

**TENTH SCENE--THE BEDROOM.**

**CHAPTER THE FORTY-FIRST. - LADY LUNDIE DOES HER DUTY.**

THE scene opens on a bedroom--and discloses, in broad daylight, a lady in bed.

Persons with an irritable sense of propriety, whose self-appointed duty it is to be always crying out, are warned to pause before they cry out on this occasion. The lady now presented to view being no less a person than Lady Lundie herself, it follows, as a matter of course, that the utmost demands of propriety are, by the mere assertion of that fact, abundantly and indisputably satisfied. To say that any thing short of direct moral advantage could, by any possibility, accrue to any living creature by the presentation of her ladyship in a horizontal, instead of a perpendicular position, is to assert that Virtue is a question of posture, and that Respectability ceases to assert itself when it ceases to appear in morning or evening dress. Will any body be bold enough to say that? Let nobody cry out, then, on the present occasion.

Lady Lundie was in bed.

Her ladyship had received Blanche's written announcement of the sudden stoppage of the bridal tour; and had penned the answer to Sir Patrick--the receipt of which at Ham Farm has been already described. This done, Lady Lundie felt it due to herself to take a becoming position in her own house, pending the possible arrival of Sir Patrick's reply. What does a right-minded woman do, when she has reason to believe that she is cruelly distrusted by the members of her own family? A right-minded woman feels it so acutely that she falls ill. Lady Lundie fell ill accordingly.

The case being a serious one, a medical practitioner of the highest grade in the profession was required to treat it. A physician from the neighboring town of Kirkandrew was called in.

The physician came in a carriage and pair, with the necessary bald head, and the indispensable white cravat. He felt her ladyship's pulse, and put a

few gentle questions. He turned his back solemnly, as only a great doctor can, on his own positive internal conviction that his patient had nothing whatever the matter with her. He said, with every appearance of believing in himself, "Nerves, Lady Lundie. Repose in bed is essentially necessary. I will write a prescription." He prescribed, with perfect gravity: Aromatic Spirits of Ammonia--16 drops. Spirits of Red Lavender--10 drops. Syrup of Orange Peel--2 drams. Camphor Julep--1 ounce. When he had written, *Misce fiat Hanstus* (instead of *Mix a Draught*)--when he had added, *Ter die Sumendus* (instead of *To be taken Three times a day*)--and when he had certified to his own Latin, by putting his initials at the end, he had only to make his bow; to slip two guineas into his pocket; and to go his way, with an approving professional conscience, in the character of a physician who had done his duty.

Lady Lundie was in bed. The visible part of her ladyship was perfectly attired, with a view to the occasion. A fillet of superb white lace encircled her head. She wore an adorable invalid jacket of white cambric, trimmed with lace and pink ribbons. The rest was--bed-clothes. On a table at her side stood the Red Lavender Draught--in color soothing to the eye; in flavor not unpleasant to the taste. A book of devotional character was near it. The domestic ledgers, and the kitchen report for the day, were ranged modestly behind the devout book. (Not even her ladyship's nerves, observe, were permitted to interfere with her ladyship's duty.) A fan, a smelling-bottle, and a handkerchief lay within reach on the counterpane. The spacious room was partially darkened. One of the lower windows was open, affording her ladyship the necessary cubic supply of air. The late Sir Thomas looked at his widow, in effigy, from the wall opposite the end of the bed. Not a chair was out of its place; not a vestige of wearing apparel dared to show itself outside the sacred limits of the wardrobe and the drawers. The sparkling treasures of the toilet-table glittered in the dim distance, The jugs and basins were of a rare and creamy white; spotless and beautiful to see. Look where you might, you saw a perfect room. Then look at the bed--and you saw a perfect woman, and completed the picture.

It was the day after Anne's appearance at Swanhaven--toward the end of the afternoon.

Lady Lundie's own maid opened the door noiselessly, and stole on tip-toe to the bedside. Her ladyship's eyes were closed. Her ladyship suddenly opened them.

"Not asleep, Hopkins. Suffering. What is it?"

