

band in England, poor Ethel's eyes filled with tears; we must remember that her high spirit was worn down by watching and much varied anxiety, and then she confessed that there had been no reconciliation, as all the family fancied, between Frank and herself—on the contrary, a parting, which she understood to be final; and she owned that her conduct toward her cousin had been most capricious and cruel, and that she could not expect they should ever again come together. Lady Kew, who hated sick-beds and surgeons, except for herself; who hated her daughter-in-law above all, was greatly annoyed at the news which Ethel gave her; made light of it, however, and was quite confident that a very few words from her would place matters on their old footing, and determined on forthwith setting out for Kehl. She would have carried Ethel with her, but that the poor Baronet with cries and moans insisted on retaining his nurse, and Ethel's grandmother was left to undertake this mission by herself, the girl remaining behind, acquiescent, not unwilling; owning openly a great regard and esteem for Kew, and the wrong which she had done him; feeling secretly a sentiment which she had best smother. She had received a letter from that other person, and answered it, with her mother's cognizance, but about this little affair neither Lady Ann nor her daughter happened to say a word to the manager of the whole family.

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

##### IN WHICH LADY KEW LEAVES HIS LORDSHIP QUITE CONVALESCENT.

Immediately after Lord Kew's wound, and as it was necessary to apprise the Newcome family of the accident which had occurred, the good-natured young Kew had himself written a brief note to acquaint his relatives with his mishap, and had even taken the precaution to antedate a couple of billets to be dispatched on future days; kindly forgeries, which told the Newcome family and the Countess of Kew that Lord Kew was progressing very favorably, and that his hurt was trifling. The fever had set in, and the young patient was lying in great danger, as most of the laggards at Baden knew, when his friends there were set at ease by this fallacious bulletin. On the third day after the accident Lady Walham arrived with

her younger son, to find Lord Kew in the fever which ensued after the wound. As the terrible anxiety during the illness had been Lady Walham's, so was hers the delight of the recovery. The commander-in-chief of the family, the old lady at Baden, showed her sympathy by sending couriers, and repeatedly issuing orders to have news of Kew. Sick-beds scared her away invariably. When illness befell a member of her family she hastily retreated from before the sufferer, showing her agitation of mind, however, by excessive ill-humor to all the others within her reach.

A fortnight passed, a ball had been found and extracted, the fever was over, the wound was progressing favorably, the patient advancing toward convalescence, and the mother, with her child once more under her wing, happier than she had been for seven years past, during which her young prodigal had been running the thoughtless career of which he himself was weary, and which had occasioned the fond lady such anguish. Those doubts which perplex many a thinking man, and when formed and uttered, give many a fond and faithful woman pain so exquisite, had most fortunately never crossed Kew's mind. His early impressions were such as his mother had left them, and he came back to her as she would have him, as a little child, owning his faults with a hearty, humble repentance, and with a thousand simple confessions lamenting the errors of his past days. We have seen him tired and ashamed of the pleasures which he was pursuing; of the companions who surrounded him, of the brawls and dissipation which amused him no more. In those hours of danger and doubt, when he had lain, with death perhaps before him, making up his account of the vain life which probably he would be called upon to surrender, no wonder this simple, kindly, modest, and courageous soul thought seriously of the past and of the future; and prayed, and resolved, if a future were awarded to him, it should make amends for the days gone by; and surely, as the mother and son read together the beloved assurance of the divine forgiveness, and of that joy which angels feel in heaven for a sinner repentant, we may fancy in the happy mother's breast a feeling somewhat akin to that angelic felicity, a gratitude and joy of all others the loftiest, the purest, the keenest. Lady Walham might shrink with terror at the Frenchman's name, but her son could forgive him, with all his heart, and kiss his mother's hand, and thank him as the best friend of his life.

During all the days of his illness, Kew had never once mentioned Ethel's name, and once or twice as his recovery progressed, when with doubt and tremor his mother alluded to it, he turned from the subject as one that was disagreeable and painful. Had she thought seriously on certain things? Lady Walham asked. Kew thought not; "but those who are bred up as you would have them, mother, are often none the better," the humble young fellow said. "I believe she is a very good girl. She is very clever, she is exceedingly handsome, she is very good to her parents and her brothers and sisters; but ——" he did not finish the sentence. Perhaps he thought, as he told Ethel afterward, that she would have agreed with Lady Walham even worse than with her imperious old grandmother.

