

# SOPHIA.\*

BY STANLEY J. WEYMAN.

IN HIS NEW NOVEL MR. WEYMAN FOLLOWS UP THE VEIN HE SO SUCCESSFULLY OPENED IN "THE CASTLE INN," AND FROM THE RICH FUND OF DRAMATIC MATERIAL OFFERED BY ENGLISH LIFE OF THE LAST CENTURY HE DRAWS A STORY OF STRONG PLOT AND STRIKING CHARACTERS.

## I.

IN the diningroom of a small house on the east side of Arlington Street, which at that period, 1742, was the ministerial street, Mr. and Mrs. Northey sat awaiting Sophia. The thin face of the honorable member for Aldbury wore the same look of severity which it had worn a few weeks earlier, on the eventful night when he found himself called upon to break the ties of years and vote in the final division against Sir Robert; his figure, as he sat stiffly expecting his sister in law, reflected the attitudes of the four crude portraits of dead Northeys that darkened the walls of the dull little room. Mrs. Northey, on the other hand, sprawled in her chair with the carelessness of the fine lady fatigued; she yawned, inspected the lace of her negligee, and now held a loose end to the light and now pondered the number of a lottery ticket. At length, out of patience, she called fretfully to Mr. Northey to ring the bell. Fortunately Sophia entered at that moment.

"In time and no more, miss," madam cried with temper. Then as the girl came forward timidly, "I'll tell you what it is," Mrs. Northey continued viciously, "you'll wear red before you're twenty! You have no more color than a china figure this morning! What's amiss with you?"

Sophia, flushing under her brother in law's eyes, pleaded a headache.

Her sister sniffed. "Eighteen, and the vapors!" she cried scornfully. "Lord, it is very evident raking don't suit you! But do you sit down now, and answer me, child. What did you say to Sir Hervey last night?"

"Nothing," Sophia faltered, her eyes on the floor.

"Oh, nothing!" Mrs. Northey repeated, mimicking her. "And pray, Miss Modesty, what did he say to you?"

"Nothing—or—or at least nothing of moment," Sophia stammered.

"Of moment! Oh, you know what's of moment, do you? And whose fault was that I'd like to know? Tell me that, miss."

Sophia, seated stiffly on the chair, her sandaled feet drawn under her, looked downcast and a trifle sullen, but did not answer.

"I ask, whose fault was that, you little fool?" Mrs. Northey continued impatiently. "Do you think to sit still all your life, looking at your toes, and waiting for the man to fall into your lap? Hang you for a natural if you do! It is not that way husbands are got, miss!"

"I don't want a husband, ma'am!" Sophia cried, stung into speech and indignation by her sister's coarseness.

"Oh, don't you?" Mrs. Northey retorted. "Don't you, Miss Innocence? Let me tell you, I know what you want. You want to make a fool of yourself with that beggarly, grinning, broad shouldered oaf of an Irishman! That's what you want. And he wants your six thousand pounds. Oh, you don't throw dust in my eyes!" Mrs. Northey continued viciously. "I've seen you puling and pining and making wortley eyes at him these three weeks! Aye, and half the town laughing at you. But I'd have you know, miss, once for all, we are not going to suffer it!"

"My life, I thought we agreed that I should explain matters," Mr. Northey said gently.

"Oh, go on, then!" madam cried; and threw herself back in her seat.

"Only because I think you go a little too far, my dear," Mr. Northey said, with a cough of warning. "I am sure that we can count on Sophia's prudence. You are

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aware, child," he continued, directly addressing her, "that your father's death has imposed on us the—the charge of your person and the care of your interests. The house at Cuckfield being closed, and your brother wanting three years of full age, your home must necessarily be with us for a time, and we have a right to expect that you will be guided by us in such plans as are broached for your settlement. Now, I think I am right in saying," Mr. Northey continued, assuming his House of Commons manner, "that your sister has communicated to you the very advantageous proposal with which my good friend and colleague at Aldbury, Sir Hervey Coke, has honored us? Ahem! Sophia, that is so, is it not? Be good enough to answer me."

"Yes, sir," Sophia murmured, her eyes glued to the carpet.

"Very good. In that case I am sure that she has not failed to point out to you that Sir Hervey is a baronet of an old and respectable family, and is possessed besides of a competent estate; that, in a word, the alliance is everything for which we could look on your behalf."

"Yes, sir," Sophia whispered.

