Vagabondia

By

Frances Hodgson Burnett

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

This my first novel was written several years ago, and published (without any revision by me) first in a ladies' magazine under the name of "Dorothea," and afterwards in book form as "Dolly." For reasons not necessary to state here, all control over the book had passed from my hands. It has been for some time out of print; but, having at last obtained control of the copyright, I have made such corrections as seemed advisable, given it the name I originally intended for it, and now issue it through my regular publishers.

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

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VAGABONDIA.

CHAPTER I. IN WHICH WE HOLD COUNSEL.

It was a nondescript sort of a room, taking it altogether. A big, sunny room, whose once handsome papering and corniceing had grown dingy, and whose rich carpeting had lost its color and pile in places, and yet asserted its superiority to its surroundings with an air of lost grandeur in every shabby medallion. There were pictures in abundance on the walls, and more than one of them were gems in their way, despite the evidence all bore to being the work of amateurs. The tables were carved elaborately, and the faded, brocaded chairs were of the order pouf, and as inviting as they were disreputable in appearance; there was manuscript music among the general litter, a guitar hung from the wall by a tarnished blue and silver ribbon, and a violin lay on the piano; and yet, notwithstanding the air of free-and-easy disorder, one could hardly help recognizing a sort of vagabond comfort and luxury in the Bohemian surroundings. It was so very evident that the owners must enjoy life in an easy, light-hearted, though perhaps light-headed fashion; and it was also so very evident that their light hearts and light heads rose above their knowledge of their light purses.

They were congregated together now, holding a grand family council around the centre-table, and Dolly was the principal feature, as usual; and, embarrassing as the subject of said council was, not one of them looked as if it was other than a most excellent joke that Dolly, having

been invited into the camps of the Philistines, should find she had nothing to put on to grace the occasion. And as to Dolly,--well, that young person stood in the midst of them in her shabby, Frenchy little hat, slapping one pink palm with a shabby, shapely kid glove, her eyes alight, her comical dismay and amusement displaying itself even in the arch of her brows.

"And so the Philistine leader pounced upon me herself," she was saying. "You know the 'Ark,' Phil? Well, they were all in the Ark,--the Rev. Bilberry in front, and the boys and girls filling up the corners; so you may imagine the effect produced when they stopped, and Lady Augusta bent over the side to solemnly proclaim her intention of inviting me to partake of coffee and conversation on Friday night, with an air of severely wondering whether I would dare to say 'No!'"

"Why did n't you say it?" said Aimée. "You know it will be an awful bore, Dolly. Those Bilberry clan gatherings always are. You have said so yourself often enough."

"Of course I have," returned Dolly. "And of course it will be, but it would be dreadfully indiscreet to let the Bilberry element know I thought so. The Bilberry doors once closed against us, where is our respectability, and Phil's chance of success among the Philistines? It is bad enough, of course, but there is reason to be thankful that I am the only victim. The rest of you would be sure to blunder into the B. B. B.'s [meaning the Bilberry black books], and that would be an

agreeable state of affairs. 'Toinette, look at Tod, he is sitting in the coal-box eating Phil's fusees."

In 'Toinette we find Mrs. Phil, a handsome creature, young enough to have been in the school-room, but with the face and figure of a Greek goddess, and a pair of eyes lovely enough to haunt one's dreams as a memory for a lifetime, and as to the rest, an inconsistent young madcap, whose beauty and spirit seemed only a necessary part of the household arrangements, and whose son and heir, in the person of the enterprising Tod (an abbreviate of Theodore), was the source of unlimited domestic enjoyment and the object of much indiscreet adoration. It was just like Philip Crewe, this marrying on probabilities; and it was equally like the rest of them to accept the state of affairs as an excellent joke, and regard the result as an exquisite piece of pleasantry. 'Toinette herself was only another careless, unworldly addition to the family circle, and enjoyed her position as thoroughly as the rest did; and as to Tod, what a delicate satire upon responsibilities Tod was, and how tranquilly he comported himself under a régime which admitted of free access into dangerous places, and a lack of personal restraint which allowed him all the joys the infantile mind can revel in!

At Dolly's exclamation Toinette rushed at him in his stronghold, and extricated him from the coal-box with demonstrations of dismay.

"Look at his white dress!" she wailed pathetically. "I only put it on a few minutes ago; and he has eaten two dozen fusees, if this was n't an

empty box when he found it. I hope they won't disagree with him, Phil."

