

Prodigal yonder among the bad company, calling black-and-red and tossing the champagne; or Brother Straightlace, that grudges his repentance? Is it downcast Hagar, that slinks away with poor little Ishmael in her hand; or bitter old virtuous Sarah, who scowls at her from my demure Lord Abraham's arm?

One day of the previous May, when of course everybody went to visit the Water-color Exhibition, Ethel Newcome was taken to see the pictures by her grandmother, that rigorous old Lady Kew, who still proposed to reign over all her family. The girl had high spirit, and very likely hot words had passed between the elder and the younger lady; such as, I am given to understand, will be uttered in the most polite families. They came to a piece by Mr. Hunt, representing one of those figures which he knows how to paint with such consummate truth and pathos—a friendless young girl cowering in a doorway, evidently without home or shelter. The exquisite fidelity of the details, and the plaintive beauty of the expression of the child, attracted old Lady Kew's admiration, who was an excellent judge of works of art; and she stood for some time looking at the drawing, with Ethel by her side. Nothing, in truth, could be more simple or pathetic; Ethel laughed; and her grandmother, looking up from her stick on which she hobbled about, saw a very sarcastic expression in the girl's eyes.

"You have no taste for pictures, only for painters, I suppose," said Lady Kew.

"I was not looking at the picture," said Ethel, still with a snile, "but at the little green ticket in the corner."

"Sold," said Lady Kew. "Of course it is sold; all Mr. Hunt's pictures are sold. There is not one of them here on which you won't see the green ticket. He is a most admirable artist. I don't know whether his comedy or tragedy are the most excellent."

"I think grandmamma," Ethel said, "we young ladies in the world, when we are exhibiting, ought to have little green tickets pinned on our backs, with 'Sold' written on them; it would prevent trouble and any future haggling, you know. Then, at the end of the season, the owner would come to carry us home."

Grandmamma only said, "Ethel, you are a fool," and hobbled on to Mr. Cattermole's picture hard by. "What splendid color; what a romantic gloom; what a flowing pencil and dexterous hand!" Lady Kew could delight in pictures, ap-

plaud good poetry, and squeeze out a tear over a good novel, too. That afternoon, young Dawkins, the rising water-color artist, who used to come daily to the gallery and stand delighted before his own piece, was aghast to perceive that there was no green ticket in the corner of the frame, and he pointed out the deficiency to the keeper of the pictures. His landscape, however, was sold and paid for, so no great mischief occurred. On that same evening, when the Newcome family assembled at dinner in Park Lane, Ethel appeared with a bright green ticket pinned in the front of her white muslin frock, and when asked what this queer fancy meant, she made Lady Kew a courtesy, looking her full in the face, and turning round to her father, said, "I am a tableau-vivant, papa. I am No. 46 in the Exhibition of the Gallery of Painters in Water-colors."

"My love, what do you mean?" says mamma; and Lady Kew, jumping up on her crooked stick with immense agility, tore the card out of Ethel's bosom, and very likely would have boxed her ears, but that her parents were present, and Lord Kew was announced.

Ethel talked about pictures the whole evening, and would talk of nothing else. Grandmamma went away furious. "She told Barnes, and when everybody was gone there was a pretty row in the building," said Madam Ethel, with an arch look, when she narrated the story. "Barnes was ready to kill me and eat me; but I never was afraid of Barnes." And the biographer gathers from this little anecdote narrated to him, never mind by whom, at a long subsequent period, that there had been great disputes in Sir Brian Newcome's establishment, fierce drawing-room battles, whereof certain pictures of a certain painter might have furnished the cause, and in which Miss Newcome had the whole of the family forces against her. That such battles take place in other domestic establishments, who shall say or shall not say? Who, when he goes out to dinner, and is received by a bland host with a gay shake of the hand, and a pretty hostess with a gracious smile of welcome, dares to think that Mr. Johnson upstairs, half an hour before, was swearing out of his dressing room at Mrs. Johnson, for having ordered a turbot instead of a salmon, or that Mrs. Johnson, now talking to Lady Jones so nicely about their mutual darling children, was crying her eyes out as her maid was fastening her gown, as the carriages were actually driving up? The servants know these things, but

not we in the dining room. Hark, with what a respectful tone Johnson begs the clergyman present to say grace!

