

CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH WE WRITE TO THE COLONEL.

Deeming that her brother Barnes had cares enough of his own presently on hand, Ethel did not think fit to confide to him the particulars of her interview with Lord Farintosh; nor even was poor Lady Ann informed that she had lost a noble son-in-law. The news would come to both of them soon enough, Ethel thought; and indeed, before many hours were over, it reached Sir Barnes Newcome in a very abrupt and unpleasant way. He had dismal occasion now to see his lawyers every day; and on the day after Lord Farintosh's abrupt visit and departure, Sir Barnes, going into Newcome upon his own unfortunate affairs, was told by his attorney, Mr. Speers, how the Marquis of Farintosh had slept for a few hours at the King's Arms, and returned to town the same evening by the train. We may add that his lordship had occupied the very room in which Lord Highgate had previously slept; and Mr. Taplow recommends the bed accordingly, and shows it with pride to this very day.

Much disturbed by this intelligence, Sir Barnes was making his way to his cheerless home in the evening when near his own gate he overtook another messenger. This was the railway porter, who daily brought telegraphic messages from his uncle and the bank in London. The message of that day was: "Consols so and so. French Rentes so much. Highgate's and Farintosh's accounts withdrawn." The wretched keeper of the lodge owned with trembling in reply to the curses and queries of his employer, that a gentleman calling himself the Marquis of Farintosh had gone up to the house the day before, and come away an hour afterward—did not like to speak to Sir Barnes when he came home, Sir Barnes looked so bad like.

Now, of course, there could be no concealment from her brother, and Ethel and Barnes had a conversation, in which the latter expressed himself with that freedom of language which characterized the head of the house of Newcome. Mme. de Montcontour's pony chaise was in waiting at the hall door when the owner of the house entered it; and my

wife was just taking leave of Ethel and her little people when Sir Barnes Newcome entered the lady's sitting room.

The livid scowl with which Barnes greeted my wife surprised that lady, though it did not induce her to prolong her visit to her friend. As Laura took leave she heard Sir Barnes screaming to the nurses to "take those little beggars away," and she rightly conjectured that some more unpleasantness had occurred to disturb this luckless gentleman's temper.

On the morrow dearest Ethel's usual courier, one of the boys from the lodge, trotted over on his donkey to dearest Laura at Rosebury with one of those missives which were daily passing between the ladies. This letter said:

Barnes m'a fait une scène terrible hier. I was obliged to tell him everything about Lord F., and to use the plainest language. At first, he forbade you the house. He thinks that you have been the cause of F.'s dismissal, and charged me, most unjustly, with a desire to bring back poor C. N. I replied as became me, and told him fairly I would leave the house if odious, insulting charges were made against me, if my friends were not received. He stormed, he cried, he employed his usual language—he was in a dreadful state. He relented, and asked pardon. He goes to town to-night by the mail train. Of course you come as usual, dear Laura. I am miserable without you; and you know I cannot leave poor mamma. Clarykin sends a thousand kisses to little Arty, and I am his mother's always affectionate
E. N.

Will the gentlemen like to shoot our pheasants? Please ask the Prince to let Warren know when. I sent a brace to poor, dear old Mrs. Mason, and had such a nice letter from her!

"And who is poor, dear Mrs. Mason?" asks Mr. Pendennis, as yet but imperfectly acquainted with the history of the Newcomes.

And Laura told me—perhaps I had heard before, and forgotten—that Mrs. Mason was an old nurse and pensioner of the Colonel's, and how he had been to see her for the sake of old times, and how she was a great favorite with Ethel; and Laura kissed her little son, and was exceedingly bright, cheerful, and hilarious that evening, in spite of the affliction under which her dear friends at Newcome were laboring.

