

followed her to the door. Then he turned round to his confederates, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Another quarrel!" he said hopelessly.

## CHAPTER XV.

WHICH CONTAINS NOTHING.

"YOU may have talent for other things," Robert Allitsen said one day to Bernardine, "but you certainly have no talent for photography. You have not made the slightest progress."

"I don't at all agree with you," Bernardine answered rather peevishly. "I think I am getting on very well."

"You are no judge," he said. "To begin with you cannot focus properly. You have a crooked eye. I have told you that several times."

"You certainly have," she put in. "You don't let me forget that."

"Your photograph of that horrid little danseuse whom you like so much," he said, "is

simply abominable. She looks like a fury. Well, she may be one for all I know, but in real life she has not the appearance of one."

"I think that is the best photograph I have done," Bernardine said, highly indignant. She could tolerate his uppishness about subjects of which she knew far more than he did; but his masterfulness about a subject of which she really knew nothing, was more than she could bear with patience. He had not the tact to see that she was irritated.

"I don't know about it being the best," he said, "unless it is the best specimen of your inexperience. Looked at from that point of view, it does stand first."

She flushed crimson with temper.

"Nothing is easier than to make fun of others," she said fiercely. "It is the resource of the ignorant."

Then, after the fashion of angry women, having said her say, she stalked away. If there had been a door to bang, she would certainly have

banged it. However, she did what she could under the circumstances: she pushed a curtain roughly aside, and passed into the concert-room, where every night of the season's six months, a scratchy string orchestra entertained the Kurhaus guests. She left the Disagreeable Man standing in the passage.

"Dear me," he said thoughtfully. And he stroked his chin. Then he trudged slowly up to his room.

"Dear me," he said once more.

Arrived in his bedroom, he began to read. But after a few minutes he shut his book, took the lamp to the looking-glass and brushed his hair. Then he put on a black coat and a white silk tie. There was a speck of dust on the coat. He carefully removed that, and then extinguished the lamp.

On his way down stairs he met Marie, who gazed at him in astonishment. It was quite unusual for him to be seen again when he had once come up from *table-d'hôte*. She noticed the

black coat and the white silk tie, too, and reported on these eccentricities to her colleague Anna.

The Disagreeable Man meanwhile had reached the Concert Hall. He glanced around, and saw where Bernardine was sitting, and then chose a place in the opposite direction, quite by himself. He looked somewhat like a dog who has been well beaten. Now and again he looked up to see whether she still kept her seat. The bad music was a great irritation to him. But he stayed on heroically. There was no reason why he should stay. Gradually, too, the audience began to thin. Still he lingered, always looking like a dog in punishment.

At last Bernardine rose, and the Disagreeable Man rose too. He followed her humbly to the door. She turned and saw him.

"I am sorry I put you in a bad temper," he said. "It was stupid of me."

"I am sorry I got into a bad temper," she answered, laughing. "It was stupid of me."

"I think I have said enough to apologize," he said. "It is a process I dislike very much."

And with that he wished her good-night and went to his room.

But that was not the end of the matter, for the next day when he was taking his breakfast with her, he of his own accord returned to the subject.

"It was partly your own fault that I vexed you last night," he said. "You have never before been touchy, and so I have become accustomed to saying what I choose. And it is not in my nature to be flattering."

"That is a very truthful statement of yours," she said, as she poured out her coffee. "But I own I was touchy. And so I shall be again if you make such cutting remarks about my photographs."

"You *have* a crooked eye," he said grimly. "Look there, for instance! You have poured your coffee outside the cup. Of course you can

do as you like, but the usual custom is to pour it inside the cup."

They both laughed, and the good understanding between them was cemented again.

"You are certainly getting better," he said suddenly. "I should not be surprised if you were able to write a book after all. Not that a new book is wanted. There are too many books as it is; and not enough people to dust them. Still, it is not probable that you would be considerate enough to remember that. You will write your book."

Bernardine shook her head.

"I don't seem to care now," she said. "I think I could now be content with a quieter and more useful part."

"You will write your book," he continued. "Now listen to me. Whatever else you may do, don't make your characters hold long discussions with each other. In real life, people do not talk four pages at a time without stopping. Also, if you bring together two clever men, don't make

them talk cleverly. Clever people do not. It is only the stupid ones who think they must talk cleverly all the time. And don't detain your reader too long: if you must have a sunset, let it be a short one. I could give you many more hints which would be useful to you,"

"But why not use your own hints for yourself?" she suggested.

