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EVA MEREDITH: THE VILLAGE DOCTOR'S STORY.

BY MADAME D'ARBOVILLE.

[CONTINUED.]

I felt in despair at my blunder, and I felt my eyes fill with tears. My mistress gave me an idea.

"Mrs. Meredith," I said, "I cannot see you torment yourself thus, and remain by your side unable to console you. I will go and seek your husband; I will follow at random one of the paths through the forest; I will search everywhere and shout his name, and go if necessary to the town itself."

"Oh thanks, thanks, kind friend!" cried Eva Meredith, "take the gardeners with you, and the servant: and search in all directions!"

We hurried back into the drawing room, and Eva rang quickly and repeatedly. All the inhabitants of the cottage opened at the same time at the different doors of the apartment.

"Follow Dr. Barnaby," cried Mrs. Meredith. At that moment a horse's gallop was distinctly heard on the gravel of the garden. Eva uttered a cry of happiness that went home to every heart.

"Never shall I forget the divine expression of joy that illumined her face, still inundated with tears. She and I, we flew to the house door. The moon passing from behind a cloud, threw her whole light upon a riderless foamed creature whose hoofs were dragged upon the ground, and whose dusty flanks were galled by the empty stirrups. A second cry, this time of intense horror, burst from Eva's breast: then she turned towards me, her eyes fixed on her mouth half open, her arms hanging powerless.

The servants were in consternation. "Go, touch my friends!" cried I, "and follow me!" "Madam, we shall soon return, I hope, and your husband with us. He has received some slight hurt, a strained ankle, perhaps. Keep your courage. We will soon be back."

"I go with you!" murmured Eva Meredith in a broken voice. "I go with you!" I cried. "We must go fast, perhaps, as in your state—it might be risking your life and that of your child!"

"I go with you!" repeated Eva. "Then did I feel how cruel was this poor woman's position! Had a father, a mother, been there, they would have retained her by force; but she was alone upon the earth, and to all my hurried entreaties she still replied in a hollow voice: 'I go with you!'"

We set out. The moon was again darkened by dense clouds: there was light neither in the heavens nor on the earth. The uncertain radiance of our torches barely showed us the path. A servant went in front lowering his torch to the right and to the left, to illuminate the ditches and bushes bordering the road. Behind him Mrs. Meredith, the doctor and myself followed with our eyes the stream of light. From time to time we raised our voices and called Mr. Meredith. After us a stifled sob murmured the name of William, as if a heart had reckoned on the instant of love to hear his tears better than our shouts. We reached the forest. Rain began to fall, and the drops pattered upon the foliage with a mournful noise, as if everything around us wept. Eva's thin dress was soon soaked with the cold flood. The water streamed from her hair over her face. She brushed her feet with the stones of the road, and repeatedly stumbled and fell upon her knee: but she rose again with an energy of despair, and pushed forward. It was agonizing to behold her. I rarely dared look at her, lest I should see her fall dead before my eyes. At last we were moving in silence, fatigued and discouraged—Mrs. Meredith pushed us suddenly aside, sprang forward and plunged into the bushes. We followed her and upon raising the torches—alas! she was upon her knees beside the body of William, who was stretched motionless upon the ground, his eyes closed and his brow covered with blood which flowed from a wound in the left temple.

"Doctor!" said Eva to me. "That one word expressed—Does William live?"

I stepped and felt the pulse of William Meredith. I placed my hand on his heart; it remained silent. Eva still gazed at me: but, when my silence was prolonged, I saw her bend, waver, and then, without a word, or cry, fall senseless upon her husband's corpse.

"But ladies," said Dr. Barnaby, turning to his audience, "the sun shines again; you can, go on now. Let us leave this sad story where it now is."

Madame de Meara approached the old physician. "Doctor," said she, "I implore you to continue: only look at us, and you will not doubt the interest with which we listen."

There were no more smiles of mockery upon the young faces that surrounded the village doctor. In some of their eyes he might even distinguish the glimmering of tears. He resumed his narrative.