"Then, may I ask," Mr. Northey continued majestically, "in what respect you find the match not to your taste?"

The young girl slid her foot to and fro; and for a moment did not answer. Then, "I—I do not wish to marry him," she said in a low voice.

"You do not wish?" Mrs. Northey cried, unable to contain herself. "And why, pray?"

"He's—he's as old as Methuselah!" the girl answered, with a sudden spirit of resentment; and she moved her foot more quickly to and fro.

"As old as Methuselah?" Mr. Northey answered in unfeigned astonishment; and then in a tone of triumphant refutation he continued, "Why, child, what are you dreaming of? He is only thirty four. And I am thirty six."

"Well, at any rate, he is old enough—he is nearly old enough to be my father," Sophia muttered rebelliously.

Mrs. Northey could no longer sit by and hear herself flouted. She was twenty nine, Sophia's senior by eleven years, and she felt all the imputation that bounded harmlessly off her husband's unconsciousness. "You little toad!" she cried. "Do

you think I do not know what you mean? I tell you, miss, you would smart for it if I were your mother! Thirty four indeed, and you call him as old as Methuselah! Oh, thank you for nothing, ma'am! I understand you."

"But he's twice as old as I am!" Sophia whimpered, bending before the storm. And in truth, to eighteen thirty four seems elderly, if not old.

"You? You're a baby!" Mrs. Northey retorted, her face red with spite. "How any man of sense can look at you or want you passes me! But he does, and if you think we are going to see our plans thwarted by a chit of a girl of your years, you are mistaken, miss! Sir Hervey's vote, joined to the two county votes which my lord commands and to Mr. Northey's seat, will gain my lord a step in the peerage; and when Coke is married to you his vote would be ours. As for you, you white faced puling thing, I should like to know who you are that you should not be glad of a good match when it is offered you? It is a very small thing to do for your family."

"For your family!" Sophia involuntarily exclaimed; and the next moment could have bitten off her tongue.

Fortunately a glance from Mr. Northey, who prided himself on his diplomacy, stayed the outburst that was on his wife's tongue. "Allow me, my dear," he said. "And do you listen to me, Sophia. Apart from his age, a ridiculous objection which could only come from a schoolgirl, is there anything else you have to urge against Sir Hervey?"

"He's as—as grave as death!" Sophia murmured tearfully.

Mr. Northey shrugged his shoulders. "Is that all?" he said.

"Yes, but——"

"But what? But what, Sophia?" Mr. Northey repeated, with a fine show of fairness. "I suppose you allow him to be in other respects a suitable match?"

"Yes, but—I do not wish to marry him, sir," Sophia whispered.

"In that," Mr. Northey said firmly, "you must be guided by us. We have your interests at heart, and—and that should be enough for you."

Sophia did not answer, but the manner in which she closed her lips and kept her gaze steadily fixed on the floor was far from boding acquiescence; every

feature indeed of her pale face—which only a mass of dark brown hair and a pair of the most brilliant and eloquent eyes redeemed from the commonplace—expressed a settled determination. Mrs. Northey, who knew something of her sister's disposition, which was also that of the family in general, discerned this, and could restrain herself no longer.

"You naughty girl!" she cried with something approaching fury. "Do you think that I don't know what is at the bottom of this? Do you think I don't know you are pining and sulking for that hulking Irish rogue that's the laughing stock of every company his great feet enter? Lord, miss, by your leave, I'd have you know we are neither fools nor blind! I've seen your sighings and oglings, your pinings and sinkings! And so has the town! Aye, you may blush"—in truth Sophia's cheeks were dyed scarlet—"my naughty madam! Blush you should, that can fancy a rawboned, uncouth Teague a fine woman would be ashamed to have for a footman! But you shan't have him! You may trust me for that—as long as there are bars and bolts in this house, miss!"

"Sophia," Mr. Northey said in his coldest manner, "I trust that there is nothing in this."

The girl, under the lash of her sister's tongue, had risen from her chair; she tried in vain to recover her composure. "There was nothing, sir," she said, almost hysterically. "But after this—after the words which my sister has used to me, she has only herself to thank if—if I please myself, and take the gentleman she has named—or any other person."

"Aye, but softly," Mr. Northey rejoined, with a certain unpleasant chill in his tone. "Softly, Sophia, if you please. Are you aware that if your brother marry under age and without his guardian's consent he forfeits ten thousand pounds in your favor? And as much more to your sister? If not, let me tell you it is so."

