

**SIXTH SCENE.--SWANHAVEN LODGE.**

**CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIRST. - SEEDS OF THE FUTURE (FIRST SOWING).**

"NOT SO large as Windygates. But--shall we say snug, Jones?"

"And comfortable, Smith. I quite agree with you."

Such was the judgment pronounced by the two choral gentlemen on Julius Delamayn's house in Scotland. It was, as usual with Smith and Jones, a sound judgment--as far as it went. Swanhaven Lodge was not half the size of Windygates; but it had been inhabited for two centuries when the foundations of Windygates were first laid--and it possessed the advantages, without inheriting the drawbacks, of its age. There is in an old house a friendly adaptation to the human character, as there is in an old hat a friendly adaptation to the human head. The visitor who left Swanhaven quitted it with something like a sense of leaving home. Among the few houses not our own which take a strong hold on our sympathies this was one. The ornamental grounds were far inferior in size and splendor to the grounds at Windygates. But the park was beautiful--less carefully laid out, but also less monotonous than an English park. The lake on the northern boundary of the estate, famous for its breed of swans, was one of the curiosities of the neighborhood; and the house had a history, associating it with more than one celebrated Scottish name, which had been written and illustrated by Julius Delamayn. Visitors to Swanhaven Lodge were invariably presented with a copy of the volume (privately printed). One in twenty read it. The rest were "charmed," and looked at the pictures.

The day was the last day of August, and the occasion was the garden-party given by Mr. and Mrs. Delamayn.

Smith and Jones--following, with the other guests at Windygates, in Lady Lundie's train--exchanged their opinions on the merits of the house, standing on a terrace at the back, near a flight of steps which led down into the garden. They formed the van-guard of the visitors, appearing by twos and threes from the reception rooms, and all bent on going to see the swans before the amusements of the day began. Julius Delamayn came out with

the first detachment, recruited Smith and Jones, and other wandering bachelors, by the way, and set forth for the lake. An interval of a minute or two passed--and the terrace remained empty. Then two ladies--at the head of a second detachment of visitors--appeared under the old stone porch which sheltered the entrance on that side of the house. One of the ladies was a modest, pleasant little person, very simply dressed. The other was of the tall and formidable type of "fine women," clad in dazzling array. The first was Mrs. Julius Delamayn. The second was Lady Lundie.

"Exquisite!" cried her ladyship, surveying the old mullioned windows of the house, with their framing of creepers, and the grand stone buttresses projecting at intervals from the wall, each with its bright little circle of flowers blooming round the base. "I am really grieved that Sir Patrick should have missed this."

"I think you said, Lady Lundie, that Sir Patrick had been called to Edinburgh by family business?"

"Business, Mrs. Delamayn, which is any thing but agreeable to me, as one member of the family. It has altered all my arrangements for the autumn. My step-daughter is to be married next week."

"Is it so near as that? May I ask who the gentleman is?"

"Mr. Arnold Brinkworth."

"Surely I have some association with that name?"

"You have probably heard of him, Mrs. Delamayn, as the heir to Miss Brinkworth's Scotch property?"

"Exactly! Have you brought Mr. Brinkworth here to-day?"

"I bring his apologies, as well as Sir Patrick's. They went to Edinburgh together the day before yesterday. The lawyers engage to have the settlements ready in three or four days more, if a personal consultation can be managed. Some formal question, I believe, connected with title-deeds. Sir Patrick thought the safest way and the speediest way would be to take Mr. Brinkworth with him to Edinburgh--to get the business over to-day--and to wait until we join them, on our way south, to-morrow."

"You leave Windygates, in this lovely weather?"

"Most unwillingly! The truth is, Mrs. Delamayn, I am at my step-daughter's mercy. Her uncle has the authority, as her guardian--and the use he makes of it is to give her her own way in every thing. It was only on Friday last that she consented to let the day be fixed--and even then she made it a positive condition that the marriage was not to take place in Scotland. Pure willfulness! But what can I do? Sir Patrick submits; and Mr. Brinkworth submits. If I am to be present at the marriage I must follow their example. I feel it my duty to be present--and, as a matter of course, I sacrifice myself. We start for London to-morrow."

"Is Miss Lundie to be married in London at this time of year?"

"No. We only pass through, on our way to Sir Patrick's place in Kent--the place that came to him with the title; the place associated with the last days of my beloved husband. Another trial for me! The marriage is to be solemnized on the scene of my bereavement. My old wound is to be reopened on Monday next--simply because my step-daughter has taken a dislike to Windygates."

"This day week, then, is the day of the marriage?"

"Yes. This day week. There have been reasons for hurrying it which I need not trouble you with. No words can say how I wish it was over.--But, my dear Mrs. Delamayn, how thoughtless of me to assail you with my family worries! You are so sympathetic. That is my only excuse. Don't let me keep you from your guests. I could linger in this sweet place forever! Where is Mrs. Glenarm?"

"I really don't know. I missed her when we came out on the terrace. She will very likely join us at the lake. Do you care about seeing the lake, Lady Lundie?"

"I adore the beauties of Nature, Mrs. Delamayn--especially lakes!"

"We have something to show you besides; we have a breed of swans on the lake, peculiar to the place. My husband has gone on with some of our friends; and I believe we are expected to follow, as soon as the rest of the party--in charge of my sister--have seen the house."

"And what a house, Mrs. Delamayn! Historical associations in every corner of it! It is such a relief to my mind to take refuge in the past. When I am far away from this sweet place I shall people Swanhaven with its departed inmates, and share the joys and sorrows of centuries since."

As Lady Lundie announced, in these terms, her intention of adding to the population of the past, the last of the guests who had been roaming over the old house appeared under the porch. Among the members forming this final addition to the garden-party were Blanche, and a friend of her own age whom she had met at Swanhaven. The two girls lagged behind the rest, talking confidentially, arm in arm--the subject (it is surely needless to add) being the coming marriage.

"But, dearest Blanche, why are you not to be married at Windygates?"

"I detest Windygates, Janet. I have the most miserable associations with the place. Don't ask me what they are! The effort of my life is not to think of them now. I long to see the last of Windygates. As for being married there, I have made it a condition that I am not to be married in Scotland at all."

"What has poor Scotland done to forfeit your good opinion, my dear?"

"Poor Scotland, Janet, is a place where people don't know whether they are married or not. I have heard all about it from my uncle. And I know somebody who has been a victim--an innocent victim--to a Scotch marriage."

"Absurd, Blanche! You are thinking of runaway matches, and making Scotland responsible for the difficulties of people who daren't own the truth!"

"I am not at all absurd. I am thinking of the dearest friend I have. If you only knew--"

"My dear! I am Scotch, remember! You can be married just as well--I really must insist on that--in Scotland as in England."

"I hate Scotland!"

"Blanche!"

"I never was so unhappy in my life as I have been in Scotland. I never want to see it again. I am determined to be married in England--from the dear old house where I used to live when I was a little girl. My uncle is quite willing. He understands me and feels for me."

"Is that as much as to say that I don't understand you and feel for you? Perhaps I had better relieve you of my company, Blanche?"

"If you are going to speak to me in that way, perhaps you had!"

"Am I to hear my native country run down and not to say a word in defense of it?"

"Oh! you Scotch people make such a fuss about your native country!"

"We Scotch people! you are of Scotch extraction yourself, and you ought to be ashamed to talk in that way. I wish you good-morning!"

"I wish you a better temper!"

A minute since the two young ladies had been like twin roses on one stalk. Now they parted with red cheeks and hostile sentiments and cutting words. How ardent is the warmth of youth! how unspeakably delicate the fragility of female friendship!

The flock of visitors followed Mrs. Delamayn to the shores of the lake. For a few minutes after the terrace was left a solitude. Then there appeared under the porch a single gentleman, lounging out with a flower in his mouth and his hands in his pockets. This was the strongest man at Swanhaven--otherwise, Geoffrey Delamayn.