Lady Walham then fell to deplore Sir Brian's condition, accounts of whose seizure, of course, had been dispatched to the Kehl party, and to lament that a worldly man as he was should have such an affliction, so near the grave and so little prepared for it. Here honest Kew, however, held out. "Every man for himself, mother," says he. "Sir Brian was bred up very strictly, perhaps too strictly, as a young man. Don't you know that that good Colonel, his elder brother, who seems to be about the most honest and good old gentleman I ever met in my life, was driven into rebellion and all sorts of wild courses by old Mrs. Newcome's tyranny over him? As for Sir Brian, he goes to church every Sunday; has prayers in the family every day; I'm sure has led a hundred times better life than I have, poor old Sir Brian. I often have thought, mother, that though our side was wrong, yours could not be altogether right, because I remember how my tutor, and Mr. Bonner, and Dr. Laud, when they used to come down to us at Kewbury, used to make themselves so unhappy about other people." So the widow withdrew her unhappiness about Sir Brian; she was quite glad to hope for the best regarding that invalid.

With some fears yet regarding her son—for many of the books with which the good lady traveled could not be got to interest him; at some he would laugh outright—with fear mixed with the maternal joy that he was returned to her, and had quitted his old ways; with keen feminine triumph, perhaps, that she had won him back, and happiness at his daily mending health, all Lady Walham's hours were passed in thankful and delighted occupation. George Barnes kept the Newcomes acquainted with the state of his brother's health.

The skillful surgeon from Strasburg reported daily better and better of him, and the little family were living in great peace and contentment, with one subject of dread, however, hanging over the mother of the two young men, the arrival of Lady Kew, the fierce old mother-in-law who had worsted Lady Walham in many a previous battle.

It was what they call the summer of St. Martin, and the weather was luckily very fine; Kew could presently be wheeled into the garden of the hotel, whence he could see the broad turbid current of the swollen Rhine; the French bank fringed with alders, the vast yellow fields behind them, the great avenue of poplars stretching away to the Alsatian city, and its purple minster yonder. Good Lady Walham was for improving the shining hour by reading amusing extracts from her favorite volumes, gentle anecdotes of Chinese and Hottentot converts, and incidents from missionary travel. George Barnes, a wily young diplomatist, insinuated Galignani, and hinted that Kew might like a novel; and a profane work called "Oliver Twist" having appeared about this time, which George read out to his family with admirable emphasis, it is a fact that Lady Walham became so interested in the parish boy's progress, that she took his history into her bedroom (where it was discovered, under Blatherwick's "Voice from Mesopotamia," by her ladyship's maid), and that Kew laughed so immensely at Mr. Bumble, the Beadle, as to endanger the reopening of his wound.

While, one day, they were so harmlessly and pleasantly occupied, a great whacking of whips, blowing of horns, and whirring of wheels was heard in the street without. The wheels stopped at their hotel gate; Lady Walham started up; ran through the garden door, closing it behind her; and divined justly who had arrived. The landlord was bowing; the courier pushing about; waiters in attendance; one of them, coming up to pale-faced Lady Walham, said, "Her Excellency the Frau Gräfinn von Kew is even now absteigend."

"Will you be good enough to walk into our salon, Lady Kew?" said the daughter-in-law, stepping forward and opening the door of the apartment. The Countess, leaning on her staff, entered that darkened chamber. She ran up toward an easy-chair, where she supposed Lord Kew was. "My dear Frank!" cries the old lady; "my dear boy, what a pretty fright you have given us all! They don't keep you in this horrid,

noisy room facing the — Ho—what is this?" cries the Countess, closing her sentence abruptly.

"It is not Frank. It is only a bolster, Lady Kew; and I don't keep him in a noisy room toward the street," said Lady Walham.

"Ho! how do you do? This is the way to him, I suppose;" and she went to another door—it was a cupboard full of the relics of Frank's illness, from which Lady Walham's mother-in-law shrank back aghast. "Will you please to see that I have a comfortable room, Maria; and one for my maid, next me? I will thank you to see, yourself," the Empress of Kew said, pointing with her stick, before which many a time the younger lady had trembled.

