

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE first signs of reviving life had begun to appear, when Marceline answered the bell. In a few minutes more, it was possible to raise Mrs. Gallilee and to place her on the sofa. Having so far assisted the servant, Mr. Gallilee took Zo by the hand, and drew back. Daunted by the terrible scene which she had witnessed from her hiding-place, the child stood by her father's side in silence. The two waited together, watching Mrs. Gallilee.

She looked wildly round the room. Discovering that she was alone with the members of her family, she became composed: her mind slowly recovered its balance. Her first thought was for herself.

"Has that woman disfigured me?" she said to the maid.

Knowing nothing of what had happened, Marceline was at a loss to understand her. "Bring me a glass," she said. The maid found a hand-glass in the bedroom, and presented it to her. She looked at herself--and drew a long breath of relief. That first anxiety at an end, she spoke to her husband.

"Where is Carmina?"

"Out of the house--thank God!"

The answer seemed to bewilder her: she appealed to Marceline.

"Did he say, thank God?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Can you tell me nothing? Who knows where Carmina has gone?"

"Joseph knows, ma'am. He heard Dr. Benjulia give the address to the cabman." With that answer, she turned anxiously to her master. "Is Miss Carmina seriously ill, sir?"

Her mistress spoke again, before Mr. Gallilee could reply. "Marceline! send Joseph up here."

"No," said Mr. Gallilee.

His wife eyed him with astonishment. "Why not?" she asked.

He said quietly, "I forbid it."

Mrs. Gallilee addressed herself to the maid. "Go to my room, and bring me another bonnet and a veil. Stop!" She tried to rise, and sank back. "I must have something to strengthen me. Get the sal volatile."

Marceline left the room. Mr. Gallilee followed her as far as the door--still leading his little daughter.

"Go back, my dear, to your sister in the schoolroom," he said. "I am distressed, Zo; be a good girl, and you will console me. Say the same to Maria. It will be dull for you, I am afraid. Be patient, my child, and try to bear it for a while."

"May I whisper something?" said Zo. "Will Carmina die?"

"God forbid!"

"Will they bring her back here?"

In her eagerness, the child spoke above a whisper. Mrs. Gallilee heard the question, and answered it.

"They will bring Carmina back," she said, "the moment I can get out."

Zo looked at her father. "Do you say that?" she asked.

He shook his head gravely, and told her again to go to the schoolroom. On the first landing she stopped, and looked back. "I'll be good, papa," she said--and went on up the stairs.

Having reached the schoolroom, she became the object of many questions--not one of which she answered. Followed by the dog, she sat down in a corner. "What are you thinking about?" her sister inquired. This time she was willing to reply. "I'm thinking about Carmina."

Mr. Gallilee closed the door when Zo left him. He took a chair, without speaking to his wife or looking at her.

"What are you here for?" she asked.

"I must wait," he said.

"What for?"

"To see what you do."

Marceline returned, and administered a dose of sal volatile. Strengthened by the stimulant, Mrs. Gallilee was able to rise. "My head is giddy," she said, as she took the maid's arm; "but I think I can get downstairs with your help."

Mr. Gallilee silently followed them out.

At the head of the stairs the giddiness increased. Firm as her resolution might be, it gave way before the bodily injury which Mrs. Gallilee had received. Her husband's help was again needed to take her to her bedroom. She stopped them at the ante-chamber; still obstinately bent on following her own designs. "I shall be better directly," she said; "put me on the sofa." Marceline relieved her of her bonnet and veil, and asked respectfully if there was any other service required. She looked defiantly at her husband, and reiterated the order--"Send for Joseph." Intelligent resolution is sometimes shaken; the inert obstinacy of a weak creature, man or animal, is immovable. Mr. Gallilee dismissed the maid with these words: "You needn't wait, my good girl--I'll speak to Joseph myself, downstairs."

His wife heard him with amazement and contempt. "Are you in your right senses?" she asked.

He paused on his way out. "You were always hard and headstrong," he said sadly; "I knew that. A cleverer man than I am might--I suppose it's possible--a clear-headed man might have found out how wicked you are." She lay, thinking; indifferent to anything he could say to her. "Are you not ashamed?" he asked wonderingly. "And not even sorry?" She paid no heed to him. He left her.

Descending to the hall, he was met by Joseph. "Doctor Benjulia has come back, sir. He wishes to see you."

"Where is he?"

"In the library."