Mrs. Meredith was carried home, and remained for several hours senseless upon her bed. I felt at once a duty and a cruelty to use every effort to recall her life. I dreaded the agonizing scenes that would follow this state of immobility. I remained beside the poor woman, bathing her temples with fresh water, and awaiting with anxiety the sad and yet happy moment of returning consciousness. I was mistaken with my anticipations, for I had never witnessed great grief. Eva half opened her eyes and immediately closed them again: no tear escaped from beneath their lids—she remained calm, motionless, silent; and but for the heart which again throbbled beneath my hand, I should have deemed her dead. Sad it is

to behold a sorrow which one feels is beyond consolation! Silence, I thought, seemed like a want of pity for this unfortunate creature: on the other hand verbal condolence was a mockery of so mighty a grief. I had found no words to calm her uneasiness; could I hope to be more eloquent in the hour of her great suffering? I took the safest course, that of profound silence. I will remain here I thought, and minister to the physical sufferings, as is my duty; but I will be mute and passive, even as a faithful dog would lie down at her feet. My maid once made up, I felt calmer; I let her live a life which resembled death. After a few hours, however, I put a spoonful of lotion to her lips. Eva slowly averted her head. In a few moments I again offered her the drug.

"Drink, madam," I said gently touching her lips with the spoon. They remained closed.

"Madam, your child!" I persisted in a low voice.

Eva opened her eyes, raised herself with effort upon her elbow, swallowed the medicine and fell back upon her pillow.

"I must wait," she murmured "till another life is detached from mine!"

Thenceforward Mrs. Meredith spoke no more, but she mechanically followed all my prescriptions. Stretched upon her bed of suffering, she seemed constantly to sleep; but at whatever moment I said to her, even in the lowest whisper, "Drink this," she instantly obeyed; thus proving to me that the soul kept its weary watch in that motionless body, without a single moment of oblivion and repose.

There were none beside myself to attend to the interests of William. Nothing positive was ever known as to the cause of his death. The sum he was to bring from the town was not found upon him; perhaps he had been robbed and murdered; perhaps the money, which was in notes, had fallen from his pocket when he was thrown from his horse, and as it was some time before any thought of seeking it, the heavy rain and trampled mud might account for its disappearance. A fruitless investigation was made and soon dropped. I endeavored to learn from Eva Meredith if her family or that of her husband should not be written to; but I had difficulty in obtaining an answer. At last she gave me to understand that I had merely to inform their agent who would do whatever was needful. I hoped, that at least, from England, some communication would arrive decisive of this poor creature's lot. But no; day followed day, and none seemed to know that the widow of William Meredith lived in utter isolation, in a poor French village. To endeavor to bring back Eva to the sense of her existence, I urged her to leave her bed.

Upon the morrow I found her up, dressed in black; but she was the ghost of the beautiful Eva Meredith. Her hair was parted in bands upon her pale forehead, and she sat near a window motionless as she had in bed.

I passed long silent evenings with her, a book in my hand for apparent occupation. Each day on my arrival, I addressed to her a few words of sympathy. She replied by a thankful look; then we remained silent. I awaited an opportunity to open a conversation; but my awkwardness and my respect for her grief prevented my finding one, or suffered it to escape when it occurred. Little by little I grew accustomed to this mute intercourse; and, besides what could I have said to her? My chief object was to prevent her feeling quite alone in the world; and obscure as was the propitiating, it still was something. I went to see her merely that my presence might say, "I am here."

It was a singular epoch in my life, and had a great influence on my future existence. Had I not shown so much regret at the threatened destruction of the white cottage, I would hurry to the conclusion of this narrative. But you have insisted upon knowing why that building is hallowed to me, and I must tell you therefore what I have thought and felt beneath its humble roof. Forgive me ladies, if my words are grave. It is good for youth to be sometimes a little saddened; it has so much time to laugh and forget.

The son of a rich peasant, I was sent to Paris to complete my studies. During four years passed in that great city, I retained the awkwardness of my manners, the simplicity of my language, but I rapidly lost the ingenuousness of my sentiments. I returned to these mountains, almost learned, but almost incredulous in all those points of faith which enable a man to pass his life contentedly beneath a thatched roof, in the society of his wife and children, with caring to look beyond the cross above the village cemetery.