After a moment a lady appeared behind him, walking softly, so as not to be heard. She was superbly dressed after the newest and the most costly Parisian design. The brooch on her bosom was a single diamond of resplendent water and great size. The fan in her hand was a master-piece of the finest Indian workmanship. She looked what she was, a person possessed of plenty of superfluous money, but not additionally blest with plenty of superfluous intelligence to correspond. This was the childless young widow of the great ironmaster--otherwise, Mrs. Glenarm.

The rich woman tapped the strong man coquettishly on the shoulder with her fan. "Ah! you bad boy!" she said, with a slightly-labored archness of look and manner. "Have I found you at last?"

Geoffrey sauntered on to the terrace--keeping the lady behind him with a thoroughly savage superiority to all civilized submission to the sex--and looked at his watch.

"I said I'd come here when I'd got half an hour to myself," he mumbled, turning the flower carelessly between his teeth. "I've got half an hour, and

here I am."

"Did you come for the sake of seeing the visitors, or did you come for the sake of seeing Me?"

Geoffrey smiled graciously, and gave the flower another turn in his teeth. "You. Of course."

The iron-master's widow took his arm, and looked up at him--as only a young woman would have dared to look up--with the searching summer light streaming in its full brilliancy on her face.

Reduced to the plain expression of what it is really worth, the average English idea of beauty in women may be summed up in three words--youth, health, plumpness. The more spiritual charm of intelligence and vivacity, the subtler attraction of delicacy of line and fitness of detail, are little looked for and seldom appreciated by the mass of men in this island. It is impossible otherwise to account for the extraordinary blindness of perception which (to give one instance only) makes nine Englishmen out of ten who visit France come back declaring that they have not seen a single pretty Frenchwoman, in or out of Paris, in the whole country. Our popular type of beauty proclaims itself, in its fullest material development, at every shop in which an illustrated periodical is sold. The same fleshy-faced girl, with the same inane smile, and with no other expression whatever, appears under every form of illustration, week after week, and month after month, all the year round. Those who wish to know what Mrs. Glenarm was like, have only to go out and stop at any bookseller's or news-vendor's shop, and there they will see her in the first illustration, with a young woman in it, which they discover in the window. The one noticeable peculiarity in Mrs. Glenarm's purely commonplace and purely material beauty, which would have struck an observant and a cultivated man, was the curious girlishness of her look and manner. No stranger speaking to this woman--who had been a wife at twenty, and who was now a widow at twenty-four--would ever have thought of addressing her otherwise than as "Miss."

"Is that the use you make of a flower when I give it to you?" she said to Geoffrey. "Mumbling it in your teeth, you wretch, as if you were a horse!"

"If you come to that," returned Geoffrey, "I'm more a horse than a man. I'm going to run in a race, and the public are betting on me. Haw! haw! Five to four."

"Five to four! I believe he thinks of nothing but betting. You great heavy

creature, I can't move you. Don't you see I want to go like the rest of them to the lake? No! you're not to let go of my arm! You're to take me."

"Can't do it. Must be back with Perry in half an hour."

(Perry was the trainer from London. He had arrived sooner than he had been expected, and had entered on his functions three days since.)

"Don't talk to me about Perry! A little vulgar wretch. Put him off. You won't? Do you mean to say you are such a brute that you would rather be with Perry than be with me?"

"The betting's at five to four, my dear. And the race comes off in a month from this."

"Oh! go away to your beloved Perry! I hate you. I hope you'll lose the race. Stop in your cottage. Pray don't come back to the house. And--mind this!--don't presume to say 'my dear' to me again."

"It ain't presuming half far enough, is it? Wait a bit. Give me till the race is run--and then I'll presume to marry you."

"You! You will be as old as Methuselah, if you wait till I am your wife. I dare say Perry has got a sister. Suppose you ask him? She would be just the right person for you."

Geoffrey gave the flower another turn in his teeth, and looked as if he thought the idea worth considering.

"All right," he said. "Any thing to be agreeable to you. I'll ask Perry."

He turned away, as if he was going to do it at once. Mrs. Glenarm put out a little hand, ravishingly clothed in a blush-colored glove, and laid it on the athlete's mighty arm. She pinched those iron muscles (the pride and glory of England) gently. "What a man you are!" she said. "I never met with any body like you before!"

The whole secret of the power that Geoffrey had acquired over her was in those words.

They had been together at Swanhaven for little more than ten days; and in that time he had made the conquest of Mrs. Glenarm. On the day before the garden-party--in one of the leisure intervals allowed him by Perry--he had

caught her alone, had taken her by the arm, and had asked her, in so many words, if she would marry him. Instances on record of women who have been wooed and won in ten days are--to speak it with all possible respect--not wanting. But an instance of a woman willing to have it known still remains to be discovered. The iron-master's widow exacted a promise of secrecy before she committed herself. When Geoffrey had pledged his word to hold his tongue in public until she gave him leave to speak, Mrs. Glenarm, without further hesitation, said Yes--having, be it observed, said No, in the course of the last two years, to at least half a dozen men who were Geoffrey's superiors in every conceivable respect, except personal comeliness and personal strength.

There is a reason for every thing; and there was a reason for this.

However persistently the epicene theorists of modern times may deny it, it is nevertheless a truth plainly visible in the whole past history of the sexes that the natural condition of a woman is to find her master in a man. Look in the face of any woman who is in no direct way dependent on a man: and, as certainly as you see the sun in a cloudless sky, you see a woman who is not happy. The want of a master is their great unknown want; the possession of a master is--unconsciously to themselves--the only possible completion of their lives. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this one primitive instinct is at the bottom of the otherwise inexplicable sacrifice, when we see a woman, of her own free will, throw herself away on a man who is unworthy of her. This one primitive instinct was at the bottom of the otherwise inexplicable facility of self-surrender exhibited by Mrs. Glenarm.

Up to the time of her meeting with Geoffrey, the young widow had gathered but one experience in her intercourse with the world--the experience of a chartered tyrant. In the brief six months of her married life with the man whose grand-daughter she might have been--and ought to have been--she had only to lift her finger to be obeyed. The doting old husband was the willing slave of the petulant young wife's slightest caprice. At a later period, when society offered its triple welcome to her birth, her beauty, and her wealth--go where she might, she found herself the object of the same prostrate admiration among the suitors who vied with each other in the rivalry for her hand. For the first time in her life she encountered a man with a will of his own when she met Geoffrey Delamayn at Swanhaven Lodge.

Geoffrey's occupation of the moment especially favored the conflict between the woman's assertion of her influence and the man's assertion of his will.



During the days that had intervened between his return to his brother's house and the arrival of the trainer, Geoffrey had submitted himself to all needful preliminaries of the physical discipline which was to prepare him for the race. He knew, by previous experience, what exercise he ought to take, what hours he ought to keep, what temptations at the table he was bound to resist. Over and over again Mrs. Glenarm tried to lure him into committing infractions of his own discipline--and over and over again the influence with men which had never failed her before failed her now. Nothing she could say, nothing she could do, would move this man. Perry arrived; and Geoffrey's defiance of every attempted exercise of the charming feminine tyranny, to which every one else had bowed, grew more outrageous and more immovable than ever. Mrs. Glenarm became as jealous of Perry as if Perry had been a woman. She flew into passions; she burst into tears; she flirted with other men; she threatened to leave the house. All quite useless! Geoffrey never once missed an appointment with Perry; never once touched any thing to eat or drink that she could offer him, if Perry had forbidden it. No other human pursuit is so hostile to the influence of the sex as the pursuit of athletic sports. No men are so entirely beyond the reach of women as the men whose lives are passed in the cultivation of their own physical strength. Geoffrey resisted Mrs. Glenarm without the slightest effort. He casually extorted her admiration, and undesignedly forced her respect. She clung to him, as a hero; she recoiled from him, as a brute; she struggled with him, submitted to him, despised him, adored him, in a breath. And the clew to it all, confused and contradictory as it seemed, lay in one simple fact--Mrs. Glenarm had found her master.