"That would be selfish of me," he said solemnly. "I wish you to profit by them."

"You are learning to be unselfish at a very rapid rate," Bernardine said.

At that moment Mrs. Reffold came into the breakfast-room, and, seeing Bernardine, gave her a stiff bow.

"I thought you and Mrs. Reffold were such friends," Robert Allitsen said.

Bernardine then told him of her last interview with Mrs. Reffold.

"Well, if you feel uncomfortable, it is as it should be," he said. "I don't see what business you had to point out to Mrs. Reffold her duty. I

dare say she knows it quite well, though she may not choose to do it. I am sure I should resent it, if any one pointed out my duty to me. Every one knows his own duty. And it is his own affair whether or not he does it."

"I wonder if you are right," Bernardine said. "I never meant to presume; but her indifference had exasperated me."

"Why should you be exasperated about other people's affairs?" he said. "And why interfere at all?"

"Being interested is not the same as being interfering," she replied quickly.

"It is difficult to be the one without being the other," he said. "It requires a genius. There is a genius for being sympathetic as well as a genius for being good. And geniuses are few."

"But I knew one," Bernardine said. "There was a friend to whom in the first days of my trouble I turned for sympathy. When others only irritated, she could soothe. She had only

to come into my room, and all was well with me."

There were tears in Bernardine's eyes as she spoke.

"Well," said the Disagreeable Man kindly, "and where is your genius now?"

"She went away, she and hers," Bernardine said. "And that was the end of that chapter."

"Poor little child," he said, half to himself. "Don't I, too, know something about the ending of such a chapter?"

But Bernardine did not hear him; she was thinking of her friend. She was thinking, as we all think, that those to whom in our suffering we turn for sympathy, become hallowed beings. Saints they may not be; but for want of a better name, saints they are to us, gracious and lovely presences. The great time Eternity, the great space Death, could not rob them of their saintship; for they were canonized by our bitterest tears.

She was aroused from her revery by the Dis-

agreeable Man, who got up, and pushed his chair noisily under the table.

"Will you come and help me to develop some photographs?" he asked cheerily. "You do not need to have a straight eye for that!"

Then as they went along together, he said:

"When we come to think about it seriously, it is rather absurd for us to expect to have uninterrupted stretches of happiness. Happiness falls to our share in separate detached bits; and those of us who are wise, content ourselves with these broken fragments."

"But who is wise?" Bernardine asked. "Why we all expect to be happy. No one told us that we were to be happy. Still, though no one told us, it is the true instinct of human nature."

"It would be interesting to know at what particular period of evolution into our present glorious types we felt that instinct for the first time," he said. "The sunshine must have had something to do with it. You see how a dog throws itself down in the sunshine; the most

wretched cur heaves a sigh of content then; the sulkiest cat begins to purr."

They were standing outside the room set apart for the photograph-maniacs of the Kurhaus.

"I cannot go into that horrid little hole," Bernardine said. "And besides, I have promised to play chess with the Swedish professor. And after that I am going to photograph Marie. I promised Warli I would."

The Disagreeable Man smiled grimly.

"I hope he will be able to recognize her!" he said. Then feeling that he was on dangerous ground, he added quickly:

"If you want any more plates, I can oblige you."

On her way to her room she stopped to talk to pretty Fraulein Muller, who was in high spirits, having had an excellent report from the Doctor. Fraulein Muller always insisted on talking English with Bernardine; and as her knowledge of it was limited, a certain amount of imagination was necessary to enable her to be understood.

"Ah, Miss Holme," she said, "I have received an exquisite report from the Doctor."

"Your are looking ever so well," Bernardine said. "And the love-making with the Spanish gentleman goes on well, too?"

"Ach!" was the merry answer. "That is your inventory! I am quite indolent to him!"

At that moment the Spanish gentleman came out of the Kurhaus flower-shop, with a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

"Mademoiselle," he said, handing them to Fraulein Muller, and at the same time putting his hand to his heart. He had not noticed Bernardine at first, and when he saw her, he became somewhat confused. She smiled at them both, and escaped into the flower-shop, which was situated in one of the covered passages connecting the mother-building with the dependencies. Herr Schmidt, the gardener, was making a wreath. His favorite companion, a saffron cat, was playing with the wire. Schmidt was rather an ill-tempered man, but he liked Bernardine.