Hopkins laid two cards on the counterpane. "Mrs. Delamayn, my lady--and Mrs. Glenarm."

"They were told I was ill, of course?"

"Yes, my lady. Mrs. Glenarm sent for me. She went into the library, and wrote this note." Hopkins produced the note, neatly folded in three-cornered form.

"Have they gone?"

"No, my lady. Mrs. Glenarm told me Yes or No would do for answer, if you could only have the goodness to read this."

"Thoughtless of Mrs. Glenarm--at a time when the doctor insists on perfect repose," said Lady Lundie. "It doesn't matter. One sacrifice more or less is of very little consequence."

She fortified herself by an application of the smelling-bottle, and opened the note. It ran thus:

"So grieved, dear Lady Lundie, to hear that you are a prisoner in your room! I had taken the opportunity of calling with Mrs. Delamayn, in the hope that I might be able to ask you a question. Will your inexhaustible kindness forgive me if I ask it in writing? Have you had any unexpected news of Mr. Arnold Brinkworth lately? I mean, have you heard any thing about him, which has taken you very much by surprise? I have a serious reason for asking this. I will tell you what it is, the moment you are able to see me. Until then, one word of answer is all I expect. Send word down--Yes, or No. A thousand apologies--and pray get better soon!"

The singular question contained in this note suggested one of two inferences to Lady Lundie's mind. Either Mrs. Glenarm had heard a report of the unexpected return of the married couple to England--or she was in the far more interesting and important position of possessing a clew to the secret of what was going on under the surface at Ham Farm. The phrase used in the note, "I have a serious reason for asking this," appeared to favor the latter of the two interpretations. Impossible as it seemed to be that Mrs. Glenarm could know something about Arnold of which Lady Lundie was in absolute ignorance, her ladyship's curiosity (already powerfully excited by Blanche's mysterious letter) was only to be quieted by obtaining the necessary

explanation forthwith, at a personal interview.

"Hopkins," she said, "I must see Mrs. Glenarm."

Hopkins respectfully held up her hands in horror. Company in the bedroom in the present state of her ladyship's health!

"A matter of duty is involved in this, Hopkins. Give me the glass."

Hopkins produced an elegant little hand-mirror. Lady Lundie carefully surveyed herself in it down to the margin of the bedclothes. Above criticism in every respect? Yes--even when the critic was a woman.

"Show Mrs. Glenarm up here."

In a minute or two more the iron-master's widow fluttered into the room--a little over-dressed as usual; and a little profuse in expressions of gratitude for her ladyship's kindness, and of anxiety about her ladyship's health. Lady Lundie endured it as long as she could--then stopped it with a gesture of polite remonstrance, and came to the point.

"Now, my dear--about this question in your note? Is it possible you have heard already that Arnold Brinkworth and his wife have come back from Baden?" Mrs. Glenarm opened her eyes in astonishment. Lady Lundie put it more plainly. "They were to have gone on to Switzerland, you know, for their wedding tour, and they suddenly altered their minds, and came back to England on Sunday last."

"Dear Lady Lundie, it's not that! Have you heard nothing about Mr. Brinkworth except what you have just told me?"

"Nothing."

There was a pause. Mrs. Glenarm toyed hesitatingly with her parasol. Lady Lundie leaned forward in the bed, and looked at her attentively.

"What have you heard about him?" she asked.

Mrs. Glenarm was embarrassed. "It's so difficult to say," she began.

"I can bear any thing but suspense," said Lady Lundie. "Tell me the worst."

Mrs. Glenarm decided to risk it. "Have you never heard," she asked, "that

Mr. Brinkworth might possibly have committed himself with another lady before he married Miss Lundie?"

Her ladyship first closed her eyes in horror and then searched blindly on the counterpane for the smelling-bottle. Mrs. Glenarm gave it to her, and waited to see how the invalid bore it before she said any more.

"There are things one must hear," remarked Lady Lundie. "I see an act of duty involved in this. No words can describe how you astonish me. Who told you?"

"Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn told me."

