

CHAPTER LXI.

Aided by time, care, and skill, Carmina had gained strength enough to pass some hours of the day in the sitting-room; reclining in an invalid-chair invented for her by Ovid. The welcome sight of Zo--brightened and developed by happy autumn days passed in Scotland--brought a deep flush to her face, and quickened the pulse which Ovid was touching, under pretence of holding her hand. These signs of excessive nervous sensibility warned him to limit the child's visit to a short space of time. Neither Miss Minerva nor Teresa were in the room: Carmina could have Zo all to herself.

"Now, my dear," she said, in a kiss, "tell me about Scotland."

"Scotland," Zo answered with dignity, "belongs to uncle Northlake. He pays for everything; and I'm Missus."

"It's true," said Mr. Gallilee, bursting with pride. "My lord says it's no use having a will of your own where Zo is. When he introduces her to anybody on the estate, he says, 'Here's the Missus.'"

Mr. Gallilee's youngest daughter listened critically to the parental testimony. "You see he knows," she said to Ovid. "There's nothing to laugh at."

Carmina tried another question. "Did you think of me, dear, when you were far away?"

"Think of you?" Zo repeated. "You're to sleep in my bedroom when we go back to Scotland--and I'm to be out of bed, and one of 'em, when you eat your first Scotch dinner. Shall I tell you what you'll see on the table? You'll see a big brown steaming bag in a dish--and you'll see me slit it with a knife--and the bag's fat inside will tumble out, all smoking hot and stinking. That's a Scotch dinner. Oh!" she cried, losing her dignity in the sudden interest of a new idea, "oh, Carmina, do you remember the Italian boy, and his song?"

Here was one of those tests of her memory for trifles, applied with a child's happy abruptness, for which Ovid had been waiting. He listened eagerly. To his unutterable relief, Carmina laughed.

"Of course I remember it!" she said. "Who could forget the boy who sings and grins and says Gimmeehaypenny?"

"That's it!" cried Zo. "The boy's song was a good one in its way. I've learnt a better in Scotland. You've heard of Donald, haven't you?"

"No."

Zo turned indignantly to her father. "Why didn't you tell her of Donald?"

Mr. Gallilee humbly admitted that he was in fault. Carmina asked who Donald was, and what he was like. Zo unconsciously tested her memory for the second time.

"You know that day," she said, "when Joseph had an errand at the grocer's and I went along with him, and Miss Minerva said I was a vulgar child?"

Carmina's memory recalled this new trifle, without an effort. "I know," she answered; "you told me Joseph and the grocer weighed you in the great scales."

Zo delighted Ovid by trying her again. "When they put me into the scales, Carmina, what did I weigh?"

"Nearly four stone, dear."

"Quite four stone. Donald weighs fourteen.' What do you think of that?"

Mr. Gallilee once more offered his testimony. "The biggest Piper on my lord's estate," he began, "comes of a Highland family, and was removed to the Lowlands by my lord's father. A great player--"

"And my friend," Zo explained, stopping her father in full career. "He takes snuff out of a cow's horn. He shovels it up his fat nose with a spoon, like this. His nose wags. He says, 'Try my sneeshin.' Sneeshin's Scotch for snuff. He boos till he's nearly double when uncle Northlake speaks to him. Boos is Scotch for bows. He skirls on the pipes--skirls means screeches. When you first hear him, he'll make your stomach ache. You'll get used to that--and you'll find you like him. He wears a purse and a petticoat; he never had a pair of trousers on in his life; there's no pride about him. Say you're my friend and he'll let you smack his legs--"

Here, Ovid was obliged to bring the biography of Donald to a close. Carmina's enjoyment of Zo was becoming too keen for her strength; her bursts of laughter grew louder and louder--the wholesome limit of

excitement was being rapidly passed. "Tell us about your cousins," he said, by way of effecting a diversion.

"The big ones?" Zo asked.

"No; the little ones, like you."

"Nice girls--they play at everything I tell 'em. Jolly boys--when they knock a girl down, they pick her up again, and clean her."

Carmina was once more in danger of passing the limit. Ovid made another attempt to effect a diversion. Singing would be comparatively harmless in its effect--as he rashly supposed. "What's that song you learnt in Scotland?" he asked.

"It's Donald's song," Zo replied. "He taught me."

At the sound of Donald's dreadful name, Ovid looked at his watch, and said there was no time for the song. Mr. Gallilee suddenly and seriously sided with his step-son. "How she got among the men after dinner," he said, "nobody knows. Lady Northlake has forbidden Donald to teach her any more songs; and I have requested him, as a favour to me, not to let her smack his legs. Come, my dear, it's time we were home again."

