

## **CHAPTER LIV.**

On Monday morning, the strain on Mrs. Gallilee's powers of patient endurance came to an end. With the help of Mr. Null's arm, she was able to get downstairs to the library. On Tuesday, there would be no objection to her going out for a drive. Mr. Null left her, restored to her equable flow of spirits. He had asked if she wished to have somebody to keep her company--and she had answered briskly, "Not on any account! I prefer being alone."

On the morning of Saturday, she had received Mr. Le Frank's letter; but she had not then recovered sufficiently to be able to read it through. She could now take it up again, and get to the end.

Other women might have been alarmed by the atrocious wickedness of the conspiracy which the music-master had planned. Mrs. Gallilee was only offended. That he should think her capable--in her social position--of favouring such a plot as he had suggested, was an insult which she was determined neither to forgive nor forget. Fortunately, she had not committed herself in writing; he could produce no proof of the relations that had existed between them. The first and best use to make of her recovery would be to dismiss him--after paying his expenses, privately and prudently, in money instead of by cheque.

In the meantime, the man's insolence had left its revolting impression on her mind. The one way to remove it was to find some agreeable occupation for her thoughts.

Look at your library table, learned lady, and take the appropriate means of relief that it offers. See the lively modern parasites that infest Science, eager to invite your attention to their little crawling selves. Follow scientific inquiry, rushing into print to proclaim its own importance, and to declare any human being, who ventures to doubt or differ, a fanatic or a fool. Respect the leaders of public opinion, writing notices of professors, who have made discoveries not yet tried by time, not yet universally accepted even by their brethren, in terms which would be exaggerated if they were applied to Newton or to Bacon. Submit to lectures and addresses by dozens which, if they prove nothing else, prove that what was scientific knowledge some years since; is scientific ignorance now--and that what is scientific knowledge now, may be scientific ignorance in some years more. Absorb your mind in controversies and discussions, in which Mr. Always Right and Mr. Never Wrong exhibit the natural tendency of man to believe in himself,

in the most rampant stage of development that the world has yet seen. And when you have done all this, doubt not that you have made a good use of your time. You have discovered what the gentle wisdom of FARADAY saw and deplored, when he warned the science of his day in words which should live for ever: "The first and last step in the education of the judgment is-- Humility." Having agreeably occupied her mind with subjects that were worthy of it, Mrs. Gallilee rose to seek a little physical relief by walking up and down the room.

Passing and repassing the bookcases, she noticed a remote corner devoted to miscellaneous literature. A volume in faded binding of sky-blue, had been placed upside down. She looked at the book before she put it in its right position. The title was "Gallery of British Beauty." Among the illustrations-- long since forgotten--appeared her own portrait, when she was a girl of Carmina's age.

A faintly contemptuous smile parted her hard lips, provoked by the recollections of her youth.

What a fool she had been, at that early period of her life! In those days, she had trembled with pleasure at the singing of a famous Italian tenor; she had flown into a passion when a new dress proved to be a misfit, on the evening of a ball; she had given money to beggars in the street; she had fallen in love with a poor young man, and had terrified her weak-minded hysterical mother, by threatening to commit suicide when the beloved object was forbidden the house. Comparing the girl of seventeen with the matured and cultivated woman of later years, what a matchless example Mrs. Gallilee presented of the healthy influence of education, directed to scientific pursuits! "Ah!" she thought, as she put the book back in its place, "my girls will have reason to thank me when they grow up; they have had a mother who has done her duty."

She took a few more turns up and down the room. The sky had cleared again; a golden gleam of sunlight drew her to the window. The next moment she regretted even this concession to human weakness. A disagreeable association presented itself, and arrested the pleasant flow of her thoughts. Mr. Gallilee appeared on the door-step; leaving the house on foot, and carrying a large brown-paper parcel under his arm.

With servants at his disposal, why was he carrying the parcel himself? The time had been, when Mrs. Gallilee would have tapped at the window, and would have insisted on his instantly returning and answering the question. But his conduct, since the catastrophe in Carmina's room, had produced a

complete estrangement between the married pair. All his inquiries after his wife's health had been made by deputy. When he was not in the schoolroom with the children, he was at his club. Until he came to his senses, and made humble apology, no earthly consideration would induce Mrs. Gallilee to take the slightest notice of him.

She returned to her reading.

The footman came in, with two letters--one arriving by post; the other having been dropped into the box by private messenger. Communications of this latter sort proceeded, not unfrequently, from creditors. Mrs. Gallilee opened the stamped letter first.

It contained nothing more important than a few lines from a daily governess, whom she had engaged until a successor to Miss Minerva could be found. In obedience to Mrs. Gallilee's instructions, the governess would begin her attendance at ten o'clock on the next morning.

The second letter was of a very different kind. It related the disaster which had befallen Mr. Le Frank.