Her ladyship applied for the second time to the smelling-bottle. "Arnold Brinkworth's most intimate friend!" she exclaimed. "He ought to know if any body does. This is dreadful. Why should Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn tell you?"

"I am going to marry him," answered Mrs. Glenarm. "That is my excuse, dear Lady Lundie, for troubling you in this matter."

Lady Lundie partially opened her eyes in a state of faint bewilderment. "I don't understand," she said. "For Heaven's sake explain yourself!"

"Haven't you heard about the anonymous letters?" asked Mrs. Glenarm.

Yes. Lady Lundie had heard about the letters. But only what the public in general had heard. The name of the lady in the background not mentioned; and Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn assumed to be as innocent as the babe unborn. Any mistake in that assumption? "Give me your hand, my poor dear, and confide it all to me!"

"He is not quite innocent," said Mrs. Glenarm. "He owned to a foolish flirtation--all her doing, no doubt. Of course, I insisted on a distinct explanation. Had she really any claim on him? Not the shadow of a claim. I felt that I only had his word for that--and I told him so. He said he could prove it--he said he knew her to be privately married already. Her husband had disowned and deserted her; she was at the end of her resources; she was desperate enough to attempt any thing. I thought it all very suspicious--until Geoffrey mentioned the man's name. That certainly proved that he had cast off his wife; for I myself knew that he had lately married another person."

Lady Lundie suddenly started up from her pillow--honestly agitated;

genuinely alarmed by this time.

"Mr. Delamayn told you the man's name?" she said, breathlessly.

"Yes."

"Do I know it?"

"Don't ask me!"

Lady Lundie fell back on the pillow.

Mrs. Glenarm rose to ring for help. Before she could touch the bell, her ladyship had rallied again.

"Stop!" she cried. "I can confirm it! It's true, Mrs. Glenarm! it's true! Open the silver box on the toilet-table--you will find the key in it. Bring me the top letter. Here! Look at it. I got this from Blanche. Why have they suddenly given up their bridal tour? Why have they gone back to Sir Patrick at Ham Farm? Why have they put me off with an infamous subterfuge to account for it? I felt sure something dreadful had happened. Now I know what it is!" She sank back again, with closed eyes, and repeated the words, in a fierce whisper, to herself. "Now I know what it is!"

Mrs. Glenarm read the letter. The reason given for the suspiciously sudden return of the bride and bridegroom was palpably a subterfuge--and, more remarkable still, the name of Anne Silvester was connected with it. Mrs. Glenarm became strongly agitated on her side.

"This is a confirmation," she said. "Mr. Brinkworth has been found out--the woman is married to him--Geoffrey is free. Oh, my dear friend, what a load of anxiety you have taken off my mind! That vile wretch--"

Lady Lundie suddenly opened her eyes.

"Do you mean," she asked, "the woman who is at the bottom of all the mischief?"

"Yes. I saw her yesterday. She forced herself in at Swanhaven. She called him Geoffrey Delamayn. She declared herself a single woman. She claimed him before my face in the most audacious manner. She shook my faith, Lady Lundie--she shook my faith in Geoffrey!"

"Who is she?"

"Who?" echoed Mrs. Glenarm. "Don't you even know that? Why her name is repeated half a dozen times in this letter!"

Lady Lundie uttered a scream that rang through the room. Mrs. Glenarm started to her feet. The maid appeared at the door in terror. Her ladyship motioned to the woman to withdraw again instantly, and then pointed to Mrs. Glenarm's chair.

"Sit down," she said. "Let me have a minute or two of quiet. I want nothing more."

The silence in the room was unbroken until Lady Lundie spoke again. She asked for Blanche's letter. After reading it carefully, she laid it aside, and fell for a while into deep thought.

"I have done Blanche an injustice!" she exclaimed. "My poor Blanche!"

"You think she knows nothing about it?"

"I am certain of it! You forget, Mrs. Glenarm, that this horrible discovery casts a doubt on my step-daughter's marriage. Do you think, if she knew the truth, she would write of a wretch who has mortally injured her as she writes here? They have put her off with the excuse that she innocently sends to me. I see it as plainly as I see you! Mr. Brinkworth and Sir Patrick are in league to keep us both in the dark. Dear child! I owe her an atonement. If nobody else opens her eyes, I will do it. Sir Patrick shall find that Blanche has a friend in Me!"