"Take me to the lake, Geoffrey!" she said, with a little pleading pressure of the blush-colored hand.

Geoffrey looked at his watch. "Perry expects me in twenty minutes," he said.

"Perry again!"

"Yes."

Mrs. Glenarm raised her fan, in a sudden outburst of fury, and broke it with one smart blow on Geoffrey's face.

"There!" she cried, with a stamp of her foot. "My poor fan broken! You monster, all through you!"

Geoffrey coolly took the broken fan and put it in his pocket. "I'll write to London," he said, "and get you another. Come along! Kiss, and make it up."

He looked over each shoulder, to make sure that they were alone then lifted her off the ground (she was no light weight), held her up in the air like a baby, and gave her a rough loud-sounding kiss on each cheek. "With kind compliments from yours truly!" he said--and burst out laughing, and put her down again.

"How dare you do that?" cried Mrs. Glenarm. "I shall claim Mrs. Delamayn's protection if I am to be insulted in this way! I will never forgive you, Sir!" As she said those indignant words she shot a look at him which flatly contradicted them. The next moment she was leaning on his arm, and was looking at him wonderingly, for the thousandth time, as an entire novelty in her experience of male human kind. "How rough you are, Geoffrey!" she said, softly. He smiled in recognition of that artless homage to the manly virtue of his character. She saw the smile, and instantly made another effort to dispute the hateful supremacy of Perry. "Put him off!" whispered the daughter of Eve, determined to lure Adam into taking a bite of the apple. "Come, Geoffrey, dear, never mind Perry, this once. Take me to the lake!"

Geoffrey looked at his watch. "Perry expects me in a quarter of an hour," he said.

Mrs. Glenarm's indignation assumed a new form. She burst out crying. Geoffrey surveyed her for a moment with a broad stare of surprise--and then took her by both arms, and shook her!

"Look here!" he said, impatiently. "Can you coach me through my training?"

"I would if I could!"

"That's nothing to do with it! Can you turn me out, fit, on the day of the race? Yes? or No?"

"No."

"Then dry your eyes and let Perry do it."

Mrs. Glenarm dried her eyes, and made another effort.

"I'm not fit to be seen," she said. "I'm so agitated, I don't know what to do. Come indoors, Geoffrey--and have a cup of tea."

Geoffrey shook his head. "Perry forbids tea," he said, "in the middle of the

day."

"You brute!" cried Mrs. Glenarm.

"Do you want me to lose the race?" retorted Geoffrey.

"Yes!"

With that answer she left him at last, and ran back into the house.

Geoffrey took a turn on the terrace--considered a little--stopped--and looked at the porch under which the irate widow had disappeared from his view.

"Ten thousand a year," he said, thinking of the matrimonial prospect which he was placing in peril. "And devilish well earned," he added, going into the house, under protest, to appease Mrs. Glenarm.

The offended lady was on a sofa, in the solitary drawing-room. Geoffrey sat down by her. She declined to look at him. "Don't be a fool!" said Geoffrey, in his most persuasive manner. Mrs. Glenarm put her handkerchief to her eyes. Geoffrey took it away again without ceremony. Mrs. Glenarm rose to leave the room. Geoffrey stopped her by main force. Mrs. Glenarm threatened to summon the servants. Geoffrey said, "All right! I don't care if the whole house knows I'm fond of you!" Mrs. Glenarm looked at the door, and whispered "Hush! for Heaven's sake!" Geoffrey put her arm in his, and said, "Come along with me: I've got something to say to you." Mrs. Glenarm drew back, and shook her head. Geoffrey put his arm round her waist, and walked her out of the room, and out of the house--taking the direction, not of the terrace, but of a fir plantation on the opposite side of the grounds. Arrived among the trees, he stopped and held up a warning forefinger before the offended lady's face. "You're just the sort of woman I like," he said; "and there ain't a man living who's half as sweet on you as I am. You leave off bullying me about Perry, and I'll tell you what I'll do--I'll let you see me take a Sprint."

He drew back a step, and fixed his big blue eyes on her, with a look which said, "You are a highly-favored woman, if ever there was one yet!" Curiosity instantly took the leading place among the emotions of Mrs. Glenarm.

"What's a Sprint, Geoffrey?" she asked.

"A short run, to try me at the top of my speed. There ain't another living soul in all England that I'd let see it but you. Now am I a brute?"

Mrs. Glenarm was conquered again, for the hundredth time at least. She

said, softly, "Oh, Geoffrey, if you could only be always like this!" Her eyes lifted themselves admiringly to his. She took his arm again of her own accord, and pressed it with a loving clasp. Geoffrey prophetically felt the ten thousand a year in his pocket. "Do you really love me?" whispered Mrs. Glenarm. "Don't I!" answered the hero. The peace was made, and the two walked on again.

They passed through the plantation, and came out on some open ground, rising and falling prettily, in little hillocks and hollows. The last of the hillocks sloped down into a smooth level plain, with a fringe of sheltering trees on its farther side--with a snug little stone cottage among the trees--and with a smart little man, walking up and down before the cottage, holding his hands behind him. The level plain was the hero's exercising ground; the cottage was the hero's retreat; and the smart little man was the hero's trainer.

If Mrs. Glenarm hated Perry, Perry (judging by appearances) was in no danger of loving Mrs. Glenarm. As Geoffrey approached with his companion, the trainer came to a stand-still, and stared silently at the lady. The lady, on her side, declined to observe that any such person as the trainer was then in existence, and present in bodily form on the scene.

"How about time?" said Geoffrey.

Perry consulted an elaborate watch, constructed to mark time to the fifth of a second, and answered Geoffrey, with his eye all the while on Mrs. Glenarm.

"You've got five minutes to spare."

"Show me where you run, I'm dying to see it!" said the eager widow, taking possession of Geoffrey's arm with both hands.

Geoffrey led her back to a place (marked by a sapling with a little flag attached to it) at some short distance from the cottage. She glided along by his side, with subtle undulations of movement which appeared to complete the exasperation of Perry. He waited until she was out of hearing--and then he invoked (let us say) the blasts of heaven on the fashionably-dressed head of Mrs. Glenarm.

"You take your place there," said Geoffrey, posting her by the sapling. "When I pass you--" He stopped, and surveyed her with a good-humored masculine pity. "How the devil am I to make you understand it?" he went on. "Look

here! when I pass you, it will be at what you would call (if I was a horse) full gallop. Hold your tongue--I haven't done yet. You're to look on after me as I leave you, to where the edge of the cottage wall cuts the trees. When you have lost sight of me behind the wall, you'll have seen me run my three hundred yards from this flag. You're in luck's way! Perry tries me at the long Sprint to-day. You understand you're to stop here? Very well then--let me go and get my toggery on."

"Sha'n't I see you again, Geoffrey?"

"Haven't I just told you that you'll see me run?"

"Yes--but after that?"

"After that, I'm sponged and rubbed down--and rest in the cottage."

"You'll come to us this evening?"

He nodded, and left her. The face of Perry looked unutterable things when he and Geoffrey met at the door of the cottage.

"I've got a question to ask you, Mr. Delamayn," said the trainer. "Do you want me? or don't you?"

"Of course I want you."

"What did I say when I first come here?" proceeded Perry, sternly. "I said, 'I won't have nobody a looking on at a man I'm training. These here ladies and gentlemen may all have made up their minds to see you. I've made up my mind not to have no lookers-on. I won't have you timed at your work by nobody but me. I won't have every blessed yard of ground you cover put in the noospapers. I won't have a living soul in the secret of what you can do, and what you can't, except our two selves.'--Did I say that, Mr. Delamayn? or didn't I?"

"All right!"

"Did I say it? or didn't I?"

"Of course you did!"

"Then don't you bring no more women here. It's clean against rules. And I won't have it."