This time Lady Walham only rang the bell. "I don't speak German, and have never been on any floor of the house but this. Your servant had better see to your room, Lady Kew. That next is mine; and I keep the door, which you are trying, locked on the other side."

"And I suppose Frank is locked up there?" cried the old lady, "with a basin of gruel and a book of Watts' hymns." A servant entered at this moment, answering Lady Walham's summons. "Peacock, the Countess of Kew says that she proposes to stay here this evening. Please to ask the landlord to show her ladyship rooms," said Lady Walham; and by this time she had thought of a reply to Lady Kew's last kind speech.

"If my son were locked up in my room, madam, his mother is surely the best nurse for him. Why did you not come to him three weeks sooner, when there was nobody with him?"

Lady Kew said nothing, but glared and showed her teeth—those pearls set in gold.

"And my company may not amuse Lord Kew——"

"He—e—e!" grinned the elder savagely.

"But at least it is better than some to which you introduced my son," continued Lady Kew's daughter-in-law, gathering force and wrath as she spoke. "Your ladyship may think lightly of me, but you can hardly think so ill of me as of the Duchesse d'Ivry, I should suppose, to whom you sent my boy, to form him, you said; about whom, when I remonstrated—for though I live out of the world I hear of it sometimes—you were pleased to tell me I was a prude and a fool. It is you I thank for separating my child from me—yes, you—for so many years of my life; and for bringing me to him when he was bleeding and almost a corpse, but that God preserved him to

the widow's prayers—and you, you were by, and never came near him."

"I—I did not come to see you—or—or—for this kind of scene, Lady Walham," muttered the other. Lady Kew was accustomed to triumph by attacking in masses, like Napoleon. Those who faced her routed her.

"No; you did not come for me, I know very well," the daughter went on. "You loved me no better than you loved your son, whose life, as long as you meddled with it, you made wretched. You came here for my boy. Haven't you done him evil enough? And now God has mercifully preserved him, you want to lead him back again into ruin and crime. It shall not be so, wicked woman! bad mother! cruel, heartless parent—George!" (Here her younger son entered the room, and she ran toward him with fluttering robes and seized his hands.) "Here is your grandmother; here is the Countess of Kew, come from Baden at last; and she wants—she wants to take Frank from us, my dear, and to—give—him—back to the—Frenchwoman again. No, no! Oh, my God! Never! never!" And she flung herself into George Barnes' arms, fainting, with an hysterical burst of tears.

"You had best get a straight-waistcoat for your mother, George Barnes," Lady Kew said, scorn and hatred in her face. (If she had been Iago's daughter, with a strong likeness to her sire, Lord Steyne's sister could not have looked more diabolical.) "Have you had advice for her? Has nursing poor Kew turned her head? I came to see him. Why have I been left alone for half an hour with this madwoman? You ought not to trust her to give Frank medicine. It is positively——"

"Excuse me," said George, with a bow; "I don't think the complaint has as yet exhibited itself in my mother's branch of the family. (She always hated me," thought George; "but if she had by chance left me a legacy, there it goes.) You would like, ma'am, to see the rooms upstairs? Here is the landlord to conduct your ladyship. Frank will be quite ready to receive you when you come down. I am sure I need not beg of your kindness that nothing may be said to agitate him. It is barely three weeks since M. de Castillonnes' ball was extracted; and the doctors wish he should be kept as quiet as possible."

Be sure that the landlord, the courier, and the persons engaged in showing the Countess of Kew the apartments above spent an agreeable time with her Excellency the Frau Gräfinn von Kew. She must have had better luck in her encounter

with these than in her previous passages with her grandson and his mother; for when she issued from her apartment in a new dress and fresh cap, Lady Kew's face wore an expression of perfect serenity. Her attendant may have shaken her fist behind her, and her man's eyes and face looked Blitz and Donnerwetter; but her mistress' features wore that pleased look which they assumed when she had been satisfactorily punishing somebody. Lord Kew had by this time got back from the garden to his own room, where he awaited grandmamma. If the mother and her two sons had in the interval of Lady Kew's toilette tried to resume the history of Bumble the Beadle, I fear they could not have found it very comical.