A smile--the dangerous smile of an inveterately vindictive woman thoroughly roused--showed itself with a furtive suddenness on her face. Mrs. Glenarm was a little startled. Lady Lundie below the surface--as distinguished from Lady Lundie on the surface--was not a pleasant object to contemplate.

"Pray try to compose yourself," said Mrs. Glenarm. "Dear Lady Lundie, you frighten me!"

The bland surface of her ladyship appeared smoothly once more; drawn back, as it were, over the hidden inner self, which it had left for the moment exposed to view.

"Forgive me for feeling it!" she said, with the patient sweetness which so

eminently distinguished her in times of trial. "It falls a little heavily on a poor sick woman--innocent of all suspicion, and insulted by the most heartless neglect. Don't let me distress you. I shall rally, my dear; I shall rally! In this dreadful calamity--this abyss of crime and misery and deceit--I have no one to depend on but myself. For Blanche's sake, the whole thing must be cleared up--probed, my dear, probed to the depths. Blanche must take a position that is worthy of her. Blanche must insist on her rights, under My protection. Never mind what I suffer, or what I sacrifice. There is a work of justice for poor weak Me to do. It shall be done!" said her ladyship, fanning herself with an aspect of illimitable resolution. "It shall be done!"

"But, Lady Lundie what can you do? They are all away in the south. And as for that abominable woman--"

Lady Lundie touched Mrs. Glenarm on the shoulder with her fan.

"I have my surprise in store, dear friend, as well as you. That abominable woman was employed as Blanche's governess in this house. Wait! that is not all. She left us suddenly--ran away--on the pretense of being privately married. I know where she went. I can trace what she did. I can find out who was with her. I can follow Mr. Brinkworth's proceedings, behind Mr. Brinkworth's back. I can search out the truth, without depending on people compromised in this black business, whose interest it is to deceive me. And I will do it to-day!" She closed the fan with a sharp snap of triumph, and settled herself on the pillow in placid enjoyment of her dear friend's surprise.

Mrs. Glenarm drew confidentially closer to the bedside. "How can you manage it?" she asked, eagerly. "Don't think me curious. I have my interest, too, in getting at the truth. Don't leave me out of it, pray!"

"Can you come back to-morrow, at this time?"

"Yes! yes!"

"Come, then--and you shall know."

"Can I be of any use?"

"Not at present."

"Can my uncle be of any use?"

"Do you know where to communicate with Captain Newenden?"



"Yes--he is staying with some friends in Sussex."

"We may possibly want his assistance. I can't tell yet. Don't keep Mrs. Delamayn waiting any longer, my dear. I shall expect you to-morrow."

They exchanged an affectionate embrace. Lady Lundie was left alone.

Her ladyship resigned herself to meditation, with frowning brow and close-shut lips. She looked her full age, and a year or two more, as she lay thinking, with her head on her hand, and her elbow on the pillow. After committing herself to the physician (and to the red lavender draught) the commonest regard for consistency made it necessary that she should keep her bed for that day. And yet it was essential that the proposed inquiries should be instantly set on foot. On the one hand, the problem was not an easy one to solve; on the other, her ladyship was not an easy one to beat. How to send for the landlady at Craig Fernie, without exciting any special suspicion or remark--was the question before her. In less than five minutes she had looked back into her memory of current events at Windygates--and had solved it.

Her first proceeding was to ring the bell for her maid.

"I am afraid I frightened you, Hopkins. The state of my nerves. Mrs. Glenarm was a little sudden with some news that surprised me. I am better now--and able to attend to the household matters. There is a mistake in the butcher's account. Send the cook here."