Whatever these family quarrels may have been, let bygones be bygones, and let us be perfectly sure, that to whatever purpose Miss Ethel Newcome, for good or evil, might make up her mind, she had quite spirit enough to hold her own. She chose to be Countess of Kew because she chose to be Countess of Kew; had she set her heart on marrying Mr. Kuhn, she would have had her way, and made the family adopt it, and called him dear Fritz, as by his godfathers and godmothers, in his baptism, Mr. Kuhn was called. Clive was but a fancy, if he had even been so much as that, not a passion, and she fancied a pretty four-pronged coronet still more.

So that the diatribe wherein we lately indulged, about the selling of virgins, by no means applies to Lady Ann Newcome, who signed the address to Mrs. Stowe, the other day, along with thousands more virtuous British matrons; but should the reader haply say, "Is thy fable, oh poet, narrated concerning Tancred Pulleyn, Earl of Dorking, and Sigismunda, his wife?" the reluctant moralist is obliged to own that the cap does fit those noble personages, of whose lofty society you will however see but little.

For though I would like to go into an Indian Brahmin's house and see the punkahs and the purdahs and tattys, and the pretty brown maidens with great eyes, and great nose rings, and painted foreheads, and slim waists cased in Cashmere shawls, Kincob scarfs, curly slippers, gilt trousers, precious anklets and bangles; and have the mystery of Eastern existence revealed to me (as who would not who has read the "Arabian Nights," in his youth?), yet I would not choose the moment when the Brahmin of the house was dead, his women howling, his priests doctoring the child of a widow, now frightening her with sermons, now drugging her with bang, so as to push her on his funeral pile at last, and into the arms of that carcass, stupefied, but obedient and decorous. And though I like to walk, even in fancy, in an earl's house, splendid, well ordered, where there are feasts and fine pictures, and fair ladies, and endless books, and good company; yet there are times when the visit is not pleasant; and when the parents in that fine house are getting ready their daughter for sale, and frightening away her tears with threats, and stupefying her grief with narcotics, praying her and imploring her, and dramming her and coaxing her, and blessing her, and cursing

her perhaps, till they have brought her into such a state as shall fit the poor young thing for that deadly couch upon which they are about to thrust her—when my lord and lady are so engaged I prefer not to call at their mansion, No. 1000 in Grosvenor Square, but to partake of a dinner of herbs rather than of that stalled ox which their cook is roasting whole. There are some people who are not so squeamish. The family comes of course; the most reverend the Lord Arch-Brahmin of Benares will attend the ceremony; there will be flowers, and lights, and white favors; and quite a string of carriages up to the pagoda; and such a breakfast afterward; and music in the street and little parish boys hurraing; and no end of speeches within and tears shed (no doubt), and his grace the Arch-Brahmin will make a highly appropriate speech (just with a feint scent of incense about it, as such a speech ought to have), and the young person will slip away unperceived, and take off her veils, wreaths, orange flowers, bangles, and finery, and will put on a plain dress more suited for the occasion, and the house door will open—and there comes the suttee in company of the body; yonder the pile is waiting on four wheels with four horses, the crowd hurrahs, and the deed is done.

The ceremony among us is so stale and common that, to be sure, there is no need to describe its rites, and as women sell themselves for what you call an establishment every day, to the applause of themselves, their parents, and the world, why on earth should a man ape originality, and pretend to pity them? Never mind about the lies at the altar, the blasphemy against the godlike name of love, the sordid surrender, the smiling dishonor. What the deuce does a *mariage de convenance* mean but all this, and are not such sober Hymeneal torches more satisfactory often than the most brilliant love matches that ever flamed and burnt out? Of course. Let us not weep when everybody else is laughing; let us pity the agonized duchess when her daughter, Lady Atalanta, runs away with the doctor—of course, that's respectable; let us pity Lady Iphigenia's father when that venerable chief is obliged to offer up his darling child; but it is over her part of the business that a decorous painter would throw the veil now. Her ladyship's sacrifice is performed, and the less said about it the better.