Any other living creature adopting this tone of remonstrance would probably have had reason to repent it. But Geoffrey himself was afraid to show his temper in the presence of Perry. In view of the coming race, the first and foremost of British trainers was not to be trifled with, even by the first and foremost of British athletes.

"She won't come again," said Geoffrey. "She's going away from Swanhaven in two days' time."

"I've put every shilling I'm worth in the world on you," pursued Perry, relapsing into tenderness. "And I tell you I felt it! It cut me to the heart when I see you coming along with a woman at your heels. It's a fraud on his backers, I says to myself--that's what it is, a fraud on his backers!"

"Shut up!" said Geoffrey. "And come and help me to win your money." He kicked open the door of the cottage--and athlete and trainer disappeared from view.

After waiting a few minutes by the little flag, Mrs. Glenarm saw the two men approaching her from the cottage. Dressed in a close-fitting costume, light and elastic, adapting itself to every movement, and made to answer every purpose required by the exercise in which he was about to engage, Geoffrey's physical advantages showed themselves in their best and bravest aspect. His head sat proud and easy on his firm, white throat, bared to the air. The rising of his mighty chest, as he drew in deep draughts of the fragrant summer breeze; the play of his lithe and supple loins; the easy, elastic stride of his straight and shapely legs, presented a triumph of physical manhood in its highest type. Mrs. Glenarm's eyes devoured him in silent admiration. He looked like a young god of mythology--like a statue animated with color and life. "Oh, Geoffrey!" she exclaimed, softly, as he went by. He neither answered, nor looked: he had other business on hand than listening to soft nonsense. He was gathering himself up for the effort; his lips were set; his fists were lightly clenched. Perry posted himself at his place, grim and silent, with the watch in his hand. Geoffrey walked on beyond the flag, so as to give himself start enough to reach his full speed as he passed it. "Now then!" said Perry. In an instant more, he flew by (to Mrs. Glenarm's excited imagination) like an arrow from a bow. His action was perfect. His speed, at its utmost rate of exertion, preserved its rare underlying elements of strength and steadiness. Less and less and less he grew to the eyes that followed his course; still lightly flying over the ground, still firmly keeping the straight line. A moment more, and the runner vanished behind the wall of the cottage, and the stop-watch of the trainer

returned to its place in his pocket.

In her eagerness to know the result, Mrs. Glenarm forgot her jealousy of Perry.

"How long has he been?" she asked.

"There's a good many besides you would be glad to know that," said Perry.

"Mr. Delamayn will tell me, you rude man!"

"That depends, ma'am, on whether I tell him."

With this reply, Perry hurried back to the cottage.

Not a word passed while the trainer was attending to his man, and while the man was recovering his breath. When Geoffrey had been carefully rubbed down, and clothed again in his ordinary garments, Perry pulled a comfortable easy-chair out of a corner. Geoffrey fell into the chair, rather than sat down in it. Perry started, and looked at him attentively.

"Well?" said Geoffrey. "How about the time? Long? short? or middling?"

"Very good time," said Perry.

"How long?"

"When did you say the lady was going, Mr. Delamayn?"

"In two days."

"Very well, Sir. I'll tell you 'how long' when the lady's gone."

Geoffrey made no attempt to insist on an immediate reply. He smiled faintly. After an interval of less than ten minutes he stretched out his legs and closed his eyes.

"Going to sleep?" said Perry.

Geoffrey opened his eyes with an effort. "No," he said. The word had hardly passed his lips before his eyes closed again.

"Hullo!" said Perry, watching him. "I don't like that."

He went closer to the chair. There was no doubt about it. The man was asleep.

Perry emitted a long whistle under his breath. He stooped and laid two of his fingers softly on Geoffrey's pulse. The beat was slow, heavy, and labored. It was unmistakably the pulse of an exhausted man.

The trainer changed color, and took a turn in the room. He opened a cupboard, and produced from it his diary of the preceding year. The entries relating to the last occasion on which he had prepared Geoffrey for a foot-race included the fullest details. He turned to the report of the first trial, at three hundred yards, full speed. The time was, by one or two seconds, not so good as the time on this occasion. But the result, afterward, was utterly different. There it was, in Perry's own words: "Pulse good. Man in high spirits. Ready, if I would have let him, to run it over again."

Perry looked round at the same man, a year afterward--utterly worn out, and fast asleep in the chair.

He fetched pen, ink, and paper out of the cupboard, and wrote two letters--both marked "Private." The first was to a medical man, a great authority among trainers. The second was to Perry's own agent in London, whom he knew he could trust. The letter pledged the agent to the strictest secrecy, and directed him to back Geoffrey's opponent in the Foot-Race for a sum equal to the sum which Perry had betted on Geoffrey himself. "If you have got any money of your own on him," the letter concluded, "do as I do. 'Hedge'--and hold your tongue."

"Another of 'em gone stale!" said the trainer, looking round again at the sleeping man. "He'll lose the race."



**CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SECOND. - SEEDS OF THE FUTURE (SECOND SOWING).**

AND what did the visitors say of the Swans?

They said, "Oh, what a number of them!"--which was all that was to be said by persons ignorant of the natural history of aquatic birds.

And what did the visitors say of the lake?

Some of them said, "How solemn!" Some of them said, "How romantic!" Some of them said nothing--but privately thought it a dismal scene.

Here again the popular sentiment struck the right note at starting. The lake was hidden in the centre of a fir wood. Except in the middle, where the sunlight reached them, the waters lay black under the sombre shadow of the trees. The one break in the plantation was at the farther end of the lake. The one sign of movement and life to be seen was the ghostly gliding of the swans on the dead-still surface of the water. It was solemn--as they said; it was romantic--as they said. It was dismal--as they thought. Pages of description could express no more. Let pages of description be absent, therefore, in this place.

Having satiated itself with the swans, having exhausted the lake, the general curiosity reverted to the break in the trees at the farther end--remarked a startlingly artificial object, intruding itself on the scene, in the shape of a large red curtain, which hung between two of the tallest firs, and closed the prospect beyond from view--requested an explanation of the curtain from Julius Delamayn--and received for answer that the mystery should be revealed on the arrival of his wife with the tardy remainder of the guests who had loitered about the house.

On the appearance of Mrs. Delamayn and the stragglers, the united party coasted the shore of the lake, and stood assembled in front of the curtain. Pointing to the silken cords hanging at either side of it, Julius Delamayn picked out two little girls (children of his wife's sister), and sent them to the cords, with instructions to pull, and see what happened. The nieces of Julius pulled with the eager hands of children in the presence of a mystery--the curtains parted in the middle, and a cry of universal astonishment and delight saluted the scene revealed to view.

At the end of a broad avenue of firs a cool green glade spread its grassy carpet in the midst of the surrounding plantation. The ground at the farther end of the glade rose; and here, on the lower slopes, a bright little spring of water bubbled out between gray old granite rocks.

Along the right-hand edge of the turf ran a row of tables, arrayed in spotless white, and covered with refreshments waiting for the guests. On the opposite side was a band of music, which burst into harmony at the moment when the curtains were drawn. Looking back through the avenue, the eye caught a distant glimpse of the lake, where the sunlight played on the water, and the plumage of the gliding swans flashed softly in brilliant white. Such was the charming surprise which Julius Delamayn had arranged for his friends. It was only at moments like these--or when he and his wife were playing Sonatas in the modest little music-room at Swanhaven--that Lord Holchester's eldest son was really happy. He secretly groaned over the duties which his position as a landed gentleman imposed upon him; and he suffered under some of the highest privileges of his rank and station as under social martyrdom in its cruelest form.

"We'll dine first," said Julius, "and dance afterward. There is the programme!"