"Bless me, my dear child! How well you look! Many a girl would give the world to have such a complexion. There is nothing like a mother for a nurse! Ah, no! Maria, you deserve to be the Mother Superior of a House of Sisters of Charity, you do. The landlord has given me a delightful apartment, thank you. He is an extortionate wretch; but I have no doubt I shall be very comfortable. The Dodsburys stopped here, I see, by the travelers' book—quite right, instead of sleeping at that odious buggy Strasburg. We have had a sad, sad time, my dears, at Baden. Between anxiety about poor Sir Brian, and about you, you naughty boy, I am sure I wonder how I have got through it all. Doctor Finck would not let me come away to-day; but I would come."

"I am sure it was uncommonly kind, ma'am," says poor Kew, with a rueful face.

"That horrible woman against whom I always warned you—but young men will not take the advice of old grandmamas—has gone away these ten days. M. le Duc fetched her; and if he locked her up at Montcontour, and kept her on bread and water for the rest of her life, I am sure he would serve her right. When a woman once forgets religious principles, Kew, she is sure to go wrong. The Conversation Room is shut up. The Dorkings go on Tuesday. Clara is really a dear little artless creature; one that you will like, Maria—and as for Ethel, I really think she is an angel. To see her nursing her poor father is the most beautiful sight; night after night she sat up with him. I know where she would like to be, the dear child. And if Frank falls ill again, Maria, he won't need a mother or useless old grandmother to nurse him. I have got some pretty messages to deliver from her; but they are for

your private ears, my lord; not even mammas and brothers may hear them."

"Do not go, mother! Pray stay, George!" cried the sick man (and again Lord Steyne's sister looked uncommonly like that lamented marquis). "My cousin is a noble young creature," he went on. "She has admirably good qualities, which I appreciate with all my heart; and her beauty, you know how I admire it. I have thought of her a great deal as I was lying on the bed yonder" (the family look was not so visible in Lady Kew's face), "and—and—I wrote to her this very morning; she will have the letter by this time, probably."

"Bien, Frank!" Lady Kew smiled (in her supernatural way) almost as much as her portrait, by Harlowe, as you may see it at Kewbury to this very day. She is represented seated before an easel, painting a miniature of her son, Lord Walham.

"I wrote to her on the subject of the last conversation we had together," Frank resumed, in rather a timid voice, "the day before my accident. Perhaps she did not tell you, ma'am, of what passed between us. We had had a quarrel; one of many. Some cowardly hand, which we both of us can guess at, had written to her an account of my past life, and she showed me the letter. Then I told her that if she loved me she never would have showed it me; without any other word of reproof I bade her farewell. It was not much, the showing that letter; but it was enough. In twenty differences we have had together she had been unjust and captious, cruel toward me, and too eager, as I thought, for other people's admiration. Had she loved me, it seemed to me Ethel would have shown less vanity and better temper. What was I to expect in life afterward from a girl who before her marriage used me so? Neither she nor I could be happy. She could be gentle enough, and kind, and anxious to please any man whom she loves, God bless her! As for me, I suppose, I'm not worthy of so much talent and beauty, so we both understood that that was a friendly farewell, and as I have been lying on my bed yonder, thinking perhaps I never might leave it, or if I did, that I should like to lead a different sort of life to that which ended in sending me there, my resolve of last month was only confirmed. Gor forbid that she and I should lead the lives of some folks we know; that Ethel should marry without love, perhaps to fall into it afterward; and that I, after this awful warning I have had, should be tempted back into that dreary life I was leading. It was wicked, ma'am, I knew it was;

many and many a day I used to say so to myself, and long to get rid of it. I am a poor, weak devil, I know; I am only too easily led into temptation, and I should only make matters worse if I married a woman who cares for the world more than for me, and would not make me happy at home."

"Ethel care for the world!" gasped out Lady Kew, "a most artless, simple, affectionate creature; my dear Frank, she——"

He interrupted her, as a blush came rushing over his pale face. "Ah!" said he, "if I had been the painter, and young Clive had been Lord Kew, which of us do you think she would have chosen? And she was right. He is a brave, handsome, honest young fellow, and is a thousand times cleverer and better than I am."

"Not better, dear, thank God," cried his mother, coming round to the other side of the sofa, and seizing her son's hand.