Whilst contemplating the love of William and of Eva, I had reverted to my former simple peasant nature. I began to dream of a virtuous affectionate wife, diligent and frugal, embellishing my house by her care and order. I saw myself proud of the gentle severity of her features, revealing to all the chaste and faithful spouse. Very different were these reveries from those that haunted me at Paris after joyous evenings spent with my comrades. Suddenly, horrible calamity descended like a thunderbolt upon Eva Meredith. This time I was slower to appreciate the lesson I daily received. Eva sat constantly at the window, her sad gaze fixed upon the heavens. The attitude, common in persons of meditative mood, attracted my attention but little. Her persistence in it at last struck me. My book upon my knees, I looked at Mrs. Meredith; and well assured she would not detect my gaze, I examined her attentively.

She still gazed at the sky—my eyes followed the direction of hers. "Ah," I said to myself with a half smile, "she thinks to rejoice him there!" Then I resumed my book, thinking how fortunate it was for the weakness of women that such thoughts came to the relief of their sorrows.

I have already told you that my student's life had put evil thoughts into my head. Every day, however, I saw Eva in the same attitude, and every day my reflections were recalled to the same subject. Little by little I came to think her a good one, and to regret I could not credit as a reality. The soul, heaven, eternal life, all that

the old priest had formerly taught me, glided through my imagination as I sat at eventide before the open window. "The doctrine of the old cure," I said to myself, "was more comforting than the cold realities science has revealed to me." Then I looked at Eva, who still looked to heaven, whilst the bells of the village church sounded sweetly in the distance, and the rays of the setting sun made the steeple-cross glimmer against the sky. I often returned to sit opposite the poor widow, persevering in her grief as in her holy hopes.

"What!" I thought, "can so much love address itself to a few particles of dust, already mingled with the mould: all these sighs wasted on empty air! William departed in the freshness of his age, his affections yet vivid, his heart in its early bloom!"

"She loved him but a year, one little year—and is all over for her! Above our heads is there nothing but void! Love—that sentiment so strong within us—is it but a flame placed in the obscure prison of our body, where it shines, burns, and is finally extinguished by the fall of the frail wall surrounding it? Is a little dust all that remains of our loves, and hopes, and passions—of all that moves, agitates and exalts us?"

There was deep silence in the recesses of my soul. I had ceased to think. I was as if slumbering between what I no longer denied, and what I did not yet believe. At last, one night, when Eva joined her hands to pray, beneath the most beautiful starlit sky possible to behold, I know not how it was, but I found my hands also clasped, and my lips opened to murmur a prayer. Then by a happy chance, and for the first time, Eva Meredith looked round, as if a secret instinct had whispered her that my soul harmonised with hers.

"Thanks," said she, holding out her hand, "keep him in your memory, and pray for him sometimes."

"Oh, madam!" I exclaimed, "may we all meet again in a better world, whether our lives have been long or short, happy or full of trial."

"The immortal soul of William looks down upon us!" she replied in a grave voice, whilst her gaze, at once sad and bright, reverted to the star-spangled heavens.

Since that evening when performing the duties of my profession, I have often witnessed death; but never without speaking to the sorrowing survivors, a few consoling words on a better life than this one; and those words were words of conviction.

At last, a month after these incidents, Eva Meredith gave birth to a son. When they brought her child,—"William!" exclaimed the poor widow; the tears, soothing tears too long denied to her grief, escaped in torrents from her eyes. The child bore that much-loved name of William, and a little cradle was placed close to the mother's bed.

—Then Eva's gaze long directed to heaven, returned earthwards. She looked at her child now, as she had previously looked to her God. She bent over him to seek his father's features. Providence had permitted an exact resemblance between William and the son he was fated not to see. A great change occurred around us. Eva, who had consented to live until her child's existence was detached from hers, was now, I could plainly see, willing to live on, because she felt that this little being needed the protection of her love.