"They won't," said Phil, composedly. "Nothing does. Dust him, and proceed to business. I want to hear the rest of Dolly's story."

"I think," said Mollie, "that he ate Shem and Ham this morning, for I could only find Japheth after he had been playing with his Noah's Ark. Go on, Dolly."

"Wait until I have taken off my things," said Dolly, "and then we 'll talk it over. We must talk it over, you know, if I am to go."

She took off her hat, and then laid her shawl aside,--a little scarlet shawl, draped about her figure and tossed over one shoulder smartly, and by no means ungracefully,--and so stood revealed; and it must be admitted she was well worth looking at. Not a beauty, but a fresh, wholesome little body, with a real complexion, an abundance of hair, and large-irised, wide-awake eyes, changeable as to color, because capricious in expression; the sort of girl, in fact, who would be likely to persuade people ultimately that, considering circumstances, absolute beauty could be easily dispensed with, and, upon the whole, would rather detract from the general charm of novelty, which, in her case, reigned supreme.

"It is n't the mere fact of being a beauty that makes women popular," she would say; "it's the being able to persuade people that you are

one,--or better than one. Don't some historians tell us that Cleopatra had red hair and questionable eyes, and yet she managed to blind the world so completely, that no one is sure whether it is true or not, and to this day the generality of people are inclined to believe that it was her supernatural beauty that dragged Marc Antony to the dust at her feet."

Aimée's face was more nearly perfect than Dolly's; Mollie's was more imposing, child as she was; 'Toi-nette threw her far into the shade in the matter of statuesque splendor; but still it was Dolly who did all the difficult things, and had divers tragic adventures with questionable adorers, whose name was legion, and who were a continual source of rejoicing and entertainment to the family.

Having tossed hat and shawl on to the table, among the manuscript music, paint-brushes, and palettes, this young person slipped into the most comfortable chair near the fire, and, having waited for the rest to seat themselves, proceeded to open the council. Mollie, who was sixteen, large, fair, beautiful, and not as tidy as she might have been, dropped into a not ungraceful position at her feet. Aimée, who was a little maiden with a tender, spirituelle face, and all the forethought of the family, sat near, with some grave perplexity in her expression. 'Toinette and Tod, posed in the low nursery-chair,--the girl's firm, white arm flung around the child,--swung lightly to and fro, fit models for an artist.

"You would make a first-class picture,--the lot of you," commented Phil, amicably.

"Never mind the picture," said Mollie, drawing her disreputable slippers up under her wrapper. "We want to hear how Dolly thinks of going to the Bilberrys'. Oh, Dolly, how heavenly it would be if you had a turquoise-blue sat--"

"Heavenly!" interrupted Dolly. "I should think so. Particularly celestial for Lady Augusta, who looks mahogany-colored in it, and peculiarly celestial for a poor relation from Vagabondia. It would be as much as my reputation was worth. She would never forgive me. You must learn discretion, Mollie."

"There is some consolation in knowing you can't get it," said 'Toinette. "You won't be obliged to deny yourself or be indiscreet. But what are you going to wear, Dolly?"

"That is for the council to decide," Dolly returned. "First, we must settle on what we want, and then we must settle on the way to get it."

"Other people go the other way about it," said Aimée.

"If we were only rich!" said Mollie.

"But it is a most glaringly patent fact that we are not," said Dolly.

"There is one thing certain, however,--it must be white."

"A simple white muslin," suggested 'Toinette, struggling in the grasp of the immortal Tod,--"a simple white muslin, with an equally simple wild flower in your hair, à la Amanda Fitzallan. How the Dowager Bilberry would like that."

"And a wide blue sash," suggested Mollie. "And the sleeves tied up with bows. And tucks, Dolly. Girls, just think of Dolly making great eyes at an eligible Philistine, in white muslin and a sash and tucks!"

She was a hardened little sinner, this Dolly, her only redeeming point being that she was honest enough about her iniquities,--so honest that they were really not such terrible iniquities after all, and were regarded as rather good fun by the habitués of Vaga-bondia proper. She laughed just as heartily as the rest of them at Mollie's speech. She could no more resist the temptation of making great eyes at eligible Philistines than she could help making them at the entertaining but highly ineligible Bohemians, who continually frequented Phil's studio. The fear of man was not before her eyes; and the life she had led had invested her with a whimsical yet shrewd knowledge of human nature, and a business-like habit of looking matters in the face, which made her something of a novelty; and when is not novelty irresistible? And as to the masculine Philistines,--well, the audacity of Dolly's successes in the very midst of the enemy's camp had been the cause of much stately demoralization of Philistine battalions.