Sophia stared at him but did not answer.

"It is true," Mr. Northey continued, "that your father's will contains no provision to punish you in the like case. But this clause proves that he expected his children to be guided by the advice of their natural guardians. And for my part,

Sophia, I expect you to be so guided. In the mean time, and that there may be no mistake in this matter, understand, if you please, that I forbid you to hold from this moment any communication with the person who has been named. If I cannot prescribe a match for you, I can at least see that you do not disgrace your family."

"Sir!" Sophia cried, her cheeks burning with indignation.

But Mr. Northey, a man of slow pulse and the least possible imagination, returned her fiery look unmoved. "I repeat it," he said coldly. "For that and nothing else an alliance with this—this person would entail. Let there be no misunderstanding on that point. You are innocent of the world, Sophia, and do not understand these distinctions. But I am within the truth when I say that Mr. Hawkesworth is known to be a broken adventurer, moving upon sufferance among persons of condition, and owning a character and antecedents that would not for a moment sustain inquiry."

"How can that be?" Sophia cried passionately. "It is not known who he is!"

"He is not one of us," Mr. Northey answered with dignity. "For the rest, you are right in saying that it is not known who he is. I am told that even the name he bears is not his own."

"No, it is not!" Sophia retorted; and then stood blushing and convicted, yet with an exultant light in her eyes. No, his name was not his own. She knew that from his own lips; and knew, too, and from his own lips, in what a world of romance he moved, what a future he was preparing, what a triumph might be—nay, would be—his by and by—and might be hers! But her mouth was sealed; already, indeed, she had said more than she had the right to say. When Mr. Northey, somewhat surprised by her acquiescence, asked with acerbity how she knew that Hawkesworth was not the man's name, and what the name was, she stood mute. Wild horses should not draw that from her.

But it was natural her brother in law should draw his conclusions, and his brow grew darker. "It is plain, at least, that you have admitted him to a degree of intimacy extremely improper," he said with more heat than he had yet exhibited. "I

fear, Sophia, that you are not so good a girl as I believed. However, from this moment you will see that you treat him as a stranger. Do you hear me?"

"Yes. Then—I am not to go with you this evening?"

"This evening? You mean to Vauxhall? Why not, pray?"

"Because—because if I go, I must see him. And if I see him I—I must speak to him," Sophia cried, her breast heaving with generous resentment. "I will not pass him by and let him think—let him think—everything!"

For a moment Mr. Northey looked a little nonplussed. Then, "Well, you can—you can bow to him," he said, pluming himself on his discretion in leaving the rein a little slack to begin. "If he forces himself upon you, you will rid yourself of him with as little delay as possible. The mode I leave to you, Sophia; but speech with him I must absolutely forbid. You will disobey on pain of my most serious displeasure."

"On pain of bread and water, miss!" her sister cried venomously. "That will have more effect, I fancy. Lord, for my part, I should die of shame if I thought that I had encouraged a nameless Irish rogue not good enough to ride behind my coach! And all the town to know it!"

Rage dried the tears that hung on Sophia's lids. "Is that all?" she asked proudly, her head high. "Is that all you wish to say to me?"

"I think so," Mr. Northey answered.

"Then—I may go?"

He appeared to hesitate. For the first time his manner betrayed doubt and unreadiness; he looked at his wife and opened his mouth, then closed it. At length, "Yes, I think so," he said pompously. "And I trust you will regain our approbation by doing as we wish, Sophia. I am sorry to say that your brother's conduct at Cambridge has not been all that we could desire. I hope that you will see to it, and will be more circumspect. I hope that you will not disappoint us. Yes, you can go."

Sophia waited for no second permission. Her heart bursting with resentment, she hurried from the room, and with burning cheeks flew up the stairs to shut herself in her chamber. Here, on the second floor, in a room consecrated to thoughts

of him and dreams of him, where in a secret nook behind the bow-fronted drawer of her tiny toilet table lay the withered flower he had given her the day he stole her glove, she felt the full wretchedness of her lot. She would see him no more! Her tears gushed, her bosom heaved, at the thought. She would see him no more! Or worse, she would see him only in public at a distance whence his eyes would stab her for a jilt, a flirt, a cold, heartless, worldly creature unworthy to live, unworthy to breathe the same air with constancy.