People in country houses should be exceedingly careful about their blotting paper. They should bring their own portfolios with them. If any kind readers will bear this simple little hint in mind, how much mischief may they save themselves—

may, enjoy, possibly, by looking at the pages of the next portfolio in the next friend's bedroom in which they sleep. From such a book I once cut out, in Charles Slyboots' well-known and perfectly clear handwriting, the words, "Miss Emily Harrington, James Street, Buckingham Gate, London," and produced as legibly on the blotting paper as on the envelope which the postman delivered. After showing the paper round to the company I inclosed it in a note and sent it to Mr. Slyboots, who married Miss Harrington three months afterward. In such a book at the club I read, as plainly as you may read this page, a holograph page of the Right Honorable the Earl of Bareacres, which informed the whole club of a painful and private circumstance, and said, "My dear Green—I am truly sorry that I shall not be able to take up the bill for £856 which becomes due next Tu. . . ."; and upon such a book, going to write a note in Mme. de Montecour's drawing room at Rosebury, what should I find but proofs that my own wife was engaged in a clandestine correspondence with a gentleman residing abroad!

"Colonel Newcome, C. B., Montagne de la Cour, Brussels," I read in this young woman's handwriting; and asked, turning round upon Laura, who entered the room just as I discovered her guilt: "What have you been writing to Colonel Newcome about, miss?"

"I wanted him to get me some lace," she said.

"To lace some nightcaps for me, didn't you, my dear? He is such a fine judge of lace! If I had known you had been writing, I would have asked you to send him a message. I want something from Brussels. Is the letter—ahem—gone?" (In this artful way, you see, I just hinted that I should like to see the letter.)

"The letter is—ahem—gone," says Laura. "What do you want from Brussels, Pen?"

"I want some Brussels sprouts, my love—they are so fine in their native country."

"Shall I write to him to send the letter back?" palpitates poor little Laura; for she thought her husband was offended, by using the ironic method.

"No, you dear little woman! You need not send for the letter back, and you need not tell me what was in it; and I will bet you a hundred yards of lace to a cotton nightcap—and you know whether I, madam, am a man *à bonnet-de-coton*—I

will bet you that I know what you have been writing about, under pretense of a message about lace, to our Colonel."

"He promised to send it to me. He really did. Lady Rockminster gave me twenty pounds——" gasps Laura.

"Under pretense of lace you have been sending over a love message. You want to see whether Clive is still of his old mind. You think the coast is now clear, and that dearest Ethel may like him. You think Mrs. Mason is growing very old and infirm, and the sight of her dear boy would——"

"Pen! Pen! did you open my letter?" cries Laura; and a laugh which could afford to be good-humored (followed by yet another expression of the lips) ended this colloquy. No; Mr. Pendennis did not see the letter; but he knew the writer—flattered himself that he knew women in general.

"Where did you get your experience of them, sir?" asks Mrs. Laura. Question answered in the same manner as the previous demand.

"Well, my dear, and why should not the poor boy be made happy?" Laura continues, standing very close up to her husband. "It is evident to me that Ethel is fond of him. I would rather see her married to a good young man whom she loves than the mistress of a thousand palaces and coronets. Suppose—suppose you had married Miss Amory, sir, what a wretched worldly creature you would have been by this time; whereas now——"

"Now that I am the humble slave of a good woman there is some chance for me," cries this model of husbands. "And all good women are matchmakers, as we know very well; and you have had this match in your heart ever since you saw the two young people together. Now, madam, since I did not see your letter to the Colonel—though I have guessed part of it—tell me, what have you said in it? Have you by any chance told the Colonel that the Farintosh alliance was broken off?"

Laura owned that she had hinted as much.

"You have not ventured to say that Ethel is well inclined to Clive?"

"Oh, no—oh, dear no!" But after much cross-examining and a little blushing on Laura's part she is brought to confess that she has asked the Colonel whether he will not come and see Mrs. Mason, who is pining to see him, and is growing very old. And I find out that she has been to see this Mrs. Mason, that she and Miss Newcome visited the old lady the day before yesterday; and Laura thought, from the manner

in which Ethel looked at Clive's picture, hanging up in the parlor of his father's old friend, that she really was very much, etc., etc. So, the letter being gone, Mrs. Pendennis is most eager about the answer to it, and day after day examines the bag, and is provoked that it brings no letter bearing the Brussels postmark.