"I have put these violets aside for you, Fraulein," he said, in his sulky way, "I meant to have sent them to your room, but have been interrupted in my work."

"You spoil me with your gifts," she said.

"You spoil my cat with the milk," he replied, looking up from his work.

"That is a beautiful wreath you are making, Herr Schmidt," she said. "Who has died? Any one in the Kurhaus?"

"No, Fraulein. But I ought to keep my door locked when I make these wreaths. People get frightened, and think they, too, are going to die. Shall you be frightened, I wonder?"

"No, I believe not," she answered as she took possession of her violets, and stroked the saffron cat. "But I am glad no one has died here."

"It is for a young, beautiful lady," he said. "She was in the Kurhaus two years ago. I liked her. So I am taking extra pains. She did not care for the flowers to be wired. So I

am trying my best without the wire. But it is difficult."

She left him to his work, and went away, thinking. All the time she had now been in Petershof had not sufficed to make her indifferent to the sadness of her surroundings. In vain the Disagreeable Man's preachings, in vain her own reasonings with herself.

These people here who suffered, and faded, and passed away, who were they to her?

Why should the faintest shadow steal across her soul on account of them?

There was no reason. And still she felt for them all, she who in the old days would have thought it waste of time to spare a moment's reflection on anything so unimportant as the sufferings of an *individual* human being.

And the bridge between her former and her present self was her own illness.

What dull-minded sheep we must all be, how lacking in the very elements of imagination, since we are only able to learn by personal experience

of grief and suffering, something about the suffering and grief of others!

Yea, how the dogs must wonder at us: those dogs who know when we are in pain or trouble, and nestle nearer to us.

So Bernardine reached her own door. She heard her name called, and, turning round, saw Mrs. Reffold. There was a scared look on her beautiful face.

"Miss Holme," she said, "I have been sent for—I dare n't go to him alone—I want you—he is worse. I am——"

Bernardine took her hand, and the two women hurried away in silence.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### WHEN THE SOUL KNOWS ITS OWN REMORSE.

BERNARDINE had seen Mr. Reffold the previous day. She had sat by his side and held his hand. He had smiled at her many times, but he only spoke once.

‘Little Brick,’ he whispered—for his voice had become nothing but a whisper—“I remember all you told me. God bless you. But what a long time it *does* take to die.”

But that was yesterday.

The lane had come to an ending at last, and Mr. Reffold lay dead.

They bore him to the little mortuary chapel. And Bernardine stayed with Mrs. Reffold, who seemed afraid to be alone. She clung to Bernardine’s hand.

“No, no,” she said excitedly, “you must not

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go! I can’t bear to be alone: you must stay with me.”

She expressed no sorrow, no regret. She did not even speak his name. She just sat nursing her beautiful face.

Once or twice Bernardine tried to slip away. This waiting about was a strain on her, and she felt that she was doing no good.

But each time Mrs. Reffold looked up and prevented her.

“No, no,” she said. “I can’t bear myself without you. I must have you near me. Why should you leave me?”

So Bernardine lingered. She tried to read a book which lay on the table. She counted the lines and dots on the wall-paper. She thought about the dead man; and about the living woman. She had pitied him; but when she looked at the stricken face of his wife, Bernardine’s whole heart rose up in pity for her. Remorse would come, although it might not remain long. The soul would see itself face to face for

one brief moment; and then forget its own likeness.

But for the moment—what a weight of suffering, what a whole century of agony!

Bernardine grew very tender for Mrs. Reffold; she bent over the sofa, and fondled the beautiful face.

“Mrs. Reffold——” she whispered.

That was all she said : but it was enough.

Mrs. Reffold burst into an agony of tears.

“Oh, Miss Holme,” she sobbed, “and I was not even kind to him! And now it is too late. How can I ever bear myself?”

And then it was that the soul knew its own remorse.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A RETURN TO OLD PASTURES.

SHE had left him alone and neglected for whole hours when he was alive. And now when he was dead, and it probably mattered little to him where he was laid, it was some time before she could make up her mind to leave him in the lonely little Petershof cemetery.

“It will be so dreary for him there,” she said to the Doctor.

“Not so dreary as you made it for him here,” thought the Doctor.

But he did not say that, he just urged her quietly to have her husband buried in Petershof ; and she yielded.

So they laid him to rest in the dreary cemetery.

Bernardine went to the funeral, much against the Disagreeable Man's wish.