She passed the days and evenings seated beside his cradle; and when I went to see her, oh! then she questioned me as to what she should do for him, she explained what he had suffered, and asked what could be done to save him from pain. For her child she feared the heat of a ray of sun, the chill of the lightest breeze. Bending over him, she shielded him with her body, and warmed him with her kisses. One day, I almost thought I saw her smile at him. But she never would sing, whilst rocking his cradle, to lull him to sleep: she called one of her women, and said, "Sing to my son that he may sleep. Then she listened, letting her tears flow softly upon little William's brow. Poor child! he was handsome, gentle, easy to rear. But, as if his mother's sorrow had affected him even before his birth, the child was melancholy; he seldom cried, but he never smiled: he was quiet; and that seems to denote suffering. I fancied that all the tears shed over the cradle froze that little soul. I would fain have seen William's arms twined caressingly round his mother's neck. I would have had him return the kisses lavished upon him. "But what am I thinking about?" I then said to myself; is it reasonable to expect that a little creature, not yet a year upon the earth, should understand that it is sent thither to love and console this woman?"

It was, I assure you, a touching sight to behold this young mother, pale, feeble, and who had once renounced existence, clinging again to life for the sake of a little child which could not even say "Thanks, dear mother!" What a marvel is the human heart! Of how small a thing it makes much! Give it but a grain of sand, and it elevates a mountain; at its latest throbb show it but an atom to love, and again its pulses revolve; it stops for good only when all is void around it, and when even the shadow of its affections had vanished from the earth!

Time rolled on, and I received a letter from an uncle, my sole surviving relative. My uncle, a member of the faculty of Montpellier, summoned me to his side, to complete in that learned town my initiation into the secrets of my art. This letter, in form an invitation, was in fact an order. I had to set out. One morning, my heart big, when I thought of the isolation in which I left the widow and the orphan, I repaired to the white cottage to take leave of Eva Meredith. I know not whether an additional shade of sadness came over her features when I told her I was about to make a long absence. Since the death of William Meredith such profound melancholy dwelt upon her countenance that a smile would have been the sole perceptible variation: sadness was always there.

"You leave us?" she exclaimed: "your care is so useful to my child!"

The poor lonely woman forgot to regret the departure of her last friend; the mother lamented the loss of the physician useful to her son. I did not complain. To be useful is the sweet recompense of the devoted.

"Adieu!" she said, holding out her hand—"Wherever you go, may God bless you; and should it be His will to afflict you, may he at least afford you the sympathy of a heart compassionate as your own."

I bowed over the hand of Eva Meredith; and I departed, deeply moved.

The child was in the garden in front of the house, lying upon the grass, in the sun. I took him in my arms and kissed him repeatedly: I looked at him long, attentively, sadly, and a tear started to my eye. "Oh, no, no! I must be mistaken!" I murmured, and I hurried from the white cottage.

"Good heavens, doctor!" simultaneously exclaimed all Dr. Barnaby's audience, "what did you apprehend?"

"Suffer me to finish my story my own way," replied the village doctor; "everything shall be told in its turn. I relate these events in the order in which they occurred."

On my arrival at Montpellier, I was exceedingly well received by my uncle: who declared, however, that he could neither lodge nor feed me, nor lend me money, and that as a stranger, without a name, I must not hope for a patient in a town so full of celebrated physicians.

"Then I will return to my village, uncle," replied I. "By no means!" was his answer. "I have got you a lucrative and respectable situation. An old Englishman, rich, gouty, and restless, wishes to have a doctor to live with him, an intelligent young man who will take charge of his health under the superintendence of an older physician. I have proposed you—you have been accepted; let us go to him."

We took ourselves immediately to the residence of Lord James Kysington, a large and handsome house, full of servants, where, after waiting some time, first in the ante-room, and then in the parlour, we were at last ushered into the presence of the noble invalid. Seated in a large arm-chair was an old man of cold and severe aspect, whose white hair contrasted oddly with his eyebrows, still a jet black. He was tall and thin, as far as I could judge through the folds of a large cloth coat, made like a dressing-gown. His hands disappeared under his cuffs, and his feet were wrapped in the skin of a white bear. A number of medicine vials were upon a table beside him.

"My lord, this is my nephew, Dr. Barnaby."

Lord Kysington bowed: that is to say, he looked at me, and made a scarcely perceptible movement with his head.

"He is well versed in his profession, and I doubt not that his care will be most beneficial to your lordship."