She took up the domestic ledger and the kitchen report; corrected the butcher; cautioned the cook; and disposed of all arrears of domestic business before Hopkins was summoned again. Having, in this way, dextrously prevented the woman from connecting any thing that her mistress said or did, after Mrs. Glenarm's departure, with any thing that might have passed during Mrs. Glenarm's visit, Lady Lundie felt herself at liberty to pave the way for the investigation on which she was determined to enter before she slept that night.

"So much for the indoor arrangements," she said. "You must be my prime minister, Hopkins, while I lie helpless here. Is there any thing wanted by the people out of doors? The coachman? The gardener?"

"I have just seen the gardener, my lady. He came with last week's accounts. I told him he couldn't see your ladyship to-day."

"Quite right. Had he any report to make?"

"No, my lady."

"Surely, there was something I wanted to say to him--or to somebody else? My memorandum-book, Hopkins. In the basket, on that chair. Why wasn't the basket placed by my bedside?"

Hopkins brought the memorandum-book. Lady Lundie consulted it (without the slightest necessity), with the same masterly gravity exhibited by the doctor when he wrote her prescription (without the slightest necessity also).

"Here it is," she said, recovering the lost remembrance. "Not the gardener, but the gardener's wife. A memorandum to speak to her about Mrs. Inchbare. Observe, Hopkins, the association of ideas. Mrs. Inchbare is associated with the poultry; the poultry are associated with the gardener's wife; the gardener's wife is associated with the gardener--and so the gardener gets into my head. Do you see it? I am always trying to improve your mind. You do see it? Very well. Now about Mrs. Inchbare? Has she been here again?"

"No, my lady."

"I am not at all sure, Hopkins, that I was right in declining to consider the message Mrs. Inchbare sent to me about the poultry. Why shouldn't she offer to take any fowls that I can spare off my hands? She is a respectable woman; and it is important to me to live on good terms with all my neighbors, great and small. Has she got a poultry-yard of her own at Craig Fernie?"

"Yes, my lady. And beautifully kept, I am told."

"I really don't see--on reflection, Hopkins--why I should hesitate to deal with Mrs. Inchbare. (I don't think it beneath me to sell the game killed on my estate to the poulterer.) What was it she wanted to buy? Some of my black Spanish fowls?"

"Yes, my lady. Your ladyship's black Spaniards are famous all round the neighborhood. Nobody has got the breed. And Mrs. Inchbare--"

"Wants to share the distinction of having the breed with me," said Lady Lundie. "I won't appear ungracious. I will see her myself, as soon as I am a

little better, and tell her that I have changed my mind. Send one of the men to Craig Fernie with a message. I can't keep a trifling matter of this sort in my memory--send him at once, or I may forget it. He is to say I am willing to see Mrs. Inchbare, about the fowls, the first time she finds it convenient to come this way."

"I am afraid, my lady--Mrs. Inchbare's heart is so set on the black Spaniards--she will find it convenient to come this way at once as fast as her feet can carry her."

"In that case, you must take her to the gardener's wife. Say she is to have some eggs--on condition, of course, of paying the price for them. If she does come, mind I hear of it."

Hopkins withdrew. Hopkins's mistress reclined on her comfortable pillows and fanned herself gently. The vindictive smile reappeared on her face. "I fancy I shall be well enough to see Mrs. Inchbare," she thought to herself. "And it is just possible that the conversation may get beyond the relative merits of her poultry-yard and mine."

A lapse of little more than two hours proved Hopkins's estimate of the latent enthusiasm in Mrs. Inchbare's character to have been correctly formed. The eager landlady appeared at Windygates on the heels of the returning servant. Among the long list of human weaknesses, a passion for poultry seems to have its practical advantages (in the shape of eggs) as compared with the more occult frenzies for collecting snuff-boxes and fiddles, and amassing autographs and old postage-stamps. When the mistress of Craig Fernie was duly announced to the mistress of Windygates, Lady Lundie developed a sense of humor for the first time in her life. Her ladyship was feebly merry (the result, no doubt, of the exhilarating properties of the red lavender draught) on the subject of Mrs. Inchbare and the Spanish fowls.