At her quietest she created small sensations and attracted attention; but in her wicked moods, when she was in a state of mind to prompt her to revenge the numerous small slights and overt acts of lofty patronage she met with, the dowagers stood in some secret awe of her propensities, and not without reason. Woe betide the daring matron who measured swords with her at such times. Great would be her confusion and dire her fall before the skirmish was over, and nothing was more certain than that she would retire from the field a wiser if not a better woman. After being triumphantly routed with great slaughter on two or three occasions, the enemy had discovered this, and decided mentally that it was more discreet to let "little Miss Crewe" alone, considering that, though it was humiliating to be routed, even by one of their own forces, it was infinitely more so to be routed by an innocent-looking young person, whose position was questionable, and who actually owed her vague shadow of respectability to her distant but august relative, the Lady Augusta Decima Crewe Bilberry, wife of the Rev. Marmaduke Sholto Bilberry, and mother of the plenteous crop of young Bilberrys, to whom little Miss Crewe was music teacher and morning governess.

So it was that Mollie's joke about the tucks and white muslin gained additional point from the family recollection of past experiences.

"But," said Dolly, when the laugh had subsided, "it won't do to talk nonsense all day. Here 's where we stand, you know. Coffee and

conversation on Friday night on one side, and nothing but my draggled old green tarlatan on the other, and it's Tuesday now."

"And the family impecuniosity being a fact well established in the family mind," began Phil, with composure.

"But that 's nonsense," interrupted Aimée. "And, as Dolly says, nonsense won't do now. But," with a quaint sigh, "we always do talk nonsense."

But here a slight diversion was created. Mrs. Phil jumped up, with an exclamation of delight, and, dropping Tod on to Mollie's lap, disappeared through the open door.

"I will be back in a minute," she called back to them, as she ran up-stairs. "I have just thought of something."

"Girls," said Mollie, "it's her white merino."

And so it was. In a few minutes she reappeared with it,--a heap of soft white folds in her arms, and a yard or so of the train dragging after her upon the carpet,--the one presentable relic of a once inconsistently elaborate bridal trousseau, at present in a rather tumbled and rolled-up condition, but still white and soft and thick, and open to unlimited improvement.

"I had forgotten all about it," she said, triumphantly. "I have never

needed it at all, and I knew I never should when I bought it, but it looked so nice when I saw it that I could n't help buying it. I once thought of cutting it up into things for Tod; but it seems to me, Dolly, it 's what you want exactly, and Tod can trust to Providence,--things always come somehow."

It was quite characteristic of Vagabondia that there should be more rejoicing over this one stray sheep of good luck than there would have been over any ninety and nine in the ordinary folds of more prosperous people. And Mrs. Phil rejoiced as heartily as the rest. It was her turn now, and she was as ready to sacrifice her white merino on the shrine of the household impecuniosity as she would be to borrow Dolly's best bonnet, or Mollie's shoes, or Aimée's gloves, when occasion demanded such a course. So the merino was laid upon the table, and the council rose to examine, comment, and suggest.

"A train," said Dolly, concisely; "no trimming, and swan's-down. Even the Bilberry could n't complain of that, I 'm sure."

Mollie, resting her smooth white elbows on the table in a comfortably lounging posture, regarded the garment with great longing in her drowsy brown eyes.

"I wish it was white satin," she observed, somewhat irrelevantly, "and I was going to wear it at a real ball, with real lace, you know, and a court train, and flowers, and a fan."

Dolly looked down at her handsome childish face good-naturedly. She was such an incongruous mixture of beauty and utter simplicity, this easy-going baby of sixteen, that Dolly could not have helped liking her heartily under any circumstances, even supposing there had been no tie of relationship between them.

"I wish it was white satin and you were going to wear it," she said. "White satin is just the sort of thing for you, Mollie. Never mind, wait until the figurative ship comes in."

"And in the interval," suggested Aimée, "put a stitch or so in that wrapper of yours. It has been torn for a week now, and Tod tumbles over it half a dozen times every morning before breakfast."