"Wait, Joseph; I have something to say to you. If your mistress asks where they have taken Miss Carmina, you mustn't--this is my order, Joseph--you

mustn't tell her. If you have mentioned it to any of the other servants--it's quite likely they may have asked you, isn't it?" he said, falling into his old habit for a moment. "If you have mentioned it to the others," he resumed, "they mustn't tell her. That's all, my good man; that's all."

To his own surprise, Joseph found himself regarding his master with a feeling of respect. Mr. Gallilee entered the library.

"How is she?" he asked, eager for news of Carmina.

"The worse for being moved," Benjulia replied. "What about your wife?"

Answering that question, Mr. Gallilee mentioned the precautions that he had taken to keep the secret of Teresa's address.

"You need be under no anxiety about that," said Benjulia. "I have left orders that Mrs. Gallilee is not to be admitted. There is a serious necessity for keeping her out. In these cases of partial catalepsy, there is no saying when the change may come. When it does come, I won't answer for her niece's reason, if those two see each other again. Send for your own medical man. The girl is his patient, and he is the person on whom the responsibility rests. Let the servant take my card to him directly. We can meet in consultation at the house."

He wrote a line on one of his visiting cards. It was at once sent to Mr. Null.

"There's another matter to be settled before I go," Benjulia proceeded. "Here are some papers, which I have received from your lawyer, Mr. Moot. They relate to a slander, which your wife unfortunately repeated--"

Mr. Gallilee got up from his chair. "Don't take my mind back to that--pray don't!" he pleaded earnestly. "I can't bear it, Doctor Benjulia--I can't bear it! Please to excuse my rudeness: it isn't intentional--I don't know myself what's the matter with me. I've always led a quiet life, sir; I'm not fit for such things as these. Don't suppose I speak selfishly. I'll do what I can, if you will kindly spare me."

He might as well have appealed to the sympathy of the table at which they were sitting. Benjulia was absolutely incapable of understanding the state of mind which those words revealed.

"Can you take these papers to your wife?" he asked. "I called here this evening--being the person to blame--to set the matter right. As it is, I leave

her to make the discovery for herself. I desire to hold no more communication with your wife. Have you anything to say to me before I go?"

"Only one thing. Is there any harm in my calling at the house, to ask how poor Carmina goes on?"

"Ask as often as you like--provided Mrs. Gallilee doesn't accompany you. If she's obstinate, it may not be amiss to give your wife a word of warning. In my opinion, the old nurse is not likely to let her off, next time, with her life. I've had a little talk with that curious foreign savage. I said, 'You have committed, what we consider in England, a murderous assault. If Mrs. Gallilee doesn't mind the public exposure, you may find yourself in a prison.' She snapped her fingers in my face. 'Suppose I find myself with the hangman's rope round my neck,' she said, 'what do I care, so long as Carmina is safe from her aunt?' After that pretty answer, she sat down by her girl's bedside, and burst out crying."

Mr. Gallilee listened absently: his mind still dwelt on Carmina.

"I meant well," he said, "when I asked you to take her out of this house. It's no wonder if I was wrong. What I am too stupid to understand is--why you allowed her to be moved."

Benjulia listened with a grim smile; Mr. Gallilee's presumption amused him.

"I wonder whether there was any room left for memory, when nature furnished your narrow little head," he answered pleasantly. "Didn't I say that moving her was the least of two risks? And haven't I just warned you of what might have happened, if we had left your wife and her niece together in the same house? When I do a thing at my time of life, Mr. Gallilee--don't think me conceited--I know why I do it."

While he was speaking of himself in these terms, he might have said something more. He might have added, that his dread of the loss of Carmina's reason really meant his dread of a commonplace termination to an exceptionally interesting case. He might also have acknowledged, that he was not yielding obedience to the rules of professional etiquette, in confiding the patient to her regular medical attendant, but following the selfish suggestions of his own critical judgment.

His experience, brief as it had been, had satisfied him that stupid Mr. Null's course of action could be trusted to let the instructive progress of the malady proceed. Mr. Null would treat the symptoms in perfect good faith--

without a suspicion of the nervous hysteria which, in such a constitution as Carmina's, threatened to establish itself, in course of time, as the hidden cause. These motives--not only excused, but even ennobled, by their scientific connection with the interests of Medical Research--he might have avowed, under more favourable circumstances. While his grand discovery was still barely within reach, Doctor Benjulia stood committed to a system of diplomatic reserve, which even included simple Mr. Gallilee.

He took his hat and stick, and walked out into the hall. "Can I be of further use?" he asked carelessly. "You will hear about the patient from Mr. Null."