Well intended by both gentlemen--but too late. Zo was ready for the performance; her hat was cocked on one side; her plump little arms were set akimbo; her round eyes opened and closed facetiously in winks worthy of a low comedian. "I'm Donald," she announced: and burst out with the song: "We're gayly yet, we're gayly yet; We're not very fou, but we're gayly yet: Then sit ye awhile, and tipple a bit; For we're not very fou, but we're gayly yet." She snatched up Carmina's medicine glass, and waved it over her head with a Bacchanalian screech. "Fill a brimmer, Tammie! Here's to Redshanks!"

"And pray who is Redshanks?" asked a lady, standing in the doorway. Zo turned round--and instantly collapsed. A terrible figure, associated with lessons and punishments, stood before her. The convivial friend of Donald, the established Missus of Lord Northlake, disappeared--and a polite pupil took their place. "If you please, Miss Minerva, Redshanks is nickname for a Highlander." Who would have recognised the singer of "We're gayly yet," in the subdued young person who made that reply?

The door opened again. Another disastrous intrusion? Yes, another! Teresa appeared this time--caught Zo up in her arms--and gave the child a kiss

that was heard all over the room. "Ah, mia Giocosa!" cried the old nurse--too happy to speak in any language but her own. "What does that mean?" Zo asked, settling her ruffled petticoats. "It means," said Teresa, who prided herself on her English, "Ah, my Jolly." This to a young lady who could slit a haggis! This to the only person in Scotland, privileged to smack Donald's legs! Zo turned to her father, and recovered her dignity. Maria herself could hardly have spoken with more severe propriety. "I wish to go home," said Zo.

Ovid had only to look at Carmina, and to see the necessity of immediate compliance with his little sister's wishes. No more laughing, no more excitement, for that day. He led Zo out himself, and resigned her to her father at the door of his rooms on the ground floor.

Cheered already by having got away from Miss Minerva and the nurse, Zo desired to know who lived downstairs; and, hearing that these were Ovid's rooms, insisted on seeing them. The three went in together.

Ovid drew Mr. Gallilee into a corner. "I'm easier about Carmina now," he said. "The failure of her memory doesn't extend backwards. It begins with the shock to her brain, on the day when Teresa removed her to this house--and it will end, I feel confident, with the end of her illness."

Mr. Gallilee's attention suddenly wandered. "Zo!" he called out, "don't touch your brother's papers."

The one object that had excited the child's curiosity was the writing-table. Dozens of sheets of paper were scattered over it, covered with writing, blotted and interlined. Some of these leaves had overflowed the table, and found a resting-place on the floor. Zo was amusing herself by picking them up. "Well!" she said, handing them obediently to Ovid, "I've had many a rap on the knuckles for writing not half as bad as yours."

Hearing his daughter's remark, Mr. Gallilee became interested in looking at the fragments of manuscript. "What an awful mess!" he exclaimed. "May I try if I can read a bit?" Ovid smiled. "Try by all means; you will make one useful discovery at least--you will see that the most patient men on the face of the civilised earth are Printers!"

Mr. Gallilee tried a page--and gave it up before he turned giddy. "Is it fair to ask what this is?"

"Something easy to feel, and hard to express," Ovid answered. "These ill-written lines are my offering of gratitude to the memory of an unknown and

unhappy man."

"The man you told me of, who died at Montreal?"

"Yes."

"You never mentioned his name."

"His last wishes forbade me to mention it to any living creature. God knows there were pitiable, most pitiable, reasons for his dying unknown! The stone over his grave only bears his initials, and the date of his death. But," said Ovid, kindling with enthusiasm, as he laid his hand on his manuscript, "the discoveries of this great physician shall benefit humanity! And my debt to him shall be acknowledged, with the admiration and the devotion that I truly feel!"

"In a book?" asked Mr. Gallilee.

"In a book that is now being printed. You will see it before the New Year."

Finding nothing to amuse her in the sitting-room, Zo had tried the bedroom next. She now returned to Ovid, dragging after her a long white staff that looked like an Alpen-stock. "What's this?" she asked. "A broomstick?"

"A specimen of rare Canadian wood, my dear. Would you like to have it?"

Zo took the offer quite seriously. She looked with longing eyes at the specimen, three times as tall as herself--and shook her head. "I'm not big enough for it, yet," she said. "Look at it, papa! Benjulia's stick is nothing to this."

That name--on the child's lips--had a sound revolting to Ovid. "Don't speak of him!" he said irritably.

"Mustn't I speak of him," Zo asked, "when I want him to tickle me?" Ovid beckoned to her father. "Take her away now," he whispered--"and never let her see that man again."

The warning was needless. The man's destiny had decreed that he and Zo were never more to meet.