Mme. de Montcontour seems perfectly well to know what Mrs. Laura has been doing and is hoping. "What, no letters again to-day? Ain't it provoking?" she cries. She is in the conspiracy too; and presently Florac is one of the initiated. "These women wish to *bacler* a marriage between the belle miss and le petit Claive," Florac announces to me. He pays the highest compliments to Miss Newcome's person, as he speaks regarding the marriage. "I continue to adore your Anglaises," he is pleased to say. "What of freshness, what of beauty, what roses! And then they are so adorably good! Go, Pendennis; thou art a happy *coquin!*" Mr. Pendennis does not say "No." He has won the twenty thousand pound prize, and we know there are worse than blanks in that lottery.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN WHICH WE ARE INTRODUCED TO A NEW NEWCOME.

No answer came to Mrs. Pendennis' letter to Colonel Newcome at Brussels, for the Colonel was absent from that city, and at the time when Laura wrote was actually in London, whither affairs of his own had called him. A note from George Warrington acquainted me with this circumstance. He mentioned that he and the Colonel had dined together at Bays' on the day previous, and that the Colonel seemed to be in the highest spirits. High spirits about what? This news put Laura in a sad perplexity. Should she write and tell him to get his letters from Brussels? She would in five minutes have found some other pretext for writing to Colonel Newcome had not her husband sternly cautioned the young woman to leave the matter alone.

The more readily perhaps because he had quarreled with his nephew Sir Barnes, Thomas Newcome went to visit his brother Hobson and his sister-in-law, bent on showing that there was no division between him and this branch of his

family. And you may suppose that the admirable woman just named had a fine occasion for her virtuous conversational powers in discoursing upon the painful event which had just happened to Sir Barnes. When we fall, how our friends cry out for us! Mrs. Hobson's homilies must have been awful. How that outraged virtue must have groaned and lamented, gathered its children about its knees, wept over them and washed them, gone into sackcloth and ashes, and tied up the knocker, confabulated with its spiritual adviser, uttered commonplaces to its husband, and bored the whole house! The punishment of worldliness and vanity, the evil of marrying out of one's station—how these points must have been explained and enlarged on! Surely the "Peerage" was taken off the drawing-room table and removed to papa's study, where it could not open, as it used naturally once, to "Highgate, Baron," or "Farintosh, Marquis of," being shut behind wires and closely jammed in on an upper shelf between Blackstone's "Commentaries" and the Farmer's Magazine! The breaking of the engagement with the Marquis of Farintosh was known in Bryanstone Square; and you may be sure interpreted by Mrs. Hobson in the light the most disadvantageous to Ethel Newcome. "A young nobleman—with grief and pain Ethel's aunt must own the fact—a young man of notoriously dissipated habits, but of great wealth and rank, had been pursued by the unhappy Lady Kew—Mrs. Hobson would not say by her niece; that were too dreadful—had been pursued, and followed, and hunted down in the most notorious manner, and finally made to propose! Let Ethel's conduct and punishment be a warning to my dearest girls, and let them bless Heaven they have parents who are not worldly! After all the trouble and pains—Mrs. Hobson did not say disgrace—the Marquis takes the very first pretext to break off the match, and leaves the unfortunate girl forever!"