He led the way to the tables, with the two ladies nearest to him--utterly careless whether they were or were not among the ladies of the highest rank then present. To Lady Lundie's astonishment he took the first seat he came to, without appearing to care what place he occupied at his own feast. The guests, following his example, sat where they pleased, reckless of precedents and dignities. Mrs. Delamayn, feeling a special interest in a young lady who was shortly to be a bride, took Blanche's arm. Lady Lundie attached herself resolutely to her hostess on the other side. The three sat together. Mrs. Delamayn did her best to encourage Blanche to talk, and Blanche did her best to meet the advances made to her. The experiment succeeded but poorly on either side. Mrs. Delamayn gave it up in despair, and turned to Lady Lundie, with a strong suspicion that some unpleasant subject of reflection was preying privately on the bride's mind. The conclusion was soundly drawn. Blanche's little outbreak of temper with her friend on the terrace, and Blanche's present deficiency of gayety and spirit, were attributable to the same cause. She hid it from her uncle, she hid it from Arnold--but she was as anxious as ever, and as wretched as ever, about Anne; and she was still on the watch (no matter what Sir Patrick might say or do) to seize the first opportunity of renewing the search for her lost friend.

Meanwhile the eating, the drinking, and the talking went merrily on. The

band played its liveliest melodies; the servants kept the glasses constantly filled: round all the tables gayety and freedom reigned supreme. The one conversation in progress, in which the talkers were not in social harmony with each other, was the conversation at Blanche's side, between her step-mother and Mrs. Delamayn.

Among Lady Lundie's other accomplishments the power of making disagreeable discoveries ranked high. At the dinner in the glade she had not failed to notice--what every body else had passed over--the absence at the festival of the hostess's brother-in-law; and more remarkable still, the disappearance of a lady who was actually one of the guests staying in the house: in plainer words, the disappearance of Mrs. Glenarm.

"Am I mistaken?" said her ladyship, lifting her eye-glass, and looking round the tables. "Surely there is a member of our party missing? I don't see Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn."

"Geoffrey promised to be here. But he is not particularly attentive, as you may have noticed, to keeping engagements of this sort. Every thing is sacrificed to his training. We only see him at rare intervals now."

With that reply Mrs. Delamayn attempted to change the subject. Lady Lundie lifted her eye-glass, and looked round the tables for the second time.

"Pardon me," persisted her ladyship--"but is it possible that I have discovered another absentee? I don't see Mrs. Glenarm. Yet surely she must be here! Mrs. Glenarm is not training for a foot-race. Do you see her? I don't."

"I missed her when we went out on the terrace, and I have not seen her since."

"Isn't it very odd, dear Mrs. Delamayn?"

"Our guests at Swanhaven, Lady Lundie, have perfect liberty to do as they please."

In those words Mrs. Delamayn (as she fondly imagined) dismissed the subject. But Lady Lundie's robust curiosity proved unassailable by even the broadest hint. Carried away, in all probability, by the infection of merriment about her, her ladyship displayed unexpected reserves of vivacity. The mind declines to realize it; but it is not the less true that this majestic woman actually simpered!

"Shall we put two and two together?" said Lady Lundie, with a ponderous playfulness wonderful to see. "Here, on the one hand, is Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn--a young single man. And here, on the other, is Mrs. Glenarm--a young widow. Rank on the side of the young single man; riches on the side of the young widow. And both mysteriously absent at the same time, from the same pleasant party. Ha, Mrs. Delamayn! should I guess wrong, if I guessed that you will have a marriage in the family, too, before long?"

Mrs. Delamayn looked a little annoyed. She had entered, with all her heart, into the conspiracy for making a match between Geoffrey and Mrs. Glenarm. But she was not prepared to own that the lady's facility had (in spite of all attempts to conceal it from discovery) made the conspiracy obviously successful in ten days' time.

"I am not in the secrets of the lady and gentleman whom you mention," she replied, dryly.

A heavy body is slow to acquire movement--and slow to abandon movement, when once acquired. The playfulness of Lady Lundie, being essentially heavy, followed the same rule. She still persisted in being as lively as ever.

"Oh, what a diplomatic answer!" exclaimed her ladyship. "I think I can interpret it, though, for all that. A little bird tells me that I shall see a Mrs. Geoffrey Delamayn in London, next season. And I, for one, shall not be surprised to find myself congratulating Mrs. Glenarm."

"If you persist in letting your imagination run away with you, Lady Lundie, I can't possibly help it. I can only request permission to keep the bridle on mine."

This time, even Lady Lundie understood that it would be wise to say no more. She smiled and nodded, in high private approval of her own extraordinary cleverness. If she had been asked at that moment who was the most brilliant Englishwoman living, she would have looked inward on herself--and would have seen, as in a glass brightly, Lady Lundie, of Windygates.

From the moment when the talk at her side entered on the subject of Geoffrey Delamayn and Mrs. Glenarm--and throughout the brief period during which it remained occupied with that topic--Blanche became conscious of a strong smell of some spirituous liquor wafted down on her, as she fancied, from behind and from above. Finding the odor grow stronger

and stronger, she looked round to see whether any special manufacture of grog was proceeding inexplicably at the back of her chair. The moment she moved her head, her attention was claimed by a pair of tremulous gouty old hands, offering her a grouse pie, profusely sprinkled with truffles.

"Eh, my bonny Miss!" whispered a persuasive voice at her ear, "ye're joost stairving in a land o' plenty. Tak' my advice, and ye'll tak' the best thing at tebble--grouse-poy, and trufflers."

Blanche looked up.

There he was--the man of the canny eye, the fatherly manner, and the mighty nose--Bishopriggs--preserved in spirits and ministering at the festival at Swanhaven Lodge!

Blanche had only seen him for a moment on the memorable night of the storm, when she had surprised Anne at the inn. But instants passed in the society of Bishopriggs were as good as hours spent in the company of inferior men. Blanche instantly recognized him; instantly called to mind Sir Patrick's conviction that he was in possession of Anne's lost letter; instantly rushed to the conclusion that, in discovering Bishopriggs, she had discovered a chance of tracing Anne. Her first impulse was to claim acquaintance with him on the spot. But the eyes of her neighbors were on her, warning her to wait. She took a little of the pie, and looked hard at Bishopriggs. That discreet man, showing no sign of recognition on his side, bowed respectfully, and went on round the table.

"I wonder whether he has got the letter about him?" thought Blanche.

He had not only got the letter about him--but, more than that, he was actually then on the look-out for the means of turning the letter to profitable pecuniary account.

The domestic establishment of Swanhaven Lodge included no formidable array of servants. When Mrs. Delamayn gave a large party, she depended for such additional assistance as was needed partly on the contributions of her friends, partly on the resources of the principal inn at Kirkandrew. Mr. Bishopriggs, serving at the time (in the absence of any better employment) as a supernumerary at the inn, made one among the waiters who could be spared to assist at the garden-party. The name of the gentleman by whom he was to be employed for the day had struck him, when he first heard it, as having a familiar sound. He had made his inquiries; and had then betaken himself for additional information, to the letter which he had picked up from

the parlor floor at Craig Fernie.

The sheet of note-paper, lost by Anne, contained, it may be remembered, two letters--one signed by herself; the other signed by Geoffrey--and both suggestive, to a stranger's eye, of relations between the writers which they were interested in concealing from the public view.

Thinking it just possible--if he kept his eyes and ears well open at Swanhaven--that he might improve his prospect of making a marketable commodity of the stolen correspondence, Mr. Bishopriggs had put the letter in his pocket when he left Kirkandrew. He had recognized Blanche, as a friend of the lady at the inn--and as a person who might perhaps be turned to account, in that capacity. And he had, moreover, heard every word of the conversation between Lady Lundie and Mrs. Delamayn on the subject of Geoffrey and Mrs. Glenarm. There were hours to be passed before the guests would retire, and before the waiters would be dismissed. The conviction was strong in the mind of Mr. Bishopriggs that he might find good reason yet for congratulating himself on the chance which had associated him with the festivities at Swanhaven Lodge.

It was still early in the afternoon when the gayety at the dinner-table began, in certain quarters, to show signs of wearing out.