Mollie cast her eyes over her shoulder to give it an indifferent glance as it rested on the faded carpet behind her.

"I wish Lady Augusta would mend things before she sends them to us," she said, with sublime naïveté, and then, at the burst of laughter which greeted her words, she stopped short, staring at the highly entertained circle with widely opened, innocent eyes. "What are you laughing at?" she said. "I 'm sure she might. She is always preaching about liking to have something to occupy her time, and it would be far more charitable of her to spend her time in that way than in persistently going into poor houses where the people don't want her, and reading tracts to them

that they don't want to hear."

Dolly's appreciation of the audacity of the idea reached a climax in an actual shriek of delight.

"If I had five pounds, which I have not, and never shall have," she said, "I would freely give it just to see Lady Augusta hear you say that, my dear. Five pounds! I would give ten--twenty--fifty, if need be. It would be such an exquisite joke."

But Mollie did not regard the matter in this light. To her unsophisticated mind Lady Augusta represented nothing more than periodical boredom in the shape of occasional calls, usually made unexpectedly, when the house was at its worst, and nobody was especially tidy,--calls invariably enlivened by severe comments upon the evil propensities of poor relations in general, and the shocking lack of respectability in this branch of the order in particular. Worldly wisdom was not a family trait, Dolly's half-whimsical assumption of it being the only symptom of the existence of such a gift, and Mollie was the most sublimely thoughtless of the lot. Mrs. Phil had never been guilty of a discreet act in her life. Phil himself regarded consequences less than he regarded anything else, and Aimée's childish staidness and forethought had certainly not an atom of worldliness in it. Accordingly, Dolly was left to battle with society, and now and then, it must be admitted, the result of her brisk affrays did her no small credit.

For a very short space of time the merino was being disposed of to an advantage; Dolly seating herself in her chair again to renovate the skirt; Aimée unpicking the bodice, and Mollie looking on with occasional comments.

"Here is Griffith," she said, at last, glancing over her shoulder at a figure passing the window; and the next minute the door was opened without ceremony, and "Grif" made his appearance upon the scene.

Being called upon to describe Griffith Donne, one would hardly feel inclined to describe him as being imposing in personal appearance. He was a thin, undersized young man, rather out at elbows and shabby of attire, and with a decided air of Bohemia about him; but his youthful face was singularly pleasing and innocent, and his long-lashed, brown-black eyes were more than good-looking,--they were absolutely beautiful in a soft, pathetic way,--beautiful as the eyes of the loveliest of women.

He came into the room as if he was used to coming into it in an every-day fashion; and Dolly, looking up, gave him a smile and a nod.

"Ah, you are all here, are you?" he said. "What is on hand now? What is all this white stuff for?" And he drew a chair up close by Dolly's side, and lifted the merino in his hand.

"For Friday night," answered Aimée. "Bilberry's again, Griffith. Coffee

and conversation this time."

Griffith looked at Dolly inquiringly, but Dolly only laughed and shrugged her plump shoulders wickedly.

"Look here," he said, with a disapproving air, "it ain't true, is it, Dolly? You are not going to make a burnt-offering of yourself on the Bilberry shrine again, are you?"

But Dolly only laughed the more as she took the merino from him.

"If you want a breadth of merino to hold, take another one," she said. "I want that. And as to being a burnt-offering on the shrine of Bilberry, my dear Griffith, you must know it is policy," and immediately went on with her unpicking again, while Griffith, bending over in an attitude more remarkable for ease than grace, looked on at her sharp little glancing scissors with an appearance of great interest.

It would perhaps be as well to pause here to account for this young man's evident freedom in the family circle. It was very plain that he was accustomed to coming and going when he pleased, and it was easy to be adduced from his manner that, to him, Dolly was the chief attraction in the establishment. The fact was, he was engaged to Dolly, and had been engaged to her for years, and in all probability, unless his prospects altered their aspect, would be engaged to her for years to come. In past time, when both were absurdly young, and ought to have