And he had been so good to her! He had been so watchful, so assiduous, so delicate; she had fondly, foolishly thought his suit a secret from all.

The way to her heart had been easy. Her father's death had cast her, a timid country girl, into the vortex of the town, and for a time she had shrunk from the whirl of routs and masquerades, the smirking beaux and loud voiced misses, among whom she found herself. She had sat mum and abashed in companies where her coarser sister ruled and ranted; where one had shunned and another had sneered at the silent, pale faced girl, whose eyes and hair and tall slender shape just redeemed her from insignificance. Only Mr. Hawkesworth, the Irishman, had discerned in her charms that in a remarkably short time won his regards and fixed his attentions; only he, with the sensibility of an unspoiled Irish heart, had penetrated the secret of her loneliness, in company had murmured sympathy in her ear, and at the opera, where he had not the entrée to her sister's box, had hung on her looks from afar, and spoken more sweetly with his fine eyes than Monticelli or Amorevoli sang on the stage.

For Sir Hervey, his would be rival, the taciturn, middle aged man, who was Hervey to half the men and Coke to three fourths of the women of town, who gamed with the same nonchalance with which he paid what she supposed he called his court—he might be the pink of fashion in his dull, mooning way; but he had nothing that caught her eighteen year old fancy. On the contrary, he had a habit of watching her when Hawkesworth was present, at the mere remembrance of which her cheek flamed. For that alone, and whatever happened, she



hated him, and would never, never marry him! They might rob her of her dear Irishman, they might break her heart—so her thoughts ran to the tremolo of a passionate sob—they might throw her into a decline, but they should never compel her to take *him*! She would live on bread and water for a year first. She was fixed, fixed, fixed on that, and would ever remain so.

Meanwhile down stairs, the door safely closed on her, the two who remained in the room she had left kept silence until her feet were heard hurrying up the stairs. Then Mr. Northey permitted his discontent to appear. "I wish, after all, I had told her," he said, moving restlessly in his chair. "Hang it, ma'am, do you hear?" he continued, looking irritably at his wife. "I wish I had taken my own line."

"Then you wish you had been a fool, Mr. Northey," the lady answered with fine contempt. "Do you think that this silly girl would rest content, or let us rest, until you had followed her dear brother Tom, and brought him back from his charmer? Not she! And for him, if you are thinking of him, he was always a rude cub and bound for the dogs one day or other. What does it matter whether he is ruined before he is of age or afterwards? Eh, Mr. Northey?"

"It matters to us," Mr. Northey answered.

"It may matter ten thousand to us if we mind our own business," his wife answered coolly. "So do you let him be for a day or two."

"It matters as much to Sophia," he said, trying to find excuses.

"And why not? There will be so much the more to bind Coke to us."

"He has plenty now."

"Much wants more, Mr. Northey."

"Of course the thing may be done already," he said, striving uncomfortably to convince himself. "For all we know, the match is now made, and interference useless. Your brother was always wilful, as you say, and it is not likely the woman would let him go for a word. On the other hand——"

"There is no other hand!" she cried, out of patience with his weakness. "I tell you, let be. Let the boy marry whom he pleases, and when he pleases. 'Tis no matter of ours."

"Still—I wish his tutor had not written to us."

"If the knot was not tied yesterday, there are persons enough will tie it today—for half a guinea," she said coolly. "It is not as if you were his only guardian. His father chose another elsewhere, and he may look to it. The girl is charge enough for us, and for her she benefits as much as we do. I wish that were the worst of it. But I scent danger, Mr. Northey. I am afraid of this great Teague of hers. He's no Irishman if he doesn't scent a fortune a mile off! And once let him learn that she is worth sixteen thousand pounds instead of six, and he'll off with her from under our very noses."

"It's all that d——d Irish Register?" Mr. Northey cried, jumping up with an oath. "She's in there, in print!"

"Under her own name?"

"To be sure, as a great fortune. And her address."

"Do you mean it, Mr. Northey? Printed in the book, is it?"

"It is—as I say."

"Hang their impudence!" his wife cried in astonishment. "They ought to be pilloried! But there is just this, we can show that to the girl! And if it don't open her eyes, nothing will. Do you get a copy, Mr. Northey, and we'll show it to her tomorrow, and put her on the notion every Irishman has it by heart. And as soon as we can, we must get her married to Coke. There'll be no certainty till she's wedded. 'Twould have been done this fortnight if he were not just such a mumchance fool as the girl herself! He may look very wise, and the town think him so. But there's more than looking wanted with a woman, Mr. Northey, and for what I see he's as big a fool as many that never saw Pall Mall."