And now we have to tell of the hardest blow which fell upon poor Ethel, and this was that her good uncle Thomas Newcome believed the charges against her. He was willing enough to listen now to anything which was said against that branch of the family. With such a traitor, double dealer, dastard as Barnes at its head, what could the rest of the race be? When the Colonel offered to endow Ethel and Clive with every shilling he had in the world had not Barnes, the archtraitor, temporized and told him falsehoods, and hesi-

tated about throwing him off until the Marquis had declared himself? Yes. The girl he and poor Clive loved so was ruined by her artful relatives; was unworthy of his affection and his boy's; was to be banished, like her worthless brother, out of his regard forever. And the man she had chosen in preference to his Clive—a roué, a libertine, whose extravagances and dissipations were the talk of every club; who had no wit nor talents, not even constancy (for had he not taken the first opportunity to throw her off?) to recommend him—only a great title and a fortune wherewith to bribe her! For shame, for shame! Her engagement to this man was a blot upon her—the rupture only a just punishment and humiliation! Poor unhappy girl! let her take care of her wretched brother's abandoned children, give up the world, and amend her life.

This was the sentence Thomas Newcome delivered—a righteous and tender-hearted man, as we know, but judging in this case wrongly, and bearing much too hardly, as we who know her better must think, upon one who had her faults certainly, but whose errors were not all of her own making. Who set her on the path she walked in? It was her parents' hands which led her, and her parents' voices which commanded her to accept the temptation set before her. What did she know of the character of the man selected to be her husband? Those who should have known better brought him to her, and vouched for him. Noble, unhappy young creature! are you the first of your sisterhood who has been bidden to traffic your beauty, to crush and slay your honest natural affections, to sell your truth and your life for rank and title? But the Judge who sees not the outward acts merely, but their causes, and views not the wrong alone, but the temptations, struggles, ignorance of erring creatures, we know has a different code to ours—to ours, who fall upon the fallen, who fawn upon the prosperous so, who administer our praises and punishments so prematurely, who now strike so hard, and, anon, spare so shamelessly.

Our stay with our hospitable friends at Rosebury was perforce coming to a close, for, indeed, weeks after weeks had passed since we had been under their pleasant roof; and in spite of dearest Ethel's remonstrances it was clear that dearest Laura must take her farewell. In these last days, besides the visits which daily took place between one and other, the young messenger was put in ceaseless requisition, and his

donkey must have been worn off his little legs with trotting to and fro between the two houses. Laura was quite anxious and hurt at not hearing from the Colonel; it was a shame that he did not have over his letters from Belgium, and answer that one which she had honored him by writing. By some information, received who knows how, our host was aware of the intrigue which Mrs. Pendennis was carrying on, and his little wife almost as much interested in it as my own. She whispered to me in her kind way that she would give a guinea, that she would, to see a certain couple made happy together; that they were born for one another, that they were; she was for having me go off to fetch Clive; but who was I to act as Hymen's messenger, or to interpose in such delicate family affairs?

All this while Sir Barnes Newcome, Baronet, remained absent in London, attending to his banking duties there, and pursuing the dismal inquiries which ended, in the ensuing Michaelmas term, in the famous suit of Newcome vs. Lord Highgate. Ethel, pursuing the plan which she had laid down for herself from the first, took entire charge of his children and house. Lady Ann returned to her own family, never indeed, having been of much use in her son's dismal household. My wife talked to me, of course, about her pursuits and amusements at Newcome, in the ancestral hall which we have mentioned. The children played and ate their dinner (mine often partook of his infantine mutton in company with little Clara and the poor young heir of Newcome) in the room which had been called my lady's own, and in which her husband had locked her, forgetting that the conservatories were open, through which the hapless woman had fled. Next to this was the baronial library, a side of which was fitted with the gloomy books from Clapham which old Mrs. Newcome had amassed—rows of tracts, and missionary magazines, and dingy quarto volumes of worldly travel and history which that lady had admitted into her collection.

Almost on the last day of our stay at Rosebury the two young ladies bethought them of paying a visit to the neighboring town of Newcome, to that old Mrs. Mason who has been mentioned in a foregoing page in some yet earlier chapter of our history. She was very old now, very faithful to the recollections of her own early time, and oblivious of yesterday. Thanks to Colonel Newcome's bounty, she had lived in comfort for many a long year past; and he was as

much her boy now as in those early days of which we have given but an outline. There were Clive's pictures of himself and his father over her little mantelpiece, near which she sat in comfort and warmth by the winter fire which his bounty supplied.