"Most ridiculous, Hopkins! This poor woman must be suffering from a determination of poultry to the brain. Ill as I am, I should have thought that nothing could amuse me. But, really, this good creature starting up, and rushing here, as you say, as fast as her feet can carry her--it's impossible to resist it! I positively think I must see Mrs. Inchbare. With my active habits, this imprisonment to my room is dreadful. I can neither sleep nor read. Any thing, Hopkins, to divert my mind from myself: It's easy to get rid of her if she is too much for me. Send her up."

Mrs. Inchbare made her appearance, courtesying deferentially; amazed at the condescension which admitted her within the hallowed precincts of Lady Lundie's room.

"Take a chair," said her ladyship, graciously. "I am suffering from illness, as you perceive."

"My certie! sick or well, yer leddyship's a braw sight to see!" returned Mrs. Inchbare profoundly impressed by the elegant costume which illness assumes when illness appears in the regions of high life.

"I am far from being in a fit state to receive any body," proceeded Lady Lundie. "But I had a motive for wishing to speak to you when you next came to my house. I failed to treat a proposal you made to me, a short time since, in a friendly and neighborly way. I beg you to understand that I regret having forgotten the consideration due from a person in my position to a person in yours. I am obliged to say this under very unusual circumstances," added her ladyship, with a glance round her magnificent bedroom, "through your unexpected promptitude in favoring me with a call. You have lost no time, Mrs. Inchbare, in profiting by the message which I had the pleasure of sending to you."

"Eh, my leddy, I wasna' that sure (yer leddyship having ance changed yer mind) but that ye might e'en change again if I failed to strike, as they say, while the iron's het. I crave yer pardon, I'm sure, if I ha' been ower hasty. The pride o' my hairt's in my powltry--and the black Spaniards' (as they ca' them) are a sair temptation to me to break the tenth commandment, sae lang as they're a' in yer leddyship's possession, and nane o' them in mine."

"I am shocked to hear that I have been the innocent cause of your falling into temptation, Mrs. Inchbare! Make your proposal--and I shall be happy to meet it, if I can."

"I must e'en be content wi' what yer leddyship will condescend on. A haitch o' eggs if I can come by naething else."

"There is something else you would prefer to a hatch of eggs?"

"I wad prefer," said Mrs. Inchbare, modestly, "a cock and twa pullets."

"Open the case on the table behind you," said Lady Lundie, "and you will find some writing paper inside. Give me a sheet of it--and the pencil out of the tray."

Eagerly watched by Mrs. Inchbare, she wrote an order to the poultry-woman, and held it out with a gracious smile.

"Take that to the gardener's wife. If you agree with her about the price, you can have the cock and the two pullets."

Mrs. Inchbare opened her lips--no doubt to express the utmost extremity of human gratitude. Before she had said three words, Lady Lundie's impatience to reach the end which she had kept in view from the time when Mrs. Glenarm had left the house burst the bounds which had successfully restrained it thus far. Stopping the landlady without ceremony, she fairly forced the conversation to the subject of Anne Silvester's proceedings at the Craig Fernie inn.

"How are you getting on at the hotel, Mrs. Inchbare? Plenty of tourists, I suppose, at this time of year?"

"Full, my leddy (praise Providence), frae the basement to the ceiling."

"You had a visitor, I think, some time since of whom I know something? A person--" She paused, and put a strong constraint on herself. There was no alternative but to yield to the hard necessity of making her inquiry intelligible. "A lady," she added, "who came to you about the middle of last month."

"Could yer leddyship condescend on her name?"

Lady Lundie put a still stronger constraint on herself. "Silvester," she said, sharply.

"Presairve us a'!" cried Mrs. Inchbare. "It will never be the same that cam' driftin' in by hersel'--wi' a bit bag in her hand, and a husband left daidling an hour or mair on the road behind her?"

"I have no doubt it is the same."

"Will she be a freend o' yer leddyship's?" asked Mrs. Inchbare, feeling her ground cautiously.

"Certainly not!" said Lady Lundie. "I felt a passing curiosity about her--nothing more."