"No, I don't think he is better, Frank," said the diplomatist, walking away to the window with a choking voice. As for grandmamma at the end of this little speech and scene, her ladyship's likeness to her brother, the late revered Lord Steyne, was more frightful than ever.

After a minute's pause, she rose up on her crooked stick, and said, "I really feel I am unworthy to keep company with so much exquisite virtue. It will be enhanced, my lord, by the thought of the pecuniary sacrifice which you are making, for I suppose you know that I have been hoarding—yes, and saving and pinching—denying myself the necessities of life, in order that my grandson might one day have enough to support his rank. Go and live and starve in your dreary old house, and marry a parson's daughter, and sing psalms with your precious mother; and I have no doubt you and she—she who has thwarted me all through life, and whom I hated—yes, I hated from the moment she took my son from me and brought misery into my family—will be all the happier when she thinks that she has made a poor, fond, lonely woman more lonely and miserable. If you please, George Barnes, be good enough to tell my people that I shall go back to Baden;" and waving her children away from her, the old woman tottered out of the room on her crutch.

So the wicked Fairy drove away disappointed in her chariot with the very dragons which had brought her in the morning, and just had time to get their feed of black bread. I wonder whether they were the horses that Clive and J. J. and Jack

Belsize had used when they passed on their road to Switzerland? Black Care sits behind all sorts of horses, and gives a trinkgeld to postilions all over the map. A thrill of triumph may be permitted to Lady Walham after her victory over her mother-in-law. What Christian woman does not like to conquer another; and if that other were a mother-in-law, would the victory be less sweet? Husbands and wives both will be pleased that Lady Walham has had the better of this bout; and you, young boys and virgins, when your turn comes to be married, you will understand the hidden meaning of this passage. George Barnes got "Oliver Twist" out, and began to read therein. Miss Nancy and Fagin again were summoned before this little company to frighten and delight them. I dare say even Fagin and Miss Nancy failed with the widow, so absorbed was she with the thoughts of the victory which she had just won. For the evening service, in which her sons rejoiced her fond heart by joining, she lighted on a psalm which was as a Te Deum after the battle—the battle of Kehl by Rhine, where Kew's soul, as his mother thought, was the object of contention between the enemies. I have said, this book is all about the world, and a respectable family dwelling in it. It is not a sermon, except where it cannot help itself, and the speaker pursuing the destiny of his narrative finds such a homily before him. Oh, friend, in your life and mine, don't we light upon such sermons daily—don't we see at home as well as among our neighbors that battle betwixt Evil and Good? Here on one side is Self and Ambition and Advancement; and Right and Love on the other. Which shall we let to triumph for ourselves—which for our children?

The young men were sitting smoking the vesper cigar. (Frank would do it, and his mother actually lighted his cigar for him now, enjoining him straightway after to go to bed.) Kew smoked and looked at a star shining above in the heavens. "Which is that star?" he asked; and the accomplished young diplomatist answered it was Jupiter.

"What a lot of things you know, George!" cries the senior, delighted. "You ought to have been the elder; you ought, by Jupiter. But you have lost your chance this time."

"Yes, thank God!" says George.

"And I am going to be all right—and to turn over a new leaf, old boy—and paste down the old ones, eh? I wrote to Martins this morning to have all my horses sold; and I'll never bet again—so help me—so help me, Jupiter. I made a vow—

a promise to myself, you see, that I wouldn't if I recovered. And I wrote to cousin Ethel this morning. As I thought over the matter yonder, I felt quite certain I was right, and that we could never, never pull together. Now the Countess is gone I wonder whether I was right—to give up sixty thousand pounds and the prettiest girl in London?"

"Shall I take horses and go after her? My mother's gone to bed, she won't know," asked George. "Sixty thousand is a lot of money to lose."

Kew laughed. "If you were to go and tell our grandmother that I could not live the night through; and that you would be Lord Kew in the morning, and your son, Viscount Walham, I think the Countess would make up a match between you and the sixty thousand pounds, and the prettiest girl in England; she would, by—by Jupiter. I intend only to swear by the heathen gods now, Georgy. No, I am not sorry I wrote to Ethel. What a fine girl she is!—I don't mean her beauty merely, but such a noble-bred one! And to think that there she is in the market to be knocked down to—I say, I was going to call that three-year-old, Ethelinda. We must christen her over again for Tattersall's, Georgy."