"You won't desert Carmina?" said Mr. Gallilee. "You will see her yourself, from time to time--won't you?"

"Don't be afraid; I'll look after her." He spoke sincerely in saying this. Carmina's case had already suggested new ideas. Even the civilised savage of modern physiology (where his own interests are concerned) is not absolutely insensible to a feeling of gratitude.

Mr. Gallilee opened the door for him.

"By the-bye," he added, as he stepped out, "what's become of Zo?"

"She's upstairs, in the schoolroom."

He made one of his dreary jokes. "Tell her, when she wants to be tickled again, to let me know. Good-evening!"

Mr. Gallilee returned to the upper part of the house, with the papers left by Benjulia in his hand. Arriving at the dressing-room door, he hesitated. The papers were enclosed in a sealed envelope, addressed to his wife. Secured in this way from inquisitive eyes, there was no necessity for personally presenting them. He went on to the schoolroom, and beckoned to the parlour-maid to come out, and speak to him.

Having instructed her to deliver the papers--telling her mistress that they had been left at the house by Doctor Benjulia--he dismissed the woman from duty. "You needn't return," he said; "I'll look after the children myself."

Maria was busy with her book; and even idle Zo was employed!

She was writing at her own inky desk; and she looked up in confusion, when her father appeared. Unsuspicious Mr. Gallilee took it for granted that

his favourite daughter was employed on a writing lesson--following Maria's industrious example for once. "Good children!" he said, looking affectionately from one to the other. "I won't disturb you; go on." He took a chair, satisfied--comforted, even--to be in the same room with the girls.

If he had placed himself nearer to the desk, he might have seen that Zo had been thinking of Carmina to some purpose.

What could she do to make her friend and playfellow well and happy again? There was the question which Zo asked herself, after having seen Carmina carried insensible out of the room.

Possessed of that wonderful capacity for minute observation of the elder persons about them, which is one among the many baffling mysteries presented by the minds of children, Zo had long since discovered that the member of the household, preferred to all others by Carmina, was the good brother who had gone away and left them. In his absence, she was always talking of him--and Zo had seen her kiss his photograph before she put it back in the case.

Dwelling on these recollections, the child's slowly-working mental process arrived more easily than usual at the right conclusion. The way to make Carmina well and happy again, was to bring Ovid back. One of the two envelopes which he had directed for her still remained--waiting for the letter which might say to him, "Come home!"

Zo determined to write that letter--and to do it at once.

She might have confided this design to her father (the one person besides Carmina who neither scolded her nor laughed at her) if Mr. Gallilee had distinguished himself by his masterful position in the house. But she had seen him, as everybody else had seen him, "afraid of mamma." The doubt whether he might not "tell mamma," decided her on keeping her secret. As the event proved, the one person who informed Ovid of the terrible necessity that existed for his return, was the little sister whom it had been his last kind effort to console when he left England.

When Mr. Gallilee entered the room, Zo had just reached the end of her letter. Her system of composition excluded capitals and stops; and reduced all the words in the English language, by a simple process of abridgment, to words of one syllable.

"dear ov you come back car is ill she wants you be quick be quick don't say

I writ this miss min is gone I hate books I like you zo."

With the pen still in her hand, the wary writer looked round at her father. She had her directed envelope (sadly crumpled) in her pocket; but she was afraid to take it out. "Maria," she thought, "would know what to do in my place. Horrid Maria!"

Fortune, using the affairs of the household as an instrument, befriended Zo. In a minute more her opportunity arrived. The parlour-maid unexpectedly returned. She addressed Mr. Gallilee with the air of mystery in which English servants, in possession of a message, especially delight. "If you please, sir, Joseph wishes to speak to you."

"Where is he?"

"Outside, sir."

"Tell him to come in."

Thanks to the etiquette of the servants' hall--which did not permit Joseph to present himself, voluntarily, in the regions above the drawing-room, without being first represented by an ambadress--attention was now diverted from the children. Zo folded her letter, enclosed it in the envelope, and hid it in her pocket.

Joseph appeared. "I beg your pardon, sir, I don't quite know whether I ought to disturb my mistress. Mr. Le Frank has called, and asked if he can see her."

Mr. Gallilee consulted the parlour-maid. "Was your mistress asleep when I sent you to her?"

"No, sir. She told me to bring her a cup of tea."

On those rare former occasions, when Mrs. Gallilee had been ill, her attentive husband never left it to the servants to consult her wishes. That time had gone by for ever.

"Tell your mistress, Joseph, that Mr. Le Frank is here."