Mr. Null was the writer. As Miss Carmina's medical attendant, it was his duty to inform her guardian that her health had been unfavourably affected by an alarm in the house. Having described the nature of the alarm, he proceeded in these words: "You will, I fear, lose the services of your present music-master. Inquiries made this morning at the hospital, and reported to me, appear to suggest serious results. The wounded man's constitution is in an unhealthy state; the surgeons are not sure of being able to save two of the fingers. I will do myself the honour of calling to-morrow before you go out for your drive."

The impression produced by this intelligence on the lady to whom it was addressed, can only be reported in her own words. She--who knew, on the best scientific authority, that the world had created itself--completely lost her head, and actually said, "Thank God!"

For weeks to come--perhaps for months if the surgeons' forebodings were fulfilled--Mrs. Gallilee had got rid of Mr. Le Frank. In that moment of infinite relief, if her husband had presented himself, it is even possible that he might have been forgiven.

As it was, Mr. Gallilee returned late in the afternoon; entered his own domain of the smoking-room; and left the house again five minutes

afterwards. Joseph officiously opened the door for him; and Joseph was surprised, precisely as his mistress had been surprised. Mr. Gallilee had a large brown paper parcel under his arm--the second which he had taken out of the house with his own hands! Moreover, he looked excessively confused when the footman discovered him. That night, he was late in returning from the club. Joseph (now on the watch) observed that he was not steady on his legs--and drew his own conclusions accordingly.

Punctual to her time, on the next morning, the new governess arrived. Mrs. Gallilee received her, and sent for the children.

The maid in charge of them appeared alone. She had no doubt that the young ladies would be back directly. The master had taken them out for a little walk, before they began their lessons. He had been informed that the lady who had been appointed to teach them would arrive at ten o'clock. And what had he said? He had said, "Very good."

The half-hour struck--eleven o'clock struck--and neither the father nor the children returned. Ten minutes later, someone rang the door bell. The door being duly opened, nobody appeared on the house-step. Joseph looked into the letter-box, and found a note addressed to his mistress, in his master's handwriting. He immediately delivered it.

Hitherto, Mrs. Gallilee had only been anxious. Joseph, waiting for events outside the door, heard the bell rung furiously; and found his mistress (as he forcibly described it) "like a woman gone distracted." Not without reason--to do her justice. Mr. Gallilee's method of relieving his wife's anxiety was remarkable by its brevity. In one sentence, he assured her that there was no need to feel alarmed. In another, he mentioned that he had taken the girls away with him for a change of air. And then he signed his initials--J. G.

Every servant in the house was summoned to the library, when Mrs. Gallilee had in some degree recovered herself.

One after another they were strictly examined; and one after another they had no evidence to give--excepting the maid who had been present when the master took the young ladies away. The little she had to tell, pointed to the inference that he had not admitted the girls to his confidence before they left the house. Maria had submitted, without appearing to be particularly pleased at the prospect of so early a walk. Zo (never ready to exert either her intelligence or her legs) had openly declared that she would rather stay at home. To this the master had answered, "Get your things on directly!"--and had said it so sharply that Miss Zoe stared at him in astonishment. Had

they taken anything with them--a travelling bag for instance? They had taken nothing, except Mr. Gallilee's umbrella. Who had seen Mr. Gallilee last, on the previous night? Joseph had seen him last. The lower classes in England have one, and but one, true feeling of sympathy with the higher classes. The man above them appeals to their hearts, and merits their true service, when he is unsteady on his legs. Joseph nobly confined his evidence to what he had observed some hours previously: he mentioned the parcel. Mrs. Gallilee's keen perception, quickened by her own experience at the window, arrived at the truth. Those two bulky packages must have contained clothes--left, in anticipation of the journey, under the care of an accomplice. It was impossible that Mr. Gallilee could have got at the girls' dresses and linen, and have made the necessary selections from them, without a woman's assistance. The female servants were examined again. Each one of them positively asserted her innocence. Mrs. Gallilee threatened to send for the police. The indignant women all cried in chorus, "Search our boxes!" Mrs. Gallilee took a wiser course. She sent to the lawyers who had been recommended to her by Mr. Null. The messenger had just been despatched, when Mr. Null himself, in performance of yesterday's engagement, called at the house.

He, too, was agitated. It was impossible that he could have heard what had happened. Was he the bearer of bad news? Mrs. Gallilee thought of Carmina first, and then of Mr. Le Frank.

"Prepare for a surprise," Mr. Null began, "a joyful surprise, Mrs. Gallilee! I have received a telegram from your son."

He handed it to her as he spoke.

"September 6th. Arrived at Quebec, and received information of Carmina's illness. Shall catch the Boston steamer, and sail to-morrow for Liverpool. Break the news gently to C. For God's sake send telegram to meet me at Queenstown."

It was then the 7th of September. If all went well, Ovid might be in London in ten days more.