Such was the case regarding an affair which appeared in due subsequence in the newspapers not long afterward under the fascinating title of "Marriage in High Life," and which

was in truth the occasion of the little family Congress of Baden which we are now chronicling. We all know—everybody, at least, who has the slightest acquaintance with the army list—that, at the commencement of their life, my Lord Kew, my Lord Viscount Rooster (the Earl of Dorking's eldest son), and the Hon. Charles Belsize, familiarly called Jack Belsize, were subaltern officers in one of his Majesty's regiments of cuirassier guards. They heard the chimes at midnight like other young men, they enjoyed their fun and frolics as gentlemen of spirit will do; sowing their wild oats plentifully, and scattering them with boyish profusion. Lord Kew's luck had blessed him with more sacks of oats than fell to the lot of his noble young companions. Lord Dorking's house is known to have been long impoverished; an excellent informant, Major Pendennis, has entertained me with many edifying accounts of the exploits of Lord Rooster's grandfather "with the wild Prince and Poins," of his feasts in the hunting field, over the bottle, over the dice-box. He played two nights and two days at a sitting with Charles Fox, when they both lost sums awful to reckon. He played often with Lord Steyne, and came away, as all men did, a dreadful sufferer from those midnight encounters. His descendants incurred the penalties of the progenitor's imprudence, and Chanticleere, though one of the finest castles in England, is splendid but for a month in the year. The estate is mortgaged up to the very castle windows. "Dorking cannot cut a stick or kill a buck in his own park," the good old Major used to tell with tragic accents; "he lives by his cabbages, grapes, and pineapples, and the fees which people give for seeing the place and gardens, which are still the show of the county, and among the most splendid in the island. When Dorking is at Chanticleere, Ballard, who married his sister, lends him the plate and sends three men with it. Four cooks inside, and four maids and six footmen on the roof, with a butler driving, come down from London in a trap, and wait the month. And as the last carriage of the company drives away, the servants' coach is packed, and they all bowl back to town again. It's pitiable, sir, pitiable."

In Lord Kew's youth, the names of himself and his two noble friends appeared on innumerable slips of stamped paper, conveying pecuniary assurances of a promissory nature; all of which promises, my Lord Kew singly and most honorably discharged. Neither of his two companions in arms had the means of meeting these engagements. Ballard, Rooster's uncle,

was said to make his lordship some allowance. As for Jack Belsize; how he lived; how he laughed; how he dressed himself so well, and looked so fat and handsome; how he got a shilling to pay for a cab or a cigar; what ravens fed him; was a wonder to all. The young men claimed kinsmanship with one another, which those who are learned in the peerage may unravel.

When Lord Dorking's eldest daughter married the Honorable and Venerable Dennis Gallowglass, Archdeacon of Ballintubber (and at present Viscount Gallowglass and Killbrogue, and Lord Bishop of Ballyshannon), great festivities took place at Chanticleere, whither the relatives of the high contracting parties were invited. Among them came poor Jack Belsize, and hence the tears which are dropping at Baden at this present period of our history. Clara Pulleyn was then a pretty little maiden of sixteen, and Jack a handsome guardsman of six or seven and twenty. As she had been especially warned against Jack as a wicked young rogue, whose antecedents were woefully against him; as she was never allowed to sit near him, at dinner, or to walk with him, or to play at billiards with him, or to waltz with him; as she was scolded if he spoke a word to her, or if he picked up her glove, or touched her hand in a round game, or she caught him when they were playing at blindman's buff; as they neither of them had a penny in the world, and were both very good-looking, of course Clara was always catching Jack at blindman's buff; constantly lighting upon him in the shrubberies or corridors, etc., etc., etc. She fell in love (she was not the first) with Jack's broad chest and thin waist; she thought his whiskers, as indeed they were, the handsomest pair in all his Majesty's Brigade of Cuirassiers.

We know not what tears were shed in the vast and silent halls of Chanticleere, when the company was gone, and the four cooks, and four maids, six footmen, and temporary butler had driven back in their private trap to the metropolis, which is not forty miles distant from the splendid castle. How can we tell? The guests departed, the lodge gates shut; all is mystery—darkness with one pair of wax candles blinking dimly in a solitary chamber; all the rest dreary vistas of brown holland, rolled Turkey carpets, gaunt ancestors on the walls scowling out of the twilight blank. The imagination is at liberty to depict his lordship, with one candle, over his dreadful endless tapes and papers; her ladyship with the other, and an old, old novel, wherein, perhaps, Mrs. Radcliffe de-

scribes a castle as dreary as her own; and poor little Clara sighing and crying in the midst of these funereal splendors, as lonely and heart-sick as Oriana in her moated grange—poor little Clara!