"I have never found him that," Mr. Northey said, with a dry cough. And he spoke with reason. He had more than once, as the heir to a peerage, taken on himself to set Sir Hervey right; but with so conspicuous a lack of success that he began to suspect that his brother member's silence was not dullness; nay, that he himself came late into that secret. Or why was Coke so well with the great wit and fashionable Hanbury Williams? With Henry Fox and my Lord Chesterfield? With young Lord Lincoln, the wary

quarry of matchmaking mothers, no less than with Tom Hervey, against whom no young virgin, embarking in life, failed of a warning? Mr. Northey knew that while in the company of these and their like he was no favorite, Coke was at home; and he hid with difficulty a sneaking fear of his colleague.

What a man so highly thought of and so well received saw in a girl who in Mr. Northey's eyes appeared every way inferior to her loud, easy, fashionable sister, passed the honorable member's understanding. But the thing was so, and that was enough for him. Sir Hervey had spoken the three or four words beyond which he seldom went, the venture had been made; now if there was one thing upon which Mr. Northey's dogged mind was firmly fixed, it was that an alliance so advantageous should not be lost to the family.

"But Sophia is prudent," he said, combating his own fears. "She has always been obedient, and—and well behaved. I am sure she's—she's a good girl and will see what is right when it is explained to her."

"If she does not, she will see sorrow," his wife answered truculently. She had neither forgotten nor forgiven the sneer about Methuselah. "I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Northey," she continued: "she takes you in with her pale, peaky face and her round eyes. But if ever there was a nasty, obstinate little toad, she is one. And you'll find that out by and by. And so Coke will learn to his cost some day."

"Still, you think—we can bend her this time?"

"Oh, she'll marry him!" Mrs. Northey retorted confidently. "I'll answer for that. But I would not be Coke afterwards."

## II.

In a year when all the world was flocking to the new rotunda in Ranelagh Gardens, Mrs. Northey would be particular and have her evening party to Vauxhall. Open air was the fashion of the time, and she received her guests seated at the open window in Arlington Street. Thence, as each newcomer appeared, she shouted her greeting, frequently in terms that convulsed the chairmen at the corner; or now and again, hanging far out, she

turned her attention and wit on the carpenters working late on Sir Robert's new house next door, and stated in good round phrases her opinion of the noise they made. When nearly all the company were assembled, and the room was full of women languishing and swimming, and of men mincing and prattling and tapping their snuff boxes, Sophia stole in; and creeping into a corner hid herself behind two jolly nymphs who, with hoops six feet wide and cheeks as handsome as crimson could make them, were bandying jokes and horse play with a tall admirer. In this retreat Sophia fancied she could hide her sad looks until the party set out; great was her dismay, therefore, when, venturing to raise her eyes, she discovered that she had placed herself beside, nay, almost touching, the detested Coke, who, singularly enough, had sought the same retirement a few moments earlier.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and recoiled a step in the confusion of the moment; for the events of the day had shaken her nerves. "I beg your pardon, sir; I did not see that you were there."

"No," he said, with a smile; "I know you didn't, child; or you would have gone to the other end of the room. Now, confess. Is it not so?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "As you please, sir," she said. "I would not venture to contradict you." And courtesying satirically, she turned away her face. At any rate, he should lie in no doubt of her feelings.

He did not answer, he barely seemed to notice; and welcome as his silence was, something like contempt of a suitor who aspired to have without daring to speak, took possession of her. Under the influence of this feeling, embittered by the rating she had received that morning, she fell to considering him out of the tail of her eye, and in spite of herself could not deny that he was a personable man; that his features, if a trifle set and lacking vivacity, were good, and his bearing that of a gentleman, at ease in his company. However, before she had well weighed him, or done more than compare him with the fop who stood before her, and whose muff and quilted coat, long queue and black leather stock, were in the extreme of the fashion, Sir Hervey spoke again.

"Why does it not please you?" he asked, almost listlessly.

"To do what, sir?" she asked.

"To be beside me."

"I did not say it did not," she answered, looking stiffly the other way.

"But it does not," he persisted. "I suppose, child, your sister has told you what my views are?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what do you say?"

