has long been the guardian angel of our home. I could take no thanks for doing my duty.

Lilian re-enters, having changed her wet dress for a simple one.

GAS.—Lilian has truly said as noble a heart beats under this rough exterior, as can be found in the highest stations of life. So modest withal. (*Tony retiring*)

LIL.—Stay, Tony, where is the letter I gave you?

TONY.—I have it here, Miss. (*offering it to her*)

LIL.—Deliver it, yourself, to my uncle, to whom it is addressed. [*Tony hands the letter to Lord Alcott, who opens it, and reads it to himself*]

LD. A.—It gives me great pleasure to comply with my darling's wishes, and to prove my gratitude to this worthy youth. Tony, Miss Lilian desires me to bestow upon you this cottage in which you were born, with the ten acres of land surrounding it. It is yours, my good fellow, and as long as Lord Alcott lives, you shall never want a friend.

TONY.—My lord! Miss Lilian! This is too much! How can I thank you! Let me call my mother.

LD. A.—No need of thanks, my lad. I hope you and your good mother may long live to enjoy your prosperity.

GAS.—I, too, father, have a favor to ask of you, if Lilian will consent. This day has been marked out by you, for another joyous anniversary. A marriage was to have taken place, and the postponement of it was a great disappointment to you.

LD. A.—Aye, a very great one, indeed, my son.

GAS.—Well, father, suppose I revoke my decision and say: Let the preparations proceed, the wedding shall still take place, and once more on the 14th of October the old halls shall ring with sounds of festivity and gladness:

LD. A.—Are you in earnest, Gaston? This is no subject for jesting. My heart would truly rejoice in such an event.

GAS.—[*takes Lilian by the hand, encircling her waist with his arm and leads her toward his father*] And here, father, is my darling bride!

Sir Arthur and Lord Ernest come forward from the rear, exclaiming:

Both—How! Lilian! not Florence!

LD. A.—Lilian! What means this mystification, Gaston, I thought Florence was your destined bride!

FLO.—Be not discomposed, dear uncle, all will be satisfactorily explained. My hand is pledged to—[*she looks toward Sir Arthur, who springs forward, takes her hand and kisses it*]

SIR A.—I trust, Lord Alcott, you will not withhold your consent to our union. I am proud and happy to become a member of your family.

LD. A.—You have my hearty consent, my friend, but I can not understand this substitution, it confuses my brain. It is dazed, bewildered; decidedly these young people are too much for me. I am getting old; my intelligence is at fault. [*to Lilian*] Lilian, my little girl, do you love your Cousin Gaston? [*she hides her face on Lord Alcott's bosom*] You little traitress! I thought you were never going to love any one besides your poor old uncle. Well, I suppose I must not be selfish. I must consent to share my treasure with my son. I can not give her up entirely.

LIL.—Dear uncle, I will never leave you!

LD. A.—Humph! Trust again to young people's promises! "*I'll never love any man but you, dear uncle,*" (*mimicking Lilian. Lilian and Gaston laugh*)

SIR. A.—(to Florence) Florence, since you have at length consented to be mine, will you not crown my happiness by allowing the celebration of a *second marriage* on this joyful anniversary?

FLO.—Patience, Sir Arthur, you must allow me time to *forget*.

LD. E.—Here I am again out in the cold! Who, in the name of all that is most wonderful, could have imagined such a winding up of the family drama? I do not really know whether I stand on my head or my heels. Only last evening Sir Arthur and I had laid all our plans for a fishing and hunting excursion in Norway, you know, and now, whew! he'll be only fishing for compliments to pay his lady-love, or hunting up the shortest road to the hymeneal temple. What is to become of me? Whom shall I marry? There's Miss Elmwood, she would have me quick enough, you know, but she is four or five years my senior, and all the powder and rouge fail to restore the bloom of youth. She has a splendid figure on horseback, seen in perspective. I might manage to ride a few paces in the rear, you know, and so keep up the illusion. But I should be mistaken for her groom; and then, on rainy days, we could not hunt. (*he makes a wry face*) No, no, that wont do. I must renounce all thoughts of marriage. My spirits are rather low. I think I'll try change of scene. I'll be off for the continent.

LOT.—[*saucily, aside*] God speed you, sir. (*laughing; she falls back to the side of Pierre, who places her arm in his*)

Florence with her arm around Lilian, walks forward and faces the audience.

FLO.—Do you not feel, dear cousin, as if something was still lacking to our entire satisfaction on this occasion? Lilian's fidelity to her promise should surely meet with the approbation of all our friends here present. Will they not give it us? that this may truly be styled another bright, eventful anniversary, to be indelibly written in the annals of Rockmount

Castle, and that its old walls may once more resound with peals of satisfaction and joy!

Gaston comes forward and takes the hand of Lilian, Sir Arthur that of Florence; all group around and form a tableau.

LIL.—(*gazes first at Gaston, then at the audience, and exclaims:*) Oh! I am so happy!

The curtain falls.

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