Mrs. Inchbare looked relieved. "To tell ye truth, my leddy, there was nae love lost between us. She had a maisterfu' temper o' her ain--and I was weel pleased when I'd seen the last of her."

"I can quite understand that, Mrs. Inchbare--I know something of her temper myself. Did I understand you to say that she came to your hotel alone, and that her husband joined her shortly afterward?"

"E'en sae, yer leddyship. I was no' free to gi' her house-room in the hottle till her husband daidled in at her heels and answered for her."

"I fancy I must have seen her husband," said Lady Lundie. "What sort of a man was he?"

Mrs. Inchbare replied in much the same words which she had used in answering the similar question put by Sir Patrick.

"Eh! he was ower young for the like o' her. A pratty man, my leddy--betwixt tall and short; wi' bonny brown eyes and cheeks, and fine coal-blaik hair. A nice douce-spoken lad. I hae naething to say against him--except that he cam' late one day, and took leg-bail betimes the next morning, and left madam behind, a load on my hands."

The answer produced precisely the same effect on Lady Lundie which it had produced on Sir Patrick. She, also, felt that it was too vaguely like too many young men of no uncommon humor and complexion to be relied on. But her ladyship possessed one immense advantage over her brother-in-law in attempting to arrive at the truth. She suspected Arnold--and it was possible, in her case, to assist Mrs. Inchbare's memory by hints contributed from her own superior resources of experience and observation.

"Had he any thing about him of the look and way of a sailor?" she asked. "And did you notice, when you spoke to him, that he had a habit of playing with a locket on his watch-chain?"

"There he is, het aff to a T!" cried Mrs. Inchbare. "Yer leddyship's weel acquainted wi' him--there's nae doot o' that."

"I thought I had seen him," said Lady Lundie. "A modest, well-behaved young man, Mrs. Inchbare, as you say. Don't let me keep you any longer from the poultry-yard. I am transgressing the doctor's orders in seeing any body. We quite understand each other now, don't we? Very glad to have seen you. Good-evening."

So she dismissed Mrs. Inchbare, when Mrs. Inchbare had served her purpose.

Most women, in her position, would have been content with the information which she had now obtained. But Lady Lundie--having a man like Sir Patrick to deal with--determined to be doubly sure of her facts before she ventured on interfering at Ham Farm. She had learned from Mrs. Inchbare that the so-called husband of Anne Silvester had joined her at Craig Fernie on the day when she arrived at the inn, and had left her again the next morning. Anne had made her escape from Windygates on the occasion of the lawn-party--that is to say, on the fourteenth of August. On the same day Arnold Brinkworth had taken his departure for the purpose of visiting the Scotch property left to him by his aunt. If Mrs. Inchbare was to be depended on, he must have gone to Craig Fernie instead of going to his appointed destination--and must, therefore, have arrived to visit his house and lands one day later than the day which he had originally set apart for that purpose. If this fact could be proved, on the testimony of a disinterested witness, the case against Arnold would be strengthened tenfold; and Lady Lundie might act on her discovery with something like a certainty that her information was to be relied on.

After a little consideration she decided on sending a messenger with a note of inquiry addressed to Arnold's steward. The apology she invented to excuse and account for the strangeness of the proposed question, referred it to a little family discussion as to the exact date of Arnold's arrival at his estate, and to a friendly wager in which the difference of opinion had ended. If the steward could state whether his employer had arrived on the fourteenth or on the fifteenth of August, that was all that would be wanted to decide the question in dispute.

Having written in those terms, Lady Lundie gave the necessary directions for having the note delivered at the earliest possible hour on the next morning; the messenger being ordered to make his way back to Windygates by the first return train on the same day.

This arranged, her ladyship was free to refresh herself with another dose of the red lavender draught, and to sleep the sleep of the just who close their eyes with the composing conviction that they have done their duty.

The events of the next day at Windygates succeeded each other in due

course, as follows:

The post arrived, and brought no reply from Sir Patrick. Lady Lundie entered that incident on her mental register of debts owed by her brother-in-law--to be paid, with interest, when the day of reckoning came.

Next in order occurred the return of the messenger with the steward's answer.