"That—that I am much obliged to you, but they are not mine!" Sophia cried, with a sudden rush of words and color; and cruelly, cruelly, it must be confessed, she enjoyed the stroke.

For a moment only. Then, to her astonishment and dismay, Sir Hervey laughed. "That is what you say now," he answered lightly. "What will you say if, by and by, when we know each other better, we get on as well together as—as Lady Sophia, there, and——"

"And Lord Lincoln?" she cried, seeing that he hesitated. "Never!"

"Indeed! But pray what do you know about Lord Lincoln?" he retorted.

"I suppose you think I know no scandal?" she cried indignantly.

"I would prefer you to know as little as possible," he answered coolly; and she fancied in the tone he would have used had she been already his property. "And there is another thing I would also prefer you did not know," he continued.

"And what is that?" she cried, openly scornful, and she flirted her fan a little faster.

"Mr. Hawkesworth."

The blood rushed to her cheeks. This was too much. "Are you jealous? Or impertinent?" she cried, her voice not less furious because it was low and guarded. "How noble, how chivalrous, to say behind a gentleman's back what you would not dare to say to his face!"

Sir Hervey shrugged his shoulders. "He is not a gentleman," he said quickly and masterfully. "He is not one of us, and he is not fit company for you. I do not know what story he has told you, nor what cards he has played, but I know that what I say is true. Be advised, child," he continued earnestly, "and look on him coldly when you see him next. Be sure, if you do not——"

"You will speak to my sister," she cried. "If you have not done it already. Lord, sir, I congratulate you! I'm sure you have discovered quite a new style of

wooing. Next, I suppose, you will have me sent to my room and put on bread and water! Or buried in a parsonage in the country with Tillotson's Sermons and the 'Holy Living'!"

"I spoke to you as I should speak to my sister," Sir Hervey said, with something of apology in his tone.

"Say, rather, as you would speak to your daughter!" she retorted, quick as lightning; and trembling with rage drove home the shaft with a low courtesy. "To be sure, sir, now I think of it, the distance between us justifies you in giving me what advice you please."

He winced at last and was a trifle out of countenance. But he did not answer, and she, furiously angry, looked the other way. Young as she was, all the woman in her rose in revolt against the humiliation of being advised in this matter by a man. She could have struck him. She hated him. And they were all in the same story. They were all against her and her dear Irishman, who alone understood her. Tears rose in Sophia's eyes as she pictured her present loneliness and her happiness in the past; as she recalled the old home looking down the long avenue of chestnut trees, the dogs, the horses, the boisterous twin brother, and the father who by turns had coarsely chidden and fondly indulged her! In her loss of all this, in a change of life as complete as it was sudden, she had found one only to comfort her, one only who had not thought the whirl of strange pleasures a sufficient compensation for a home and a father! One only who had read her silence and pitied her inexperience. And him they would snatch from her!

At this point her thoughts were interrupted by a general movement towards the door. Bent on frolic, the party issued into the street with loud laughter and louder voices, and in a moment were in St. James' Street. One or two of the elder ladies took chairs, but the greater part walked, the gentlemen with their hats under their arms and canes dangling from their wrists; the more foppish with muffs. Passing down St. James', where Betty the fruit woman was taken in tow with a couple of baskets of fruit, they crossed the end of Pall Mall, now inviting a recruit, after the easy fashion of the day, and now hailing a friend on the further side of the street. Thence by the

Mall and the Horse Guards, and so to the Whitehall Stairs, where boats were waiting for them on the gray surface of the broad river.

Sophia, compelled to go in the same boat with Sir Hervey, took good heed to ensconce herself at a distance from him; and sat at her end moody and careless of appearances. There was singing and some romping in the stern of the boat, where the ladies principally sat, and their hoops called for some arrangement. Presently a pert girl, Lady Betty Cochran, out at fifteen and bent on a husband before she was sixteen, marked Sophia's silence, nudged those next her, and took on herself to rally the girl.

"La, miss, you must have been at a Quakers' meeting!" she cried, simpering. "It is easy to see where your thoughts are."

"Where?" Sophia murmured, abashed by this public notice.

"I believe there is very good acting in—*Doblin!*" the provoking creature answered; and the ladies tittered and the gentlemen smiled. "Have you ever been to—*Doblin*, miss?" she continued, with a look that winged the innuendo.

Sophia, her face on fire, did not answer.

