

CHAPTER X.

CHANGES.

SCENE.--A chamber at the Seymour House. Little discovered weeping.
John rushing in with empressement.

"Lillie, you shall tell me what ails you."

"Nothing ails me, John."

"Yes, there does; you were crying when I came in."

"Oh, well, that's nothing!"

"Oh, but it is a great deal! What is the matter? I can see that you
are not happy."

"Oh, pshaw, John! I am as happy as I ought to be, I dare say; there
isn't much the matter with me, only a little blue, and I don't feel
quite strong."

"You don't feel strong! I've noticed it, Lillie."

"Well, you see, John, the fact is, that I never have got through this

month without going to the sea-side. Mamma always took me. The doctors told her that my constitution was such that I couldn't get along without it; but I dare say I shall do well enough in time, you know."

"But, Lillie," said John, "if you do need sea-air, you must go. I can't leave my business; that's the trouble."

"Oh, no, John! don't think of it. I ought to make an effort to get along. You see, it's very foolish in me, but places affect my spirits so. It's perfectly absurd how I am affected."

"Well, Lillie, I hope this place doesn't affect you unpleasantly," said John.

"It's a nice, darling place, John, and it's very silly in me; but it is a fact that this house somehow has a depressing effect on my spirits. You know it's not like the houses I've been used to. It has a sort of old look; and I can't help feeling that it puts me in mind of those who are dead and gone; and then I think I shall be dead and gone too, some day, and it makes me cry so. Isn't it silly of me, John?"

"Poor little pussy!" said John.

"You see, John, our rooms are lovely; but they aren't modern and cheerful, like those I've been accustomed to. They make me feel pensive and sad all the time; but I'm trying to get over it."

"Why, Lillie!" said John, "would you like the rooms refurnished? It can easily be done if you wish it."

"Oh, no, no, dear! You are too good; and I'm sure the rooms are lovely, and it would hurt Gracie's feelings to change them. No: I must try and get over it. I know just how silly it is, and I shall try to overcome it. If I had only more strength, I believe I could."

"Well, darling, you must go to the sea-side. I shall have you sent right off to Newport. Gracie can go with you."

"Oh, no, John! not for the world. Gracie must stay, and keep house for you. She's such a help to you, that it would be a shame to take her away. But I think mamma would go with me,--if you could take me there, and engage my rooms and all that, why, mamma could stay with me, you know. To be sure, it would be a trial not to have you there; but then if I could get up my strength, you know,"--

"Exactly, certainly; and, Lillie, how would you like the parlors arranged if you had your own way?"

"Oh, John! don't think of it."

"But I just want to know for curiosity. Now, how would you have them if you could?"

"Well, then, John, don't you think it would be lovely to have them frescoed? Did you ever see the Folingsbees' rooms in New York? They were so lovely!--one was all in blue, and the other in crimson, opening into each other; with carved furniture, and those marquetric tables, and all sorts of little French things. They had such a gay and cheerful look."

"Now, Lillie, if you want our rooms like that, you shall have them."

"O John, you are too good! I couldn't ask such a sacrifice."

"Oh, pshaw! it isn't a sacrifice. I don't doubt I shall like them better myself. Your taste is perfect, Lillie; and, now I think of it, I wonder that I thought of bringing you here without consulting you in every particular. A woman ought to be queen in her own house, I am sure."

"But, Gracie! Now, John, I know she has associations with all the things in this house, and it would be cruel to her," said Lillie, with a sigh.

"Pshaw! Gracie is a good, sensible girl, and ready to make any rational change. I suppose we have been living rather behind the times, and are somewhat rusty, that's a fact; but Gracie will enjoy new things as much as anybody, I dare say."

"Well, John, since you are set on it, there's Charlie Ferrola, one of my particular friends; he's an architect, and does all about arranging rooms and houses and furniture. He did the Folingsbees', and the Hortons', and the Jeromes', and no end of real nobby people's houses; and made them perfectly lovely. People say that one wouldn't know that they weren't in Paris, in houses that he does."

Now, our John was by nature a good solid chip of the old Anglo-Saxon block; and, if there was any thing that he had no special affinity for, it was for French things. He had small opinion of French morals, and French ways in general; but then at this moment he saw his Lillie, whom, but half an hour before, he found all pale and tear-drenched, now radiant and joyous, sleek as a humming-bird, with the light in her eyes, and the rattle on the tip of her tongue; and he felt so delighted to see her bright and gay and joyous, that he would have turned his house into the Jardin Mabille, if that were possible.