Mrs. Mason remembered Miss Newcome, prompted thereto by the hints of her little maid, who was much younger and had a more faithful memory than her mistress. Why, Sarah Mason would have forgotten the pheasants whose very tails decorated the chimney-glass had not Keziah, the maid, reminded her that the young lady was the donor. Then she recollected her benefactor, and asked after her father, the Baronet; and wondered, for her part, why her boy, the Colonel, was not made baronet and why his brother had the property. Her father was a very good man, though Mrs. Mason had heard he was not much liked in those parts. "Dead and gone was he, poor man?" (This came in reply to a hint from Keziah, the attendant, bawled in the old lady's ears, who was very deaf.) "Well, well, we must all go; and if we were all good like the Colonel what was the use of staying? I hope his wife will be good. I am sure such a good man deserves one," added Mrs. Mason.

The ladies thought the old woman doting, led thereto by the remark of Keziah, the maid, that Mrs. Mason "have a lost her memory." And she asked who the other bonny lady was, and Ethel told her that Mrs. Pendennis was a friend of the Colonel's and Clive's.

"Oh, Clive's friend! Well, she was a pretty lady, and he was a dear pretty boy. He drew those pictures, and he took off me in my cap, with my old cat and all—my poor old cat that's buried this ever so long ago."

"She has had a letter from the Colonel, miss," cries out Keziah. "Haven't you had a letter from the Colonel, mum? It came only yesterday." And Keziah takes out the letter and shows it to the ladies. They read as follows:

London, February 12, 184—.

My Dear Old Mason: I have just heard from a friend of mine who has been staying in your neighborhood that you are well and happy, and that you have been making inquiries after your young scapegrace, Tom Newcome, who is well and happy too, and who purposes to be happier still before any very long time is over.

The letter which was written to me about you was sent to me in Belgium, at Brussels, where I have been living—a town near

the place where the famous Battle of Waterloo was fought; and as I had run away from Waterloo, it followed me to England.

I cannot come to Newcome just now to shake my dear old friend and nurse by the hand. I have business in London; and there are those of my name living in Newcome who would not be very happy to see me and mine.

But I promise you a visit before very long, and Clive will come with me; and when we come I shall introduce a new friend to you, a very pretty little daughter-in-law, whom you must promise to love very much. She is a Scotch lassie, niece of my oldest friend, James Binnie, Esq., of the Bengal Civil Service, who will give her a pretty bit of siller, and her present name is Miss Rosey Mackenzie.

We shall send you a wedding cake soon, and a new gown for Keziah (to whom remember me), and when I am gone my grandchildren after me will hear what a dear friend you were to your affectionate
THOMAS NEWCOME.

Keziah must have thought that there was something between Clive and my wife, for when Laura had read the letter she laid it down on the table, and sitting down by it, and hiding her face in her hands, burst into tears.

Ethel looked steadily at the two pictures of Clive and his father. Then she put her hand on her friend's shoulder. "Come, my dear," she said, "it is growing late, and I must go back to my children." And she saluted Mrs. Mason and her maid in a very stately manner, and left them, leading my wife away, who was still exceedingly overcome.

We could not stay long at Rosebury after that. When Mme. de Montcontour heard the news the good lady cried too. Mrs. Pendennis' emotion was renewed as we passed the gates of Newcome Park on our way to the railroad.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. AND MRS. CLIVE NEWCOME.

The friendship between Ethel and Laura, which the last narrated sentimental occurrences had so much increased, subsists very little impaired up to the present day. A lady with many domestic interests and increasing family, etc., etc., cannot be supposed to cultivate female intimacies out of doors with that ardor and eagerness which young spinsters exhibit in their intercourse; but Laura, whose kind heart first led her to