"Oh, la, miss, you are not offended, I hope!" the tormentor cried. "Sure I thought the gentleman had spoken and all was arranged. To be sure

O'Rourke's noble fair  
Will ne'er be forgot,  
By those who were there,  
And those who were not!

*And those who were not!*" she hummed again, with a wink that drove the ladies to hide their mirth in their handkerchiefs. "A fine man O'Rourke, and I have heard that he was an actor in—*Doblin!*" the little tease continued.

Sophia, choking with rage and no match for her town bred antagonist, could find not a word to answer, and, worse still, knew not where to look. Another moment and she might have burst into tears, a mishap which would have disgraced her forever in that company. But at this critical instant a quiet voice at the stern was heard.

"Whom Simplicetta loves the town would know. Mark well her knots, and name the happy beau!" it hummed.

Then it was seen that it is one thing.

to tease and another to be teased. Lady Betty swung round in a rage, and without a word attacked Sir Hervey with her fan with a violence that came very near to upsetting the boat. "How dare you, you horrid man?" she cried, when she thought she had beaten him enough. "I wish there were no men in the world, I declare I do! It's a great story, you horrid thing! If Mr. Heskit says I gave him a knot, he is just a——"

A shout of laughter cut her short. Too late she saw that she had betrayed herself, and she stamped furiously. "He cut it off!" she shrieked, raising her voice above the laughter, "He would cut it off! 'Tis a shame you will not believe me. I say——"

A fresh peal of laughter drowned her voice, perhaps to her relief, and brought the boat to the landing place. "All the same, Lady Betty," the nearest girl said, as they prepared to step out, "you'd better not let your mother hear, or you'll go milk cows, my dear, in the country. Lord, you little fool, the boy's not worth a groat, and should be at school by rights!"

Miss Betty did not answer, but, cocking her chin with disdain, which made her look prettier than ever, stepped out, sulking. Sophia followed, her cheeks a trifle cooler than they had been a few minutes before, and the party, now complete, proceeded on foot from the river to the much praised Groves of Pleasure, where ten thousand lamps twinkled and glanced among the trees, and outlined the narrowing avenue that led to the glittering pavilion. In the wide and open space before this palace of Aladdin a hundred gay and lively groups were moving to and fro to the strains of the band, or standing to gaze at the occupants of the boxes; who, sheltered from the elements, and divided from the humbler visitors by little gardens, supped *al fresco*, their ears charmed by music, and their eyes entertained by the ever changing crowd that moved below them.

Two of the best boxes had been retained for Mrs. Northey's party, but before proceeding to them her company strolled up and down a time or two, diverting themselves with the humors of the place and the evening. More than once Sophia's heart stood still as they walked. She fancied that she saw Hawkesworth ap-



proaching, that she distinguished his form amid the crowd; and conscious of the knowing eyes round her, as well as of her sister's displeasure, she knew not where to look, for embarrassment. On each occasion it turned out that she was mistaken; and to delicious tremors succeeded the chill of a disappointment almost worse to bear. After all, she thought, if she must dismiss him, here were a hundred opportunities of doing so in greater freedom than she could command elsewhere. The turmoil of the press through which they moved, now in light and now in shadow, now on the skirts of the romantic, twilight grove, and now under the blaze of the pavilion lamps, favored the stolen word, the kind glance, the quick breathed sigh. But though he knew that she was to be there, he did not appear; and by and by her company left the parade, and, entering the boxes, fell to mincing chickens in china bowls, and cooking them with butter and water over a lamp; all with much romping and scolding, and some kissing and snatching of white fingers, and such a fire of jests and laughter as soon drew a crowd to the front of the box, and filled the little gardens on either side of them with staring groups.

Gayest, pertest, most reckless of all, Lady Betty was in her glory. Never was such a rattle as she showed herself. Her childish treble and shrill laugh, her pretty flushed face and tumbled hair, were everywhere. Apparently bent on punishing Coke for his interference, she never let him rest; with the result that Sophia, whose resentment still smoldered, was free to withdraw to the back of the box and witness rather than share the sport that went forward. To this a new zest was given when Lord P——, who had been dining at a tavern, arrived very drunk, and proceeded to harangue the crowd from the front of the box.