A second movement of the head was the sole reply vociferated.

"Moreover," continued my relation, "having had a tolerably good education, he can read to your lordship, or write under your dictation."

"I shall be obliged to him," replied Lord Kysington, breaking silence at last, and then closing his eyes, either from fatigue, or as a hint that the conversation was to drop. I glanced around me. Near the window sat a lady, very elegantly dressed, who continued her embroidery without once raising her eyes, as if we were not worthy her notice. Upon the carpet at her feet a little boy amused himself with toys. The lady, although young, did not at first strike me as pretty—because she had black hair and eyes: and to be pretty, according to my notion, was to be fair, like Eva Meredith; and moreover, in my experience, I held beauty impossible without a certain air of goodness. It was long before I could admit the beauty of this woman, whose brow was haggard, her look disdainful, and her mouth unsmiling. Like Lord Kysington, she was tall, thin, rather pale. In character they were too much alike to suit each other well. Formal and taciturn they lived together without affection, almost without converse. The child, too, had been taught silence; he walked on tiptoe, and at the least noise a severe look from Lord Kysington changed him to a statue.

It was too late to return to my village; but it is never too late to regret what one has loved and lost. My heart ached when I thought of my courage, my valley, my liberty.

What I learned concerning the cheerless family I had entered was as follows: Lord James Kysington had come to Montpellier for his health, deteriorated by the climate of India. Second son of the Duke of Kysington, and a lord only by courtesy, he owed to talent and not to inheritance his fortune and his political positions in the House of Commons. Lady Mary was the wife of his youngest brother; and Lord James, free to dispose of his fortune, had named her son his heir.

Towards me his lordship was most punctiliously polite. A bow thanked me for every service I rendered him. I read aloud for hours together, uninterrupted either by the soubre old man, whom I listened to sleep, or by the young woman, who did not listen to me, or by the child, who tumbled in his uncle's presence. I had never led so melancholy a life, and yet, as you know, ladies, the little white cottage had long ceased to be gay; but the silence of misfortune implies such grave reflections, that words are insufficient to express them. One feels the life of the soul under the stillness of the body. In my own abode it was the silence of a void.

One day that Lord James dozed and Lady Mary was engrossed with the embroidery, little Harry climbed upon my knee, as I sat apart at the further end of the room, and began to question me with the artless curiosity of his age. In my turn, and without reflecting on what I said, I questioned him concerning his family.

"Have you any brothers or sisters?" I inquired.

"I have a pretty little sister."

"What is her name?" asked I, absently, glancing at the newspaper, in my hand.

"She has a beautiful name. Guess it, Doctor."

I know not what I was thinking about. In my village I had heard none but the names of peasants, hardly applicable to Lady Mary's daughter. Mrs. Meredith was the only lady I had known, and the child repeating, "Guess, guess!" I replied at random.

"Eva, perhaps?"

We were speaking very low; but when the name of Eva escaped my lips, Lord James opened his eyes quickly, and raised himself in his chair, Lady Mary dropped her needle, and turned sharply towards me. I was confounded at the effect I had produced; I looked alternately at Lord James and at Lady Mary, without daring to utter another word.

Some minutes passed: Lord James again let his head fall back and closed his eyes, Lady Mary resumed her needle. Harry and I ceased our conversation. I reflected for some time upon this strange incident, until at last, all around me having sunk into the usual monotonous calm, I rose to leave the room. Lady Mary pushed away her embroidery frame, passed before me, and made me a sign to follow. When we were both in another room she shut the door, and raising her head, with the imperious air which was the most habitual expression of her features: "Dr. Barnaby," said she, "be so good as never again to pronounce the name that just now escaped your lips. It is a name Lord James Kysington must not hear." She bowed slightly, and re-entered her brother-in-law's apartment.

