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"Exactly; a blood-vessel has given way, I see," said the Reverend Dives; "internal hæmorrhage. I see, exactly; and I—I know that Slowton doctor won't speak any more than you, my dear Pratt, but I may as well see him, don't you think? And, and there's really no need for all that terrible misery of an inquest."

"Well, you know, it's not for me; the—the family would act naturally."

"The family! why, look at that poor girl, my niece, in hysterics! I would not stake that—that *hat* there, I protest, on her preserving her wits, if all that misery were to be gone through."

"Does Lady Alice know anything of it?"

"Lady Alice Redcliffe? Quite right, sir—very natural inquiry; not a syllable. She's, you know, not a—a person to conceal things; but she knows and suspects nothing; and no one—that nurse, you told me, thought the hurt was an operation—not a soul suspects."

And thus the Reverend Dives agreed with himself that the scandal might be avoided; and thus it came to pass that the county paper, with a border of black round the paragraph, announced the death of Sir Jekyl Marlowe, Baronet, at the family residence of Marlowe Manor, in this county, the immediate cause of his death being the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs, attended by internal hæmorrhage. By the death of Sir Jekyl Marlowe, it further stated, "a seat in Parliament and a deputy lieutenancy for this county become vacant." Then came a graceful tribute to Sir Jekyl's value as a county gentleman, followed by the usual summary from the "Peerage," and the fact that, leaving no male issue, he would be succeeded in his title and the bulk of his estates by his brother, the Reverend Dives Marlowe.

So in due course this brother figured as the Reverend Sir Dives Marlowe, and became proprietor of Marlowe Manor, where, however, he does not reside, preferring his sacred vocation, and the chance of preferment, for he has grown, they say, very fond of money—to the wordly life, and expensive liabilities of a country gentleman.

The Reverend Sir Dives Marlowe, Bart., is still unmarried. It is said, however, that he was twice pretty near making the harbor of matrimony. Lady Bateman, the relict of Sir Thomas, was his first object, and matters went on satisfactorily until the stage of business was arrived at; when unexpectedly the lovers on both sides were pulled up and thrown on their haunches by a clause in Sir Thomas's will, the spirit of which is contained in the Latin words, *durante viduitate*. Over this they pondered, recovered their senses, shook hands, and in the name of prudence parted good friends, which they still are.

The second was the beautiful and accomplished Miss D'Acre. In earlier days the Reverend Dives would not have dreamed of anything so imprudent. Time, however, which notoriously does so much for us, if he makes us sages in some particulars, in others, makes us spoonies. It is hard to say what might have happened if a more eligible bridegroom had not turned up in George St. George Lighton, of Seymour Park, Esq. So that Dives' love passages have led to nothing, and of late years he has attempted no further explorations in those intricate ways.

I may as well here mention all I know further about Lady Jane Lennox. I cannot say exactly how soon she left Wardlock, but she did not await Lady Alice's return, and, I think, has never met her since.

Sir Jekyl Marlowe's death was, I suppose, the cause of the abandonment of General Leonox's resolution to proceed for a divorce. He remained in England for fully four months after the Baronet's death, evidently awaiting any proceedings which the family might institute, in consequence, against him. Upon this point he was fiercely obstinate, and his respectable solicitor even fancied him "cracked." With as little *fracas* as possible, a separation was arranged, no difficult matter, for the General was open-handed, and the lady impatient only to be gone. It was a well-kept secret; the separation, of course, a scandal, but its exact cause enveloped in doubt. A desperate quarrel, it was known, had followed the General's return from town, but which of the younger gentlemen, then guests at Marlowe, was the hero of the suspicion, was variously conjectured. The evidence of sojourners in the house only deepened the mystery. Lady Jane had not shown the least liking for anyone there. It was thought by most to have a reference to those old London stories which had never been quite proved. A few even went the length of conjecturing that something had turned up about the old General, which had caused the explosion.

With an elderly female cousin, Donica Gwynn, and her maid, she went abroad, where she has continued nearly ever since, living rather solitarily, but not an outcast, a woman who had been talked about unpleasantly, but never convicted—perhaps quite blameless, and therefore by no means excluded.

But a secret sorrow always sat at her heart. The last look of that bad man, who, she believed, had loved her truly though guiltily—summoned as he talked with her—irrevocably gone. Where was he now? How was it with him?

"Oh, Jekyl! Jekyl! If I could only know if we are ever to meet again—forgiven!"

With fingers clasped together under her cloak, and eyes upturned to the stars in the beautiful Italian skies, she used, as she walked to and fro alone on the terrace of her villa, to murmur these agonised invocations. The heedless air received them; the silent stars shone cold above, inexorably bright. But Time, who dims the pictures, as well as heals the wounds of the past, spread his shadows and mildews over these ghastly images; and as her unselfish sorrow subsided, the sense of her irrevocable forfeiture threw its ever-lengthening shadow over her mind.