been at school, the two had met,--an impressionable, good-natured, well-disposed couple of children, who fell in love with each other unreasoningly and honestly, giving no thought to the future. They were too young to be married, of course, and indeed had not troubled themselves about anything so matter of fact; they had fallen in love, and enjoyed it, and, strange to say, had been enjoying it ever since, and falling in love more deeply every day of their affectionate, inconsequent, free-and-easy lives. What did it matter to them that neither owned a solitary sixpence, for which they had not a thousand uses? What did it matter to Dolly that Griffith's literary career had so far been so unremunerative that a new suit is as an event, and an extra shilling an era? What did it matter to Griffith that Dolly's dresses were re-trimmed and re-turned and re-furbished, until their reappearance with the various seasons was the opening of a High Carnival of jokes? Love is not a matter of bread and butter in Vaga-bondia, thank Heaven! Love is left to Bohemia as well as to barren Respectability, and, as Griffith frequently observed with no slight enthusiasm, "When it comes to figure, where's the feminine Philistine whose silks and satins and purple and fine raiment fit like Dolly's do?" So it went on, and the two adored each other with mutual simplicity, and, having their little quarrels, always made them up again with much affectionate remorse, and, scorning the prudential advice of outsiders, believed in each other and the better day which was to come, when one or the other gained worldly goods enough to admit of a marriage in which they were to be happy in their own way,--which, I may add, was a way simple and tender, unselfish and faithful, enough.

It was quite evident, however, that Griffith was not in the best of spirits this morning. He was not as sanguine as Dolly by nature, and outward influences tended rather to depress him occasionally. But he never was so low-spirited that Dolly could not cheer him, consequently he always came to her with his troubles; and to her credit, be it said, she never failed to understand and deal with them tenderly, commonplace though they were. So she understood his mood very well to-day. Something had gone wrong at "the office." ("The office" was the editorial den which swallowed him up, and held him in bondage from morning until night; appropriating his labor for a very small pecuniary compensation, too, it may be added.) "Old Flynn," as the principal was respectfully designated, had been creating one of his periodical disturbances, or he had been snubbed, which, by the way, was not a rare event, and to poor Griffith slights were stings and patronage poison. He could not laugh at the enemy and scorn discomfiture as Dolly could, and the consequence of an encounter with the Philistines on his part was usually a desperate fit of low spirits, which made him wretched, bitter, and gloomy by turns.

This morning it appeared that his spirits had reached their lowest ebb, and before many minutes had passed he was pouring forth his tribulations with much frankness and simplicity. Mr. Griffith Donne's principal trial was the existence of an elderly maiden aunt, who did not approve of him, and was in the habit of expressing her disapproval in lengthy epistolary correspondence, invariably tending to severe denunciation of his mode of

life, and also invariably terminating with the announcement that unless he "desisted" (from what, or in what manner, not specified) she should consider it her bounden duty to disinherit him forthwith. One of these periodical epistles, having arrived before he had breakfasted, had rather destroyed Griffith's customary equanimity, and various events of the morning had not improved his frame of mind; consequently he came to Dolly for comfort.

"And she's coming to London, too," he ended, after favoring the assemblage with extracts from the letter. "And, of course, she will expect me to do the dutiful. Confound her money! I wish she would build an asylum for irate, elderly spinsters with it, and retire into it for the remainder of her natural life. I don't want it, and"--with praiseworthy ingenuousness--"I shouldn't get it if I did!"

"But," said Dolly, when they found themselves alone for a few minutes, "it would be an agreeable sort of thing to have, Griffith, upon the whole, wouldn't it?"

They were standing close together by the fire, Griffith with his arm thrown round the girl's waist, and she with both her plump, flexible hands clasped on his shoulder and her chin resting on them, and her big, round eyes gazing up into his. She was prone to affectionate, nestling attitudes and coaxing ways--with Griffith it may be understood--her other adorers were treated cavalierly enough.

"A nice sort of thing," echoed Griffith. "I should think it would. I should like to have it for your sake. I don't care for it so much for myself, you know, Dolly, but I want the time to come when I can buy you such things as Old Flynn's nieces wear. It would n't be a waste of good material on such a figure as yours. I have an idea of my own about a winter dress I intend you to have when we are rich,--a dark blue velvet, and a hat with a white plume in, and one of those muff affairs made of long white silky fur--"

"Angora," said Dolly, her artless enjoyment of the idea shining in her eyes. "Angora, Griffith."

"I don't know what it's called," answered Griffith, "but it is exactly your style, and I have thought about it a dozen times. Ah, if we were only rich!"