Thoughts innumerable crowded upon my mind. This Eva, whose name was not to be spoken, could it be Eva Meredith? Was the Lord Kysington's daughter-in-law? Was I in the house of William's father? I hoped, but still I doubted; for, after all, if there was but one Eva in the world for me, in England the name was, doubtless, by no means uncommon. But the thought that I was perhaps with the family of Eva Meredith, living with the woman who robbed the widow and the orphan of their inheritance, this thought was present to me by day and by night. In my dreams I beheld the return of Eva and her son to the paternal residence, in consequence of the pardon I had implored and obtained for them. But when I raised my eyes, the cold impassible physiognomy of Lord Kysington froze all the hopes of my heart. I applied myself to the examination of that countenance as if I had never before seen it; I analysed its features and lines to find a trace of sensibility. I sought the heart I so gladly would have touched. Alas! I found it not. But I had so good a cause that I was not to be discouraged. "Pshaw!" I said to myself, "what matters the expression of the face? why heed the external envelope? May not the darkest coffer contain bright gold? Must all that is within us reveal itself at a glance? Does not every man of the world learn to separate his mind and his thoughts from the habitual expression of his countenance?"

I resolved to clear up my doubts, but how to do so was the difficulty. Impossible to question Lady Mary or Lord James; the servants were French, and had lately come to the house. An English valet-de-chambre had just been despatched to London on a confidential mission. I directed my investigations to Lord James Kysington. The severe expression of his countenance ceased to intimidate me. I said to myself; "When the forester meets with a tree apparently dead, he strikes his axe into the trunk to see whether sap does not still sprive beneath the withered bark, in like manner will I strike at the heart, and see whether life be not somewhere hidden." And I only waited an opportunity.

To wait an opportunity with impatience is to accelerate its coming. Instead of depending on circumstances we subjugate them. One night Lord James sent for me. He was in pain. After administering the necessary remedies, I remained by his bedside, to watch their effect. The room was dark; a single wax candle showed the outline of objects, without illuminating them. The pale and noble head of Lord James was thrown back upon his pillow. His eyes were shut, according to his custom when suffering, as if he concentrated his moral energies within him. He never complained, but lay stretched out in his bed, straight and motionless as a king's statue upon a marble tomb. In general he got somebody to read to him, hoping either to distract his thoughts from his pains, or to be lulled to sleep by the monotonous sound.

Upon that night he made sign to me with his meagre hand to take a book and read, but I sought one in vain; books and newspapers had all been removed to the drawing-room; the doors were locked, and unless I rang and aroused the house, a book was not to be had. Lord James made a gesture of impatience, then one of resignation, and beckoned me to resume my seat by his side. We remained for some time without speaking, almost in darkness, the silence broken only by the ticking of the clock. Sleep came not. Suddenly Lord James opened his eyes.

"Speak to me," he said. "Tell me something; whatever you like."

His eyes closed, and he waited. My heart beat violently. The moment had come.

"My Lord," said I, "I greatly fear I know nothing that will interest your lordship. I can speak but of myself, of the events of my life,—said the history of the great ones of the earth were necessary to fix your attention. What can a peasant have to say, who has lived contented with little, in obscurity and repose! I have scarcely quitted my village, my lord. It is a pretty mountain hamlet, where even those not born there might well be pleased to dwell. Near it is a country house, which I have known inhabited by rich people who could have left it if they had liked, but who remained, because the woods were thick, the paths bordered with flowers, the streams bright and rapid in their rocky beds. Alas! they were two in that house—and soon a poor woman was there alone, and the hand of her son."

"My lord, she was there alone, and the hand of her son."

"You are an Englishwoman, of beauty such as is seldom seen either in England or in France; good as, besides her, only the angels in heaven can be! She had just completed her eighteenth year: when

I left her, fatherless, motherless, and already widowed of an adored husband; she is feeble, delicate, almost ill, and yet she must live—would you protect that little child? Oh! my lord, there are very unhappy beings of this world! To be unhappy in middle life or old age, is doubtless sad, but still you have pleasant memories of the past to remind you that you have had your day, your share, your happiness; but to weep before you are eighteen is far sadder; for nothing can bring back the dead, and the future is dim with tears. Poor creature. We see a beggar by the roadside suffering from cold and hunger; and we give him alms, and look upon him without pain, because it is in our power to relieve him; but this unhappy, broken-hearted woman, the only relief to give her would be to love her—and none are there to bestow that alms upon her!"