"I see how people think— some wonder

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at me, some accept me, some flatter me—all suspect me."

So thought she, with a sense of sometimes nearly insupportable loneliness, of resentment she could not express, and of restlessness—dissatisfied with the present, hopeless of the future. It was a life without an object, without retrospect—no technical compromise, but somehow a fall—a fall in which she bitterly acquiesced, yet which she fiercely resented.

I don't know that her bible has yet stood her in stead much. She has practised vagaries—Tractarian sometimes, and sometimes Methodist. But there is a yearning, I am sure, which will some day lead her to hope and serenity.

It is about a year since I saw the death of General Lennox in the "Times," an event which took place rather suddenly at Vichy. I am told that his will contains no allusion to Lady Jane. This, however, was to have been expected, for the deed of separation had amply provided for her; so now she is free. But I have lately heard from old Lady Alice, who keeps her memory and activity wonderfully, and maintains a correspondence with old Donnie Gwynn, that she shows no symptom of a disposition to avail herself of her liberty. I have lived long enough to be surprised at nothing, and therefore should not wonder if hereafter she should do so.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE LAST.

Old Lady Alice, who liked writing and reading letters, kept up an active correspondence with her grandson, and that dutiful young gentleman received them with a punctuality that did him honor.

Shortly after Lady Jane Lennox's departure from Wardlock, Lady Alice Redcliffe and her fair young charge, Beatrix, arrived at that discreet old dower house. Old Lady Alice, who, when moved, could do a good-natured thing, pitying the solitariness of her pretty guest, so soon as she thought her spirits would bear it, invited first the Miss Radlowes, and afterward the Miss Winkletons—lively young ladies of Beatrix's time of life—who helped to make Wardlock less depressing. These hospitalities led to "invites;" and so the time passed over without the tedium that might have been looked for, until the period drew near when Beatrix was to make the Italian tour she had arranged with that respectable and by no means disagreeable family, the Fentons of Appleby. A rumour reached Guy that Drayton was to be one of the party. This certainly was not pleasant. He alluded to it in his next letter, but Lady Alice chose to pass the subject by.

There has been no step actually taken in the threatened lawsuit since the death of Sir Jekyl. But there were unpleasant rumors, and Pelter and Crowe were in communication with the Rev. Sir Dives Marlowe on the subject, and he occasionally communicated his peevish sense of poor Jekyl's unreasonableness in having died just when everything was at sixes and sevens, and the unfairness of his having all the trouble and so little of the estates.

Varbarriere, I suppose, was on good terms once more with his nephew. There was no more talk of Algeria, and they were now again in London. That corpulent old gentleman used to smile with an unctuous scorn over the long letters with which Lady Alice occasionally favored him.

"My faith! she must suppose I have fine leisure, good eyes also, to read all that. I wish, Guy, she would distinguish only you with her correspondence. I suppose if I never answer her, she will cease some time."

He had a letter from her while in London, on which he discoursed in the above vein. I doubt that he had ever read it through.

Guy received one by the same post, in the conclusion of which she said—

"Beatrix Marlowe goes in a few days, with the Fentons, to Paris, and thence to Italy. My house will then be a desert, and I miserably solitary, unless you and your uncle will come to me, as you long since promised, and as you well know there is nothing to prevent. I have written to him, naming Wednesday week. I shall then have rooms in which to place you, and you positively must not refuse."

Under this hospitable pressure, Varbarriere resolved to make a visit to Wardlock—a flying visit of a day and night—rather to hear what she might have to say than to enjoy that excellent lady's society. From Slowton, having there got rid of their railway dust and vapor, the gentlemen reached Wardlock at the approach of evening. In the hall they found old Lady Alice, her thin stooping figure cloaked and shawled for a walk, and her close bonnet shading her hollow and wrinkled face.

Hospitable in her way, and really glad to see her guests, was the crone. She would have dismantled and unbonnetted, and called for luncheon, and would have led the way into the parlor; but they would not hear of such things, having refreshed at Slowton, and insisted instead on joining the old lady in her walk.

There is a tall glass door in the back hall, which opens on the shorn grass, and through it they passed into the circumscribed but pretty pleasure-ground, a quadrangle, of which the old house, overgrown with jessamine and woodbine, formed nearly one side; the opposite garden wall, overtopped with ancient fruit-trees, another; and screens of tall-stemmed birch and ash, and an underwood of juniper and evergreens, the others; beds of brilliant verbena here and there patterned the green sod; and the whole had an air so quaint and cloister-like, as drew forth some honest sentences of admiration from old Varbarriere.

They strolled among these flowers in this pleasant seclusion for a time, until Lady Alice pronounced herself fatigued, and sat

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