Dolly laughed joyously, clasping her hands a little closer over his shoulder. Their conversations upon prospects generally ended in some such pleasantly erratic remarks. They never were tired of supposing that they were rich; and really, in default of being rich, it must be admitted that there is some consolation in being in a frame of mind which can derive happiness from such innocent day-dreams.

"Just think of the house we would have," she said, "and the fun we could all have together, if you and I were rich and--and married, Griffith. We should be happy if we were married, and not rich, but if we were rich

and married--goodness, Griffith!" and she opened her eyes wide and looked so enjoyable altogether, that Griffith, being entirely overcome by reason of the strength of his feelings upon the subject, caught her in both arms and embraced her heartily, and only released her in an extremely but charmingly crushed and dishevelled condition, after he had kissed her about half a dozen times.

It did not appear, upon the whole, that she objected to the proceeding. She took it quite naturally and unaffectedly, as if she was used to it, and regarded it as a part of the programme. Indeed, it was quite a refreshing sight to see her put both her little hands up to her disarranged hair and settle the crimps serenely.

"We should have the chances to find true people if we were rich," she said. "And then we could take care, of Aimée and Mollie, and help them to make grand marriages."

But that very instant Griffith's face fell somewhat.

"Dolly," he said, "have you never thought--not even thought that you would like to have made a grand marriage yourself?" And though there was not the least shade of a reason for the change in his mood, it was glaringly evident that he was at once rendered absolutely prostrate with misery at the thought.

These sudden pangs of remorse at his own selfishness in holding the girl

bound to him, were his weakness, and Dolly's great difficulty was to pilot him safely through his shoals of doubt and self-reproach, and she had her own way of managing it. Just now her way of managing it was to confront him bravely, coming quite close to him again, and taking hold of one of his coat buttons.

"I have thought of it a hundred times," she said, "but not since I have belonged to you; and as I have belonged to you ever since I was fifteen years old, I should think what I thought before then can hardly have the right to trouble us now. You never think of marrying any one but me, do you, Griffith?"

"Think of marrying any one else!" exclaimed Griffith, indignantly. "I would n't marry a female Rajah with a diamond--"

"I know you wouldn't," Dolly interrupted. "I believe in you, Griffith. Why won't you believe in me?" And the eyes lifted to his were so perfectly honest and straightforward that the sourest of cynics must have believed them, and Griffith was neither sour nor a cynic, but simply an unsuccessful, affectionate, contradictory young man, too susceptible to outward influences for his own peace of mind.

He was a very unfortunate young man, it may as well be observed at once, and his misfortunes were all the harder to bear because he was not to blame for them. He had talent, and was industrious and indefatigable, and yet, somehow or other, the Fates seemed to be against him. If he

had been less honest or less willing, he might perhaps have been more successful; but in his intercourse with the world's slippery ones he customarily found himself imposed upon. He had done hard work for which he had never been paid, and work for which he had been paid badly; he had fought honestly to gain footing, and, somehow or other, luck had seemed to be against him, for certainly he had not gained it yet. Honest men admired and respected him, and men of intellectual worth prophesied better days; but so far it had really seemed that the people who were willing to befriend him were powerless, and those who were powerful cared little about the matter. So he alternately struggled and despaired, and yet retained his good nature, and occasionally enjoyed life heartily in defiance of circumstances. With every member of the Crewe household he was popular, from Tod to Mrs. Phil. His engagement to Dolly they regarded as a satisfactory arrangement. That he was barely able to support himself, and scarcely possessed a presentable suit of clothes, was to their minds the most inconsequent of trifles. It was unfortunate, perhaps, but unavoidable; and their sublime trust in the luck which was to ripen in all of them at some indefinite future time, was their hope in this case. Some time or other he would "get into something," they had decided, and then he would marry Dolly, and they would all enjoy the attendant festivities. And in the mean time they allowed the two to be happy, and made Griffith welcome, inviting him to their little impromptu suppers, and taking care never to be de trop on the occasion of tête-à-tête conversations.