Lord Kew's drag took the young men to London; his lordship driving, and the servants sitting inside. Jack sat behind with the two grooms, and tooted on a cornet-à-piston in the most melancholy manner. He partook of no refreshment on the road. His silence at his clubs was remarked; smoking, billiards, military duties, and this and that, roused him a little, and presently Jack was alive again. But then came the season, Lady Clara Pulleyn's first season in London, and Jack was more alive than ever. There was no ball he did not go to; no opera (that is to say, no opera of certain operas) which he did not frequent. It was easy to see by his face, two minutes after entering a room, whether the person he sought was there or absent; not difficult for those who were in the secret to watch in another pair of eyes the bright, kindling signals which answered Jack's fiery glances. Ah! how beautiful he looked on his charger on the birthday, all in a blaze of scarlet and bullion and steel. O Jack! tear her out of yon carriage, from the side of yonder livid, feathered, painted, bony dowager! place her behind you on the black charger; cut down the policeman, and away with you! The carriage rolls in through St. James' Park; Jack sits alone with his sword dropped to the ground, or only *altra cura* on the crupper behind him; and Snip, the tailor, in the crowd, thinks it is for fear of him Jack's head droops. Lady Clara Pulleyn is presented by her mother, the Countess of Dorking; and Jack is arrested that night as he is going out of White's to meet her at the Opera.

Jack's little exploits are known in the Insolvent Court, where he made his appearance as Charles Belsize, whose dealings were smartly chronicled by the indignant moralists of the press of those days. The Scourge flogged him heartily. The Whip (of which the accomplished editor was himself in Whitecross Street Prison) was especially virtuous regarding him; and the Penny Voice of Freedom gave him an awful dressing. I am not here to scourge sinners; I am true to my party; it is the other side this humble pen attacks; let us keep to the virtuous and respectable, for as for poor sinners they get the whipping post every day. One person was faithful to poor Jack through all his blunders and follies, and extravagance and misfortunes, and that was the pretty young girl of

Chanticleere, round whose young affections his luxuriant whiskers had curled. And the world may cry out at Lord Kew for sending his brougham to the Queen's Bench prison, and giving a great feast at Grignon's to Jack on the day of his liberation; but I for one will not quarrel with his lordship. He and many other sinners had a jolly night. They said Kew made a fine speech, in hearing and acknowledging which Jack Belsize wept copiously. Barnes Newcome was in a rage at Jack's manumission, and sincerely hoped Mr. Commissioner would give him a couple of years longer; and cursed and swore with a great liberality on hearing of his liberty.

That this poor prodigal should marry Clara Pulleyn, and, by way of a dowry, lay his schedule at her feet, was out of the question. His noble father Lord Highgate was furious against him; his eldest brother would not see him; he had given up all hopes of winning his darling prize long ago; and one day there came to him a great packet bearing the seal of Chanticleere, containing a wretched little letter signed C. P., and a dozen sheets of Jack's own clumsy writing, delivered who knows how, in what crush rooms, quadrilles, bouquets, balls, and in which were scrawled Jack's love, and passion, and ardor. How many a time had he looked into the dictionary at White's to see whether eternal was spelt with an e, and adore with one a or two! There they were, the incoherent utterances of his brave, longing heart; and those two wretched lines signed C., begging that C.'s little letters might, too, be returned or destroyed. To do him justice he burnt them loyally, every one, along with his own waste paper. He kept not one single little token which she had given him, or let him take. The rose, the glove, the little handkerchief which she had dropped to him, how he cried over them! The ringlet of golden hair—he burnt them all, all in his own fire in prison, save a little, little bit of the hair, which might be anyone's, which was the color of his sister's. Kew saw the deed done; perhaps he hurried away when Jack came to the very last part of the sacrifice, and flung the hair into the fire, where he would have liked to fling his heart and his life too.