"Ah! my lord, if you knew what a fine young man her husband was—hardly three-and-twenty; a noble countenance, a lofty brow—like your own intelligent and proud; dark blue eyes, rather pensive, rather sad. I knew why they were sad. He loved his father and his native land, and he was doomed to exile from both! And how good and graceful was his smile! Ah how he would have smiled at his little child, had he lived long enough to see it. He took it even before it was born: he took pleasure in looking at the cradle that awaited it. Poor, poor young man!—I saw him on a stormy night, in the darkest forest, stretched upon the wet earth, motionless, lifeless, his garments covered with mud, his temple shattered, blood escaping in torrents from his wound. I saw—alas I saw William!"

"You saw my son's death!" cried Lord James, raising himself like a spectre in the midst of his pillows, and fixing me with his eyes so distended and piercing, that I started back alarmed. But, notwithstanding the darkness, I thought I saw a tear moisten the old man's eye-lids.

"My lord," I replied, "I was present at your son's death, and at the birth of his child!"

There was an instant's silence. Lord James looked steadily at me. At last he made a movement; his trembling hand sought mine, pressed it, then his fingers relaxed their grasp, and he fell back upon his bed.

"Enough, sir, enough: I suffer, I need repose. Leave me."

I bowed and retired.

Before I was out of the room, Lord James had relapsed into his habitual position; into silence and immobility.

I will not detail to you my numerous and respectful representations to Lord James Kysington, his indecision and secret anxiety, and how at last his paternal love, awakened by the details of the horrible catastrophe, his pride of race, revived by the hope of leaving an heir to his name, triumphed over his bitter resentment. Three months after the scene I have described, I awaited on the threshold of the house at Montpellier, the arrival of Eva Meredith and her son, summoned to their family and to the resumption of all their rights. It was a proud and happy day for me.

Lady Mary, perfect mistress of herself, had concealed her joy when family dissensions had made her son heir to her wealthy brother. Still better did she conceal her regret and anger when Eva Meredith, or rather Eva Kysington, was reconciled to her father-in-law. Not a cloud appeared upon Lady Mary's marble forehead. But beneath this external calm how many evil passions fomented!

When the carriage of Eva Meredith entered the courtyard of the house, I was there to receive her. Eva held out her hand—"Thanks, thanks my friend!" she murmured. She wiped the tears that were trembling in her eyes, and taking her boy, now three years old, by the hand, she entered her new abode. "I am afraid!" she said. She was still the weak woman, broken by affliction, pale, sad and beautiful, incredulous of earthly hopes, but firm in heavenly faith. I walked by her side; and as she ascended the steps, her gentle countenance beamed with tears, her slender and feeble form inclined toward the balustrade, her extended arms assisted the child, who walked still more slowly than herself, Lady Mary and her son appeared at the door. Lady Mary wore a brown velvet dress, rich bracelets encircled her arms, a slender gold chain encircled her brow, which in truth was of those on which a diadem sits well. She glauced with an assured step, her head high, her glance full of pride. Such was the first meeting of the two mothers.

"You are welcome, madam," said Lady Mary, bowing to Eva Meredith.

Eva tried to smile, and answered by a few affectionate words. How could she forebode hatred, she who only knew love! We proceeded to Lord James's room. Mrs. Meredith scarcely able to support herself, entered first, too a few steps and knelt beside her grand-father's arm-chair. Taking her child in her arms, she placed him on his grand-father's knee.

"His son!" she said. Then the poor woman wept and was silent.

Long did Lord James gaze upon the child. As he gradually recognized the features of the son he had lost, his eyes became moist and their expression affectionate. There came a moment, when forgetting his age, and lapse of time, and past misfortune, he dreamed himself back again to the happy day when he first pressed his infant son to his heart. "William, William!" he murmured. "My daughter," added he, extending his hand to Eva Meredith.

My eyes filled with tears. Eva had a family protector, a fortune, I was happy; perhaps that was why I wept.

CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

Don't Get in a Passion! It's very well," says Mrs. Dobbs, "for the moral papers to keep saying don't get in a passion; but for my part, when the nasty creature Mr. D., goes to bed with his boots, I kind of like over."