The tête-à-tête of the morning ended happily as usual. Dolly went back

to her unpicking, and Griffith, finding his ghost of self-reproach laid for the time being, watched her in a supremely blissful state of mind. He never tired of watching her, he frequently told her in enthusiastic confidence. The charm in Dolly Crewe was her adaptability; she was never out of place, and it had been said that she suited herself to her accompaniments far oftener than her accompaniments suited themselves to her. Seeing her in a shabby dress, seated in the shabby parlor, one instinctively felt that shabbiness was not so utterly unbearable after all, and acknowledged that it had a brightness of its own. Meeting her at a clan gathering in the camps of the Philistines, one always found her in excellent spirits, and quite undamped in her enjoyment of the frequently ponderous rejoicings. In the Bilberry school-room, among dog-eared French grammars and lead-pencilled music, education did not appear actually dispiriting; and now, as she sat by the fire, with the bright, sharp little scissors in lier hand, and the pile of white merino on her knees and trailing on the hearth-rug at her feet, Griffith found her simply irresistible. Ah! the bliss that revealed itself in the prospect of making her Mrs. Donne, and taking possession of her entirely! The joy of seeing her seated in an arm-chair of his own, by a fire which was solely his property, in a room which was nobody else's paradise! He could imagine so well how she would regard such a state of affairs as a nice little joke, and would pretend to adapt herself to her position with divers daring witcheries practised upon himself to the dethroning of his reason; how she would make innocent, wicked speeches, and be coaxing and dazzling and mock-matronly by turns; and above all, how she would enjoy it, and make him enjoy it, too; and yet sometimes,

when they were quiet and alone, would drop all her whimsical little airs and graces, and make such tender, unselfish, poetic little speeches, that he would find himself startled in life wonder at the depth and warmth and generosity of her girlish heart. He often found her surprising him-after this manner, and the surprise usually came when he had just been most nearly betrayed into thinking of her as an adorable little collection of witcheries and whimsicalities, and forgetting that she had other moods. More than once she had absolutely brought tears into his eyes, and a thrill to his heart, by some sudden, pathetic, trustful speech, made after she had been dazzling and bewildering for hours with her pretty coquetries and daring flashes of wit. No one but Griffith ever saw her in these intense moods. The rest of them saw her intense enough sometimes but the sudden, uncontrollable flashes of light Griffith saw now and then, fairly staggered him. And the poor fellow's love for her was something akin to adoration. There was only this one woman upon earth to him, and his whole soul was bound up in her. It was for her he struggled against disappointment, it was for her he hoped, it was only the desperate strength of his love for her that made disappointment so terribly bitter to him. Certainly his love made him better and sweeter-tempered and more energetic than he would have been if his life had not been so full of it. His one ambition was to gain success to lay at her feet. To him success meant Dolly, and Dolly meant Paradise, an honest Paradise, in which primeval bliss reigned supreme and trial was unknown. Consequently the bright little scissors glanced before his eyes a sort of loadstar.

"I did n't tell you that nephew of Old Flynn's had come back, did I?" he said, at length.

"No," answered Dolly, snipping diligently. "You never mentioned him. What nephew, and where did he come from?"

"A fellow of the name of Gowan, who has been travelling in the East for no particular reason for the last ten years. He called on Flynn, at the office, today, for the first time; and if I had been called upon to kick him out, I should have regarded it as a cheerful and improving recreation."

"Why?" laughed Dolly. "Is he one of the Philistines?"

"Philistine!" echoed Griffith, with disgust. "I should think so. A complacent idiot in a chronic state of fatigue.. Drove up to the door in a cab,--his own, by the way, and a confoundedly handsome affair it is,--gave the reins to his tiger, and stared at the building tranquilly for at least two minutes before he came in, stared at Old Flynn when he did come in, stared at me, shook hands with Old Flynn exhaustedly, and then subsided into listening and paring his nails during the remainder of the interview."

"Which might or might not be discreet under the circumstances," said Dolly. "Perhaps he had nothing to say. Never mind, Grif. Let us console ourselves with the thought that we are not as these utterly worthless

explorers of the East are," with a flourish of the scissors.

"Better is a dinner of herbs in Vagabondia, with a garnish of conversation and bon-mots, than a stalled ox among the Philistines with dulness."

But about an hour after Griffith had taken his departure, as she was bending over the table, industriously clipping at the merino, a thought suddenly crossed her mind, which made her drop her scissors and look up meditatively.

"By the way," she began, all at once. "Yes, it must be! How was it I did not think of it when Grif was talking? I am sure, it was Gowan, Lady Augusta said. To be sure it was. Mollie, this exploring nephew of the Flynns is to partake of coffee and conversation with us at the Bilberrys' on Friday, if I am not mistaken, and I never remembered it until now."