A knock is heard through an adjoining door, and a maternal voice cries, "It is time to go to bed." So the brothers part, and, let us hope, sleep soundly.

The Countess of Kew, meanwhile, has returned to Baden; where, though it is midnight when she arrives, and the old lady has had two long bootless journeys, you will be grieved to hear that she does not sleep a single wink. In the morning she hobbles over to the Newcome quarters; and Ethel comes down to her, pale and calm. How is her father? He has had a good night; he is a little better, speaks more clearly, has a little more the use of his limbs.

"I wish I had had a good night!" groans out the Countess.

"I thought you were going to Lord Kew, at Kehl," remarked her granddaughter.

"I did go, and returned with wretches who would not bring me more than five miles an hour! I dismissed that brutal, grinning courier, and I have given warning to that fiend of a maid."

"And Frank is pretty well, grandmamma?"

"Well! He looks as pink as a girl in her first season! I found him, and his brother George, and their mamma. I

think Maria was hearing them their catechism," cries the old lady.

"N. and M. together! Very pretty," says Ethel gravely. "George has always been a good boy, and it is quite time for my Lord Kew to begin."

The elder lady looked at her descendant, but Miss Ethel's glance was impenetrable. "I suppose you can fancy, my dear, why I came back?" said Lady Kew.

"Because you quarreled with Lady Walham, grandmamma. I think I have heard that there used to be differences between you." Miss Newcome was armed for defense and attack; in which cases we have said Lady Kew did not care to assault her.

"My grandson told me that he had written to you," the Countess said.

"Yes, and had you waited but half an hour yesterday you might have spared me the humiliation of that journey."

"You—the humiliation—Ethel!"

"Yes, me," Ethel flashed out. "Do you suppose it is none to have me bandied about from bidder to bidder, and offered for sale to a gentleman who will not buy me? Why have you and all my family been so eager to get rid of me? Why should you suppose or desire that Lord Kew should like me? Hasn't he the opera, and such friends as Mme. la Duchesse d'Ivry, to whom your ladyship introduced him in early life? He told me so, and she was good enough to inform me of the rest. What attractions have I in comparison with such women? And to this man from whom I am parted by good fortune; to this man who writes to remind me that we are separated—your ladyship must absolutely go, and entreat him to give me another trial! It is too much, grandmamma. Do please to let me stay where I am, and worry me with no more schemes for my establishment in life. Be contented with the happiness which you have secured for Clara Pulleyn and Barnes, and leave me to take care of my poor father. Here I know I am doing right. Here, at least, there is no such sorrow, and doubt, and shame, for me, as my friends have tried to make me endure. There is my father's bell. He likes me to be with him at breakfast and to read his paper to him."

"Stay a little, Ethel," cried the Countess, with a trembling voice. "I am older than your father, and you owe me a little obedience, that is, if children do owe any obedience to their parents nowadays. I don't know. I am an old woman—the world perhaps has changed since my time; and it is you who

ought to command, I dare say, and we to follow. Perhaps I have been wrong all through life, and in trying to teach my children to do as I was made to do. God knows I have had very little comfort from them; whether they did or whether they didn't. You and Frank I had set my heart on; I loved you out of all my grandchildren—was it very unnatural that I should wish to see you together? For that boy I have been saving money these years past. He flies back to the arms of his mother, who has been pleased to hate me as only such virtuous people can; who took away my own son from me; and now his son—toward whom the only fault I ever committed was to spoil him and be too fond of him. Don't leave me too, my child. Let me have something that I can like at my years. And I like your pride, Ethel, and your beauty, my dear; and I am not angry with your hard words; and if I wish to see you in the place in life which becomes you—do I do wrong? No. Silly girl! There—give me the little hand. How hot it is! Mine is as cold as a stone—and shakes, doesn't it? Eh! it was a pretty hand once! What did Ann—what did your mother say to Frank's letter?"

"I did not show it to her," Ethel answered.

"Let me see it, my dear," whispered Lady Kew in a coaxing way.

"There it is," said Ethel, pointing to the fireplace, where there lay some torn fragments and ashes of paper. It was the same fireplace at which Clive's sketches had been burned.

#### END OF VOLUME I.

## THE NEWCOMES.

### Volume II.