So Clara was free, and the year when Jack came out of prison and went abroad, she passed the season in London, dancing about night after night, and everybody said she was well out of that silly affair with Jack Belsize. It was then that Barnes Newcome, Esq., a partner in the wealthy banking firm of Hobson Brothers & Newcome, son and heir of Sir Brian

Newcome, of Newcome, Bart. and M. P., descended in right line from Bryan de Newcomyn, slain at Hastings, and barber-surgeon to Edward the Confessor, etc., etc., cast the eyes of regard on the Lady Clara Pulleyn, who was a little pale and languid certainly, but had blue eyes, a delicate skin, and a pretty person, and knowing her previous history as well as you who have just perused it, deigned to entertain matrimonial intentions toward her ladyship.

Not one of the members of these most respectable families, excepting poor little Clara perhaps, poor little fish (as if she had any call but to do her duty, and to ask *à quelle sauce elle serait mangée* protested against this little affair of traffic; Lady Dorking had a brood of little chickens to succeed Clara. There was little Hennie, who was sixteen, and Biddy, who was fourteen, and Adelaide, and who knows how many more. How could she refuse a young man, not very agreeable, it is true, nor particularly amiable, nor of good birth, at least on his father's side, but otherwise eligible, and heir to so many thousands a year? The Newcomes, on their side, think it a desirable match. Barnes, it must be confessed, is growing rather selfish, and has some bachelor ways which a wife will reform. Lady Kew is strong for the match. With her own family interest, Lord Steyne and Lord Kew, her nephew's and Barnes' own father-in-law, Lord Dorking, in the Peers; why shall not the Newcomes sit there too, and resume the old seat which all the world knows they had in the time of Richard III.? Barnes and his father had got up quite a belief about a Newcome killed at Bosworth, along with King Richard, and hated Henry VII. as an enemy of their noble race. So all the parties were pretty well agreed. Lady Ann wrote rather a pretty little poem about welcoming the white Fawn to the Newcome bowers, and "Clara" was made to rhyme with "fairer" and "timid does and antlered deer to dot the glades of Chanticleere," quite in a picturesque way. Lady Kew pronounced that the poem was very pretty indeed.

The year after Jack Belsize made his foreign tour he returned to London for the season. Lady Clara did not happen to be there; her health was a little delicate, and her kind parents took her abroad; so all things went on very smoothly and comfortably indeed.

Yes, but when things were so quiet and comfortable, when the ladies of the two families had met at the Congress of Baden, and liked each other so much; when Barnes and his

papa the Baronet, recovered from his illness, were actually on their journey from Aix-la-Chapelle, and Lady Kew in motion from Kissingen to the Congress of Baden; why on earth should Jack Belsize, haggard, wild, having been winning great sums, it was said, at Hombourg; forsake his luck there, and run over frantically to Baden? He wore a great thick beard, a great slouched hat—he looked like nothing more or less than a painter or an Italian brigand. Unsuspecting Clive, remembering the jolly dinner which Jack had procured for him at the Guards' mess in St. James', whither Jack himself came from the Horse Guards—simple Clive, seeing Jack enter the town, hailed him cordially, and invited him to dinner, and Jack accepted, and Clive told him all the news he had of the place, how Kew was there, and Lady Ann Newcome, and Ethel; and Barnes was coming. "I am not very fond of him either," says Clive, smiling, when Belsize mentioned his name. So Barnes was coming to marry that pretty little Lady Clara Pulleyn. The knowing youth! I dare say he was rather pleased with his knowledge of the fashionable world, and the idea that Jack Belsize would think he, too, was somebody.

Jack drank an immense quantity of champagne, and the dinner over, as they could hear the band playing from Clive's open windows in the snug, clean little Hôtel de France; Jack proposed they should go on the promenade. M. de Florac was of the party; he had been exceedingly jocular when Lord Kew's name was mentioned, and said, "Ce petit Kiou! M. le Duc d'Ivry, mon oncle, l'honore d'une amitié toute particulière." These three gentlemen walked out; the promenade was crowded, the band was playing "Home, sweet Home" very sweetly, and the very first persons they met on the walk were the Lords of Kew and Dorking, on the arm of which latter venerable peer his daughter Lady Clara was hanging.