The younger members of the party--especially the ladies--grew restless with the appearance of the dessert. One after another they looked longingly at the smooth level of elastic turf in the middle of the glade. One after another they beat time absently with their fingers to the waltz which the musicians happened to be playing at the moment. Noticing these symptoms, Mrs. Delamayn set the example of rising; and her husband sent a message to the band. In ten minutes more the first quadrille was in progress on the grass; the spectators were picturesquely grouped round, looking on; and the servants and waiters, no longer wanted, had retired out of sight, to a picnic of their own.

The last person to leave the deserted tables was the venerable Bishopriggs. He alone, of the men in attendance, had contrived to combine a sufficient appearance of waiting on the company with a clandestine attention to his own personal need of refreshment. Instead of hurrying away to the servants' dinner with the rest, he made the round of the tables, apparently clearing away the crumbs--actually, emptying the wine-glasses. Immersed in this occupation, he was startled by a lady's voice behind him, and, turning as quickly as he could, found himself face to face with Miss Lundie.

"I want some cold water," said Blanche. "Be so good as to get me some from the spring."

She pointed to the bubbling rivulet at the farther end of the glade.

Bishopriggs looked unaffectedly shocked.

"Lord's sake, miss," he exclaimed "d'ye relly mean to offend yer stomach wi' cauld water--when there's wine to be had for the asking!"

Blanche gave him a look. Slowness of perception was not on the list of the failings of Bishopriggs. He took up a tumbler, winked with his one available eye, and led the way to the rivulet. There was nothing remarkable in the spectacle of a young lady who wanted a glass of spring-water, or of a waiter who was getting it for her. Nobody was surprised; and (with the band playing) nobody could by any chance overhear what might be said at the spring-side.

"Do you remember me at the inn on the night of the storm?" asked Blanche.

Mr. Bishopriggs had his reasons (carefully inclosed in his pocketbook) for not being too ready to commit himself with Blanche at starting.

"I'm no' saying I canna remember ye, miss. Whar's the man would mak' sic an answer as that to a bonny young leddy like you?"

By way of assisting his memory Blanche took out her purse. Bishopriggs became absorbed in the scenery. He looked at the running water with the eye of a man who thoroughly distrusted it, viewed as a beverage.

"There ye go," he said, addressing himself to the rivulet, "bubblin' to yer ain annihilation in the loch yonder! It's little I know that's gude aboot ye, in yer unconvaired state. Ye're a type o' human life, they say. I tak' up my testimony against that. Ye're a type o' naething at all till ye're heated wi' fire, and sweetened wi' sugar, and strengthened wi' whusky; and then ye're a type o' toddy--and human life (I grant it) has got something to say to ye in that capacity!"

"I have heard more about you, since I was at the inn," proceeded Blanche, "than you may suppose." (She opened her purse: Mr. Bishopriggs became the picture of attention.) "You were very, very kind to a lady who was staying at Craig Fernie," she went on, earnestly. "I know that you have lost your place at the inn, because you gave all your attention to that lady. She is my



dearest friend, Mr. Bishopriggs. I want to thank you. I do thank you. Please accept what I have got here?"

All the girl's heart was in her eyes and in her voice as she emptied her purse into the gouty (and greedy) old hand of Bishopriggs.

A young lady with a well-filled purse (no matter how rich the young lady may be) is a combination not often witnessed in any country on the civilized earth. Either the money is always spent, or the money has been forgotten on the toilet-table at home. Blanche's purse contained a sovereign and some six or seven shillings in silver. As pocket-money for an heiress it was contemptible. But as a gratuity to Bishopriggs it was magnificent. The old rascal put the money into his pocket with one hand, and dashed away the tears of sensibility, which he had not shed, with the other.

"Cast yer bread on the waters," cried Mr. Bishopriggs, with his one eye raised devotionally to the sky, "and ye sall find it again after monny days! Heeh! hech! didna I say when I first set eyes on that puir leddy, 'I feel like a fether to ye?' It's seemply mairvelous to see hoo a man's ain gude deeds find him oot in this lower warld o' ours. If ever I heard the voice o' naitural affection speaking in my ain breast," pursued Mr. Bishopriggs, with his eye fixed in uneasy expectation on Blanche, "it joost spak' trumpet-tongued when that winsome creature first lookit at me. Will it be she now that told ye of the wee bit sairvice I rendered to her in the time when I was in bondage at the hottle?"

"Yes--she told me herself."

"Might I mak' sae bauld as to ask whar' she may be at the present time?"

"I don't know, Mr. Bishopriggs. I am more miserable about it than I can say. She has gone away--and I don't know where."

"Ow! ow! that's bad. And the bit husband-creature danglin' at her petticoat's tail one day, and awa' wi' the sunrise next mornin'--have they baith taken leg-bail together?"

"I know nothing of him; I never saw him. You saw him. Tell me--what was he like?"

"Eh! he was joost a puir weak creature. Didn't know a glass o' good sherry-wine when he'd got it. Free wi' the siller--that's a' ye can say for him--free wi' the siller!"



Finding it impossible to extract from Mr. Bishopriggs any clearer description of the man who had been with Anne at the inn than this, Blanche approached the main object of the interview. Too anxious to waste time in circumlocution, she turned the conversation at once to the delicate and doubtful subject of the lost letter.

"There is something else that I want to say to you," she resumed. "My friend had a loss while she was staying at the inn."

The clouds of doubt rolled off the mind of Mr. Bishopriggs. The lady's friend knew of the lost letter. And, better still, the lady's friend looked as if she wanted it!

"Ay! ay!" he said, with all due appearance of carelessness. "Like eneugh. From the mistress downward, they're a' kittle cattle at the inn since I've left 'em. What may it ha' been that she lost?"

"She lost a letter."

The look of uneasy expectation reappeared in the eye of Mr. Bishopriggs. It was a question--and a serious question, from his point of view--whether any suspicion of theft was attached to the disappearance of the letter.

"When ye say 'lost,'" he asked, "d'ye mean stolen?"

Blanche was quite quick enough to see the necessity of quieting his mind on this point.

"Oh no!" she answered. "Not stolen. Only lost. Did you hear about it?"

"Wherefore suld I ha' heard about it?" He looked hard at Blanche--and detected a momentary hesitation in her face. "Tell me this, my young leddy," he went on, advancing warily near to the point. "When ye're speering for news o' your friend's lost letter--what sets ye on comin' to me?"

Those words were decisive. It is hardly too much to say that Blanche's future depended on Blanche's answer to that question.

If she could have produced the money; and if she had said, boldly, "You have got the letter, Mr. Bishopriggs: I pledge my word that no questions shall be asked, and I offer you ten pounds for it"--in all probability the bargain would have been struck; and the whole course of coming events

would, in that case, have been altered. But she had no money left; and there were no friends, in the circle at Swanhaven, to whom she could apply, without being misinterpreted, for a loan of ten pounds, to be privately intrusted to her on the spot. Under stress of sheer necessity Blanche abandoned all hope of making any present appeal of a pecuniary nature to the confidence of Bishopriggs.

The one other way of attaining her object that she could see was to arm herself with the influence of Sir Patrick's name. A man, placed in her position, would have thought it mere madness to venture on such a risk as this. But Blanche--with one act of rashness already on her conscience--rushed, woman-like, straight to the commission of another. The same headlong eagerness to reach her end, which had hurried her into questioning Geoffrey before he left Windygates, now drove her, just as recklessly, into taking the management of Bishopriggs out of Sir Patrick's skilled and practiced hands. The starving sisterly love in her hungered for a trace of Anne. Her heart whispered, Risk it! And Blanche risked it on the spot.

"Sir Patrick set me on coming to you," she said.

The opening hand of Mr. Bishopriggs--ready to deliver the letter, and receive the reward--closed again instantly as she spoke those words.