Lillie had the prettiest little caressing tricks and graces imaginable; and she perched herself on his knee, and laughed and chatted so gayly, and pulled his whiskers so saucily, and then, springing up, began arraying herself in such an astonishing daintiness of device, and fluttering before him with such a variety of well-assorted plumage, that John was quite taken off his feet. He did not care so much whether what she willed to do were, "Wisest, virtouousest, discreetest, best," as feel that what she wished to do

must be done at any rate.

"Why, darling!" he said in his rapture; "why didn't you tell me all this before? Here you have been growing sad and blue, and losing your vivacity and spirits, and never told me why!"

"I thought it was my duty, John, to try to bear it," said Lillie, with the sweet look of a virgin saint. "I thought perhaps I should get used to things in time; and I think it is a wife's duty to accommodate herself to her husband's circumstances."

"No, it's a husband's duty to accommodate himself to his wife's wishes," said John. "What's that fellow's address? I'll write to him about doing our house, forthwith."

"But, John, do pray tell Gracie that it's your wish. I don't want her to think that it's I that am doing this. Now, pray do think whether you really want it yourself. You see it must be so natural for you to like the old things! They must have associations, and I wouldn't for the world, now, be the one to change them; and, after all, how silly it was of me to feel blue!"

"Don't say any more, Lillie. Let me see,--next week," he said, taking out his pocket-book, and looking over his memoranda,--"next week I'll take you down to Newport; and you write to-day to your mother to meet you there, and be your guest. I'll write and engage the rooms at

once."

"I don't know what I shall do without you, John."

"Oh, well, I couldn't stay possibly! But I may run down now and then, for a night, you know."

"Well, we must make that do," said Lillie, with a pensive sigh.

Thus two very important moves on Miss Lillie's checker-board of life were skilfully made. The house was to be refitted, and the Newport precedent established.

Now, dear friends, don't think Lillie a pirate, or a conspirator, or a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing, or any thing else but what she was,--a pretty little, selfish woman; undeveloped in her conscience and affections, and strong in her instincts and perceptions; in a blind way using what means were most in her line to carry her purposes. Lillie had always found her prettiness, her littleness, her helplessness, and her tears so very useful in carrying her points in life that she resorted to them as her lawful stock in trade. Neither were her blues entirely shamming. There comes a time after marriage, when a husband, if he be any thing of a man, has something else to do than make direct love to his wife. He cannot be on duty at all hours to fan her, and shawl her, and admire her. His love must express itself through other channels. He must be a full man for her sake;

and, as a man, must go forth to a whole world of interests that takes him from her. Now what in this case shall a woman do, whose only life lies in petting and adoration and display?

Springdale had no beau monde, no fashionable circle, no Bois de Boulogne, and no beaux, to make amends for a husband's engrossments. Grace was sisterly and kind; but what on earth had they in common to talk about? Lillie's wardrobe was in all the freshness of bridal exuberance, and there was nothing more to be got, and so, for the moment, no stimulus in this line. But then where to wear all these fine French dresses? Lillie had been called on, and invited once to little social evening parties, through the whole round of old, respectable families that lived under the elm-arches of Springdale; and she had found it rather stupid. There was not a man to make an admirer of, except the young minister, who, after the first afternoon of seeing her, returned to his devotion to Rose Ferguson.

You know, ladies, Aesop has a pretty little fable as follows: A young man fell desperately in love with a cat, and prayed to Jupiter to change her to a woman for his sake. Jupiter was so obliging as to grant his prayer; and, behold, a soft, satin-skinned, purring, graceful woman was given into his arms.

But the legend goes on to say that, while he was delighting in her charms, she heard the sound of mice behind the wainscot, and left him forthwith to rush after her congenial prey.

Lillie had heard afar the sound of mice at Newport, and she longed to be after them once more. Had she not a prestige now as a rich young married lady? Had she not jewels and gems to show? Had she not any number of mouse-traps, in the way of ravishing toilets? She thought it all over, till she was sick with longing, and was sure that nothing but the sea-air could do her any good; and so she fell to crying, and kissing her faithful John, till she gained her end, like a veritable little cat as she was.