Jack Belsize, in a velvet coat, with a sombrero slouched over his face, with a beard reaching to his waist, was, no doubt, not recognized at first by the noble Lord of Dorking, for he was greeting the other two gentlemen with his usual politeness and affability; when, of a sudden, Lady Clara looking up, gave a little shriek and fell down lifeless on the gravel walk. Then the old earl recognized Mr. Belsize, and Clive heard him say, "You villain, how dare you come here?"

Belsize had flung himself down to lift up Clara, calling her frantically by her name, when old Dorking sprang to seize him. "Hands off, my lord," said the other, shaking the old man

from his back. "Confound you, Jack, hold your tongue," roars out Kew. Clive runs for a chair, and a dozen were forthcoming. Florae skips back with a glass of water. Belsize runs toward the awaking girl; and the father, for an instant, losing all patience and self-command, trembling in every limb, lifts his stick, and says again, "Leave her, you ruffian." "Lady Clara has fainted again, sir," says Captain Belsize. "I am staying at the Hôtel de France. If you touch me, old man" (this in a very low voice), "by Heaven I shall kill you. I wish you good-morning;" and taking a last long look at the lifeless girl, he lifts his hat and walks away. Lord Dorking mechanically takes his hat off, and stands stupidly gazing after him. He beckoned Clive to follow him, and a crowd of the frequenters of the place are by this time closed round the fainting young lady.

Here was a pretty incident in the Congress of Baden!

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN WHICH BARNES COMES A-WOOING.

Ethel had all along known that her holiday was to be a short one, and that, her papa and Barnes arrived, there was to be no more laughing and fun, and sketching and walking with Clive; so she took the sunshine while it lasted, determined to bear with a stout heart the bad weather.

Sir Brian Newcome and his eldest born arrived at Baden on the very night of Jack Belsize's performance upon the promenade; of course it was necessary to inform the young bridegroom of the facts. His acquaintances of the public, who by this time know his temper, and are acquainted with his language, can imagine the explosions of the one and the vehemence of the other; it was a perfect *feu d'artifice* of oaths which he sent up. Mr. Newcome only fired off these volleys of curses when he was in a passion, but then he was in a passion very frequently.

As for Lady Clara's little accident, he was disposed to treat that very lightly. "Poor dear Clara, of course, of course," he said, "she's been accustomed to fainting fits; no wonder she was agitated on the sight of that villain, after his infernal treatment of her. If I had been there" (a volley of oaths

comes here along the whole line) "I should have strangled the scoundrel; I should have murdered him."

"Mercy, Barnes," cries Lady Ann.

"It was a mercy Barnes was not there," says Ethel gravely; "a fight between him and Captain Belsize would have been awful indeed."

"I am afraid of no man, Ethel," says Barnes fiercely, with another oath.

"Hit one of your own size, Barnes," says Miss Ethel (who had a number of school-phrases from her little brothers, and used them on occasions skillfully). "Hit Captain Belsize, he has got no friends."

As Jack Belsize from his height and strength was fitted to be not only an officer but actually a private in his former gallant regiment, and brother Barnes was but a puny young gentleman, the idea of a personal conflict between them was rather ridiculous. Some notion of this sort may have passed through Sir Brian's mind, for the baronet said with his usual solemnity, "It is the cause, Ethel, it is the cause, my dear, which gives strength. In such a cause as Barnes', with a beautiful young creature to protect from a villain, any man would be strong, any man would be strong." "Since his last attack," Barnes used to say, "my poor old governor is exceedingly shaky, very groggy about the head," which was the fact. Barnes was already master at Newcome and the bank, and awaiting with perfect composure the event which was to place the blood-red hand of the Newcome baronetcy on his own brougham.

Casting his eyes about the room, a heap of drawings, the work of a well-known hand which he hated, met his eye; there were a half-dozen sketches of Baden; Ethel on horseback again; the children and dogs just in the old way. "D— him, is he here?" screams out Barnes. "Is that young pothouse villain here? and hasn't Kew knocked his head off? Clive Newcome is here, sir!" he cries out to his father. "The Colonel's son. I have no doubt they met by—"

"By what, Barnes?" says Ethel.

"Clive is here, is he?" says the Baronet; "making caricatures, hey? You did not mention him in your letters, Lady Ann."

Sir Brian was evidently very much touched by his last attack.

Ethel blushed; it was a curious fact, but there had been no mention of Clive in the ladies' letters to Sir Brian.