"Sir Paitrick?" he repeated "Ow! ow! ye've een tauld Sir Paitrick aboot it, have ye? There's a chiel wi' a lang head on his shouthers, if ever there was ane yet! What might Sir Paitrick ha' said?"

Blanche noticed a change in his tone. Blanche was rigidly careful (when it was too late) to answer him in guarded terms.

"Sir Patrick thought you might have found the letter," she said, "and might not have remembered about it again until after you had left the inn."

Bishopriggs looked back into his own personal experience of his old master--and drew the correct conclusion that Sir Patrick's view of his connection with the disappearance of the letter was not the purely unsuspecting view reported by Blanche. "The dour auld deevil," he thought to himself, "knows me better than that!"

"Well?" asked Blanche, impatiently. "Is Sir Patrick right?"

"Richt?" rejoined Bishopriggs, briskly. "He's as far awa' from the truth as

John o' Groat's House is from Jericho."

"You know nothing of the letter?"

"Deil a bit I know o' the letter. The first I ha' heard o' it is what I hear noo."

Blanche's heart sank within her. Had she defeated her own object, and cut the ground from under Sir Patrick's feet, for the second time? Surely not! There was unquestionably a chance, on this occasion, that the man might be prevailed upon to place the trust in her uncle which he was too cautious to confide to a stranger like herself. The one wise thing to do now was to pave the way for the exertion of Sir Patrick's superior influence, and Sir Patrick's superior skill. She resumed the conversation with that object in view.

"I am sorry to hear that Sir Patrick has guessed wrong," she resumed. "My friend was anxious to recover the letter when I last saw her; and I hoped to hear news of it from you. However, right or wrong, Sir Patrick has some reasons for wishing to see you--and I take the opportunity of telling you so. He has left a letter to wait for you at the Craig Fernie inn."

"I'm thinking the letter will ha' lang eneugh to wait, if it waits till I gae back for it to the hottle," remarked Bishopriggs.

"In that case," said Blanche, promptly, "you had better give me an address at which Sir Patrick can write to you. You wouldn't, I suppose, wish me to say that I had seen you here, and that you refused to communicate with him?"

"Never think it!" cried Bishopriggs, fervently. "If there's ain thing mair than anither that I'm carefu' to presairve intact, it's joost the respectful attention that I owe to Sir Paitrick. I'll make sae bauld, miss, au to chaarge ye wi' that bit caird. I'm no' settled in ony place yet (mair's the pity at my time o' life!), but Sir Paitrick may hear o' me, when Sir Paitrick has need o' me, there." He handed a dirty little card to Blanche containing the name and address of a butcher in Edinburgh. "Sawmuel Bishopriggs," he went on, glibly. "Care o' Davie Dow, flesher; Cowgate; Embro. My Patmos in the weelderness, miss, for the time being."

Blanche received the address with a sense of unspeakable relief. If she had once more ventured on taking Sir Patrick's place, and once more failed in justifying her rashness by the results, she had at least gained some atoning advantage, this time, by opening a means of communication between her

uncle and Bishopriggs. "You will hear from Sir Patrick," she said, and nodded kindly, and returned to her place among the guests.

"I'll hear from Sir Paitrick, wull I?" repeated Bishopriggs when he was left by himself. "Sir Paitrick will wark naething less than a meeracle if he finds Sawmuel Bishopriggs at the Cowgate, Embro!"

He laughed softly over his own cleverness; and withdrew to a lonely place in the plantation, in which he could consult the stolen correspondence without fear of being observed by any living creature. Once more the truth had tried to struggle into light, before the day of the marriage, and once more Blanche had innocently helped the darkness to keep it from view.

**CHAPTER THE THIRTY-THIRD. - SEEDS OF THE FUTURE (THIRD SOWING).**

AFTER a new and attentive reading of Anne's letter to Geoffrey, and of Geoffrey's letter to Anne, Bishopriggs laid down comfortably under a tree, and set himself the task of seeing his position plainly as it was at that moment.

The profitable disposal of the correspondence to Blanche was no longer among the possibilities involved in the case. As for treating with Sir Patrick, Bishopriggs determined to keep equally dear of the Cowgate, Edinburgh, and of Mrs. Inchbare's inn, so long as there was the faintest chance of his pushing his own interests in any other quarter. No person living would be capable of so certainly extracting the correspondence from him, on such ruinously cheap terms as his old master. "I'll no' put myself under Sir Patrick's thumb," thought Bishopriggs, "till I've gane my ain rounds among the lave o' them first."

Rendered into intelligible English, this resolution pledged him to hold no communication with Sir Patrick--until he had first tested his success in negotiating with other persons, who might be equally interested in getting possession of the correspondence, and more liberal in giving hush-money to the thief who had stolen it.

Who were the "other persons" at his disposal, under these circumstances?

He had only to recall the conversation which he had overheard between Lady Lundie and Mrs. Delamayn to arrive at the discovery of one person, to begin with, who was directly interested in getting possession of his own letter. Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn was in a fair way of being married to a lady named Mrs. Glenarm. And here was this same Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn in matrimonial correspondence, little more than a fortnight since, with another lady--who signed herself "Anne Silvester."

Whatever his position between the two women might be, his interest in possessing himself of the correspondence was plain beyond all doubt. It was equally clear that the first thing to be done by Bishopriggs was to find the means of obtaining a personal interview with him. If the interview led to nothing else, it would decide one important question which still remained to be solved. The lady whom Bishopriggs had waited on at Craig Fernie might well be "Anne Silvester." Was Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn, in that case, the

gentleman who had passed as her husband at the inn?

Bishopriggs rose to his gouty feet with all possible alacrity, and hobbled away to make the necessary inquiries, addressing himself, not to the men-servants at the dinner-table, who would be sure to insist on his joining them, but to the women-servants left in charge of the empty house.

He easily obtained the necessary directions for finding the cottage. But he was warned that Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn's trainer allowed nobody to see his patron at exercise, and that he would certainly be ordered off again the moment he appeared on the scene.

Bearing this caution in mind, Bishopriggs made a circuit, on reaching the open ground, so as to approach the cottage at the back, under shelter of the trees behind it. One look at Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn was all that he wanted in the first instance. They were welcome to order him off again, as long as he obtained that.

He was still hesitating at the outer line of the trees, when he heard a loud, imperative voice, calling from the front of the cottage, "Now, Mr. Geoffrey! Time's up!" Another voice answered, "All right!" and, after an interval, Geoffrey Delamayn appeared on the open ground, proceeding to the point from which he was accustomed to walk his measured mile.

Advancing a few steps to look at his man more closely, Bishopriggs was instantly detected by the quick eye of the trainer. "Hullo!" cried Perry, "what do you want here?" Bishopriggs opened his lips to make an excuse. "Who the devil are you?" roared Geoffrey. The trainer answered the question out of the resources of his own experience. "A spy, Sir--sent to time you at your work." Geoffrey lifted his mighty fist, and sprang forward a step. Perry held his patron back. "You can't do that, Sir," he said; "the man's too old. No fear of his turning up again--you've scared him out of his wits." The statement was strictly true. The terror of Bishopriggs at the sight of Geoffrey's fist restored to him the activity of his youth. He ran for the first time for twenty years; and only stopped to remember his infirmities, and to catch his breath, when he was out of sight of the cottage, among the trees.

He sat down to rest and recover himself, with the comforting inner conviction that, in one respect at least, he had gained his point. The furious savage, with the eyes that darted fire and the fist that threatened destruction, was a total stranger to him. In other words, not the man who had passed as the lady's husband at the inn.

At the same time it was equally certain that he was the man involved in the compromising correspondence which Bishopriggs possessed. To appeal, however, to his interest in obtaining the letter was entirely incompatible (after the recent exhibition of his fist) with the strong regard which Bishopriggs felt for his own personal security. There was no alternative now but to open negotiations with the one other person concerned in the matter (fortunately, on this occasion, a person of the gentler sex), who was actually within reach. Mrs. Glenarm was at Swanhaven. She had a direct interest in clearing up the question of a prior claim to Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn on the part of another woman. And she could only do that by getting the correspondence into her own hands.