He had referred to his Diary; and he had discovered that Mr. Brinkworth had written beforehand to announce his arrival at his estate for the fourteenth of August--but that he had not actually appeared until the fifteenth. The one discovery needed to substantiate Mrs. Inchbare's evidence being now in Lady Lundie's possession, she decided to allow another day to pass--on the chance that Sir Patrick might alter his mind, and write to her. If no letter arrived, and if nothing more was received from Blanche, she resolved to leave Windygates by the next morning's train, and to try the bold experiment of personal interference at Ham Farm.

The third in the succession of events was the appearance of the doctor to pay his professional visit.

A severe shock awaited him. He found his patient cured by the draught! It was contrary to all rule and precedent; it savored of quackery--the red lavender had no business to do what the red lavender had done--but there she was, nevertheless, up and dressed, and contemplating a journey to London on the next day but one. "An act of duty, doctor, is involved in this--whatever the sacrifice, I must go!" No other explanation could be obtained. The patient was plainly determined--nothing remained for the physician but to retreat with unimpaired dignity and a paid fee. He did it. "Our art," he explained to Lady Lundie in confidence, "is nothing, after all, but a choice between alternatives. For instance. I see you--not cured, as you think--but sustained by abnormal excitement. I have to ask which is the least of the two evils--to risk letting you travel, or to irritate you by keeping you at home. With your constitution, we must risk the journey. Be careful to keep the window of the carriage up on the side on which the wind blows. Let the extremities be moderately warm, and the mind easy--and pray don't omit to provide yourself with a second bottle of the Mixture before you start." He made his bow, as before--he slipped two guineas into his pocket, as before--and he went his way, as before, with an approving conscience, in the character of a physician who had done his duty. (What an enviable profession is Medicine! And why don't we all belong to it?)



The last of the events was the arrival of Mrs. Glenarm.

"Well?" she began, eagerly, "what news?"

The narrative of her ladyship's discoveries--recited at full length; and the announcement of her ladyship's resolution--declared in the most uncompromising terms--raised Mrs. Glenarm's excitement to the highest pitch.

"You go to town on Saturday?" she said. "I will go with you. Ever since that woman declared she should be in London before me, I have been dying to hasten my journey--and it is such an opportunity to go with you! I can easily manage it. My uncle and I were to have met in London, early next week, for the foot-race. I have only to write and tell him of my change of plans.--By-the-by, talking of my uncle, I have heard, since I saw you, from the lawyers at Perth."

"More anonymous letters?"

"One more--received by the lawyers this time. My unknown correspondent has written to them to withdraw his proposal, and to announce that he has left Perth. The lawyers recommended me to stop my uncle from spending money uselessly in employing the London police. I have forwarded their letter to the captain; and he will probably be in town to see his solicitors as soon as I get there with you. So much for what I have done in this matter. Dear Lady Lundie--when we are at our journey's end, what do you mean to do?"

"My course is plain," answered her ladyship, calmly. "Sir Patrick will hear from me, on Sunday morning next, at Ham Farm."

"Telling him what you have found out?"

"Certainly not! Telling him that I find myself called to London by business, and that I propose paying him a short visit on Monday next."

"Of course, he must receive you?"

"I think there is no doubt of that. Even his hatred of his brother's widow can hardly go to the length--after leaving my letter unanswered--of closing his doors against me next."

"How will you manage it when you get there?"

"When I get there, my dear, I shall be breathing an atmosphere of treachery and deceit; and, for my poor child's sake (abhorrent as all dissimulation is to me), I must be careful what I do. Not a word will escape my lips until I have first seen Blanche in private. However painful it may be, I shall not shrink from my duty, if my duty compels me to open her eyes to the truth. Sir Patrick and Mr. Brinkworth will have somebody else besides an inexperienced young creature to deal with on Monday next. I shall be there."

With that formidable announcement, Lady Lundie closed the conversation; and Mrs. Glenarm rose to take her leave.

"We meet at the Junction, dear Lady Lundie?"

"At the Junction, on Saturday."