"Praise Providence for a' its mercies!" said Bishopriggs, getting on his feet again. "I've got twa strings, as they say, to my boo. I trow the woman's the canny string o' the twa--and we'll een try the twanging of her."

He set forth on his road back again, to search among the company at the lake for Mrs. Glenarm.

The dance had reached its climax of animation when Bishopriggs reappeared on the scene of his duties; and the ranks of the company had been recruited, in his absence, by the very person whom it was now his foremost object to approach.

Receiving, with supple submission, a reprimand for his prolonged absence from the chief of the servants, Bishopriggs--keeping his one observant eye carefully on the look-out--busied himself in promoting the circulation of ices and cool drinks.

While he was thus occupied, his attention was attracted by two persons who, in very different ways, stood out prominently as marked characters among the rank and file of the guests.

The first person was a vivacious, irascible old gentleman, who persisted in treating the undeniable fact of his age on the footing of a scandalous false report set afloat by Time. He was superbly strapped and padded. His hair, his teeth, and his complexion were triumphs of artificial youth. When he was not occupied among the youngest women present--which was very seldom--he attached himself exclusively to the youngest men. He insisted on joining every dance. Twice he measured his length upon the grass, but nothing daunted him. He was waltzing again, with another young woman, at the next dance, as if nothing had happened. Inquiring who this effervescent old gentleman might be, Bishopriggs discovered that he was a retired officer

in the navy; commonly known (among his inferiors) as "The Tartar;" more formally described in society as Captain Newenden, the last male representative of one of the oldest families in England.

The second person, who appeared to occupy a position of distinction at the dance in the glade, was a lady.

To the eye of Bishopriggs, she was a miracle of beauty, with a small fortune for a poor man carried about her in silk, lace, and jewelry. No woman present was the object of such special attention among the men as this fascinating and priceless creature. She sat fanning herself with a matchless work of art (supposed to be a handkerchief) representing an island of cambric in the midst of an ocean of lace. She was surrounded by a little court of admirers, who fetched and carried at her slightest nod, like well-trained dogs. Sometimes they brought refreshments, which she had asked for, only to decline taking them when they came. Sometimes they brought information of what was going on among the dancers, which the lady had been eager to receive when they went away, and in which she had ceased to feel the smallest interest when they came back. Every body burst into ejaculations of distress when she was asked to account for her absence from the dinner, and answered, "My poor nerves." Every body said, "What should we have done without you!"--when she doubted if she had done wisely in joining the party at all. Inquiring who this favored lady might be, Bishopriggs discovered that she was the niece of the indomitable old gentleman who would dance--or, more plainly still, no less a person than his contemplated customer, Mrs. Glenarm.

With all his enormous assurance Bishopriggs was daunted when he found himself facing the question of what he was to do next.

To open negotiations with Mrs. Glenarm, under present circumstances, was, for a man in his position, simply impossible. But, apart from this, the prospect of profitably addressing himself to that lady in the future was, to say the least of it, beset with difficulties of no common kind.

Supposing the means of disclosing Geoffrey's position to her to be found--what would she do, when she received her warning? She would in all probability apply to one of two formidable men, both of whom were interested in the matter. If she went straight to the man accused of attempting to marry her, at a time when he was already engaged to another woman--Bishopriggs would find himself confronted with the owner of that terrible fist, which had justly terrified him even on a distant and cursory view. If, on the other hand she placed her interests in the care of her uncle--



Bishopriggs had only to look at the captain, and to calculate his chance of imposing terms on a man who owed Life a bill of more than sixty years' date, and who openly defied time to recover the debt.

With these serious obstacles standing in the way, what was to be done? The only alternative left was to approach Mrs. Glenarm under shelter of the dark.

Reaching this conclusion, Bishopriggs decided to ascertain from the servants what the lady's future movements might be; and, thus informed, to startle her by anonymous warnings, conveyed through the post, and claiming their answer through the advertising channel of a newspaper. Here was the certainty of alarming her, coupled with the certainty of safety to himself! Little did Mrs. Glenarm dream, when she capriciously stopped a servant going by with some glasses of lemonade, that the wretched old creature who offered the tray contemplated corresponding with her before the week was out, in the double character of her "Well-Wisher" and her "True Friend."

The evening advanced. The shadows lengthened. The waters of the lake grew pitchy black. The gliding of the ghostly swans became rare and more rare. The elders of the party thought of the drive home. The juniors (excepting Captain Newenden) began to flag at the dance. Little by little the comfortable attractions of the house--tea, coffee, and candle-light in snug rooms--resumed their influence. The guests abandoned the glade; and the fingers and lungs of the musicians rested at last.

Lady Lundie and her party were the first to send for the carriage and say farewell; the break-up of the household at Windygates on the next day, and the journey south, being sufficient apologies for setting the example of retreat. In an hour more the only visitors left were the guests staying at Swanhaven Lodge.

The company gone, the hired waiters from Kirkandrew were paid and dismissed.

On the journey back the silence of Bishopriggs created some surprise among his comrades.

"I've got my ain concerns to think of," was the only answer he vouchsafed to the remonstrances addressed to him. The "concerns" alluded to, comprehended, among other changes of plan, his departure from Kirkandrew the next day--with a reference, in case of inquiries, to his

convenient friend at the Cowgate, Edinburgh. His actual destination--to be kept a secret from every body--was Perth. The neighborhood of this town--as stated on the authority of her own maid--was the part of Scotland to which the rich widow contemplated removing when she left Swanhaven in two days' time. At Perth, Bishopriggs knew of more than one place in which he could get temporary employment--and at Perth he determined to make his first anonymous advances to Mrs. Glenarm.

The remainder of the evening passed quietly enough at the Lodge.

The guests were sleepy and dull after the excitement of the day. Mrs. Glenarm retired early. At eleven o'clock Julius Delamayn was the only person left up in the house. He was understood to be in his study, preparing an address to the electors, based on instructions sent from London by his father. He was actually occupied in the music-room--now that there was nobody to discover him--playing exercises softly on his beloved violin.

At the trainer's cottage a trifling incident occurred, that night, which afforded materials for a note in Perry's professional diary.

Geoffrey had sustained the later trial of walking for a given time and distance, at his full speed, without showing any of those symptoms of exhaustion which had followed the more serious experiment of running, to which he had been subjected earlier in the day. Perry, honestly bent--though he had privately hedged his own bets--on doing his best to bring his man in good order to the post on the day of the race, had forbidden Geoffrey to pay his evening visit to the house, and had sent him to bed earlier than usual. The trainer was alone, looking over his own written rules, and considering what modifications he should introduce into the diet and exercises of the next day, when he was startled by a sound of groaning from the bedroom in which his patron lay asleep.

He went in, and found Geoffrey rolling to and fro on the pillow, with his face contorted, with his hands clenched, and with the perspiration standing thick on his forehead--suffering evidently under the nervous oppression produced by the phantom-terrors of a dream.

Perry spoke to him, and pulled him up in the bed. He woke with a scream. He stared at his trainer in vacant terror, and spoke to his trainer in wild words. "What are your horrid eyes looking at over my shoulder?" he cried out. "Go to the devil--and take your infernal slate with you!" Perry spoke to him once more. "You've been dreaming of somebody, Mr. Delamayn. What's to do about a slate?" Geoffrey looked eagerly round the room, and heaved a

heavy breath of relief. "I could have sworn she was staring at me over the dwarf pear-trees," he said. "All right, I know where I am now." Perry (attributing the dream to nothing more important than a passing indigestion) administered some brandy and water, and left him to drop off again to sleep. He fretfully forbade the extinguishing of the light. "Afraid of the dark?" said Perry, with a laugh. No. He was afraid of dreaming again of the dumb cook at Windygates House.