Sophia's seat at the back of the box was beside the head of the half dozen stairs that led down to the gardens. The door at her elbow was open. On a sudden, while the hubbub was at its height and half the party were on their feet before her—some encouraging his lordship to fresh vagaries, others striving to soothe him—she heard a stealthy "Hist! hist!" in the doorway beside her, as if some one sought to gain her attention. With Hawkesworth in her mind, she peered

that way in trembling apprehension; immediately a little white note dropped lightly at her feet, and she had a glimpse of a head and shoulders hastily withdrawing.

With a tumultuous feeling between shame and joy, Sophia, who until this moment had nothing clandestine on her conscience, slipped her foot over the note, and glanced round to see if any one was looking. That moment an eager childish voice cried in her ear, "Give me that!" And then, "Do you hear? It is mine! Please give it me!"

The voice was Lady Betty's, and her flushed, pleading face backed the appeal. At which, and all it meant, it is not to be denied that a little malice stirred in Sophia's breast. The chit had so tormented her an hour earlier, had so held her up to ridicule, so shamed her. It was no wonder she was inclined to punish her now. "Yours, child?" she said, looking coldly at her. "Impossible!"

"Yes, miss. Please—please give it me—at once, please, before it is too late."

"I do not know," Sophia answered virtuously, from the height of her eighteen years. "Children have no right to receive notes. I ought to give it to your mother." And with an unexpected movement she stooped and possessed herself of the folded scrap of paper. "And I am not sure that I shall not," she continued. Lady Betty's face was piteous. "If you do, I—I shall be sent into the country," she panted. "I—I don't know what they'll do to me. Oh, please, please, will you give it to me!"

Sophia had a kindly nature; the girl's distress appealed to her, but it appealed in two ways. "No, I shall not give it you," she answered firmly. "But I shall not tell your mother either. I shall tear it up. You are too young, you little baby, to do this!" And suiting the action to the word, she tore the note into a dozen pieces, and dropped them.

Lady Betty glared at her between relief and rage. At last, "Cat! Cat!" she whispered with childish spite. "Thank you for nothing, ma'am. I'll pay you by and by, see if I don't!" And with a spring, she was back at the front of the box, her laugh the loudest, her voice the freshest, her wit the boldest and most impertinent of them all. Sophia, who

fancied she had made an enemy, did not notice that more than once this madcap looked her way; and in the midst of the wildest outbursts had an eye for what happened in her direction.

Sophia, indeed, had something to think of more important than Lady Betty, for the girl had scarcely left her side when Mrs. Northey came to her, shook her roughly by the shoulder—they had very direct ways in those days—and asked her in a fierce whisper if she was going to sulk there all the evening. Thus adjured, Sophia moved reluctantly to a front seat at the right hand corner of the box. Lord P—— had been suppressed, but broken knots of people still lingered before the garden of the box, expecting a new escapade. To the right, in the open, fireworks were being let off; the grounds in that direction were as light as in the day. Suddenly Sophia's eyes, roving moodily hither and thither, became fixed, and she rose to her feet with a cry of surprise, which must have been heard by her companions if they had not been taken up with the arrest of a pickpocket by two thief takers, a drama which was going forward on the left.

"There's—there's Tom!" she shrieked, her astonishment extreme, since Tom should have been at Cambridge; and raising her voice she shouted, "Tom! Tom!"

Her brother did not hear. He was crossing the open lighted space, some fifteen paces from the box; a handsome boy, foppishly dressed, moving with the affected indifference of a young dandy. Sophia glanced round in an agony of impatience, and found that no one was paying attention to her, that there was no one she could send to him. She saw that in a twinkling he would be lost in the crowd, and acting on the impulse of the moment she darted to the stairs, which were only two paces from her, and flew down them to overtake him. Unfortunately she tripped at the bottom and almost fell, lost a precious instant—and lost Tom. When she reached the spot where she had espied him, and looked round, her brother was not to be seen.

Or yes, there he was, just vanishing down one of the dim alleys that led into the grove. Half laughing, half crying, anticipating his surprise when he should see her, Sophia sped after him. He turned a corner—the place was a perfect maze

and dimly lighted—she followed him; she saw him meet some one, and the next moment was herself all but in the arms of Hawkesworth.

"Sophia, my angel!" the Irishman cried, pressing his hat to his heart. "That I should be so blest! This is indeed a happy meeting."

But she was far at the moment from sharing his bliss. Her brother occupied all her thoughts. "Where is he?" she cried wildly, looking every way. "Where is Tom? Mr. Hawkesworth, you must have seen him! He must have passed you?"

"Seen whom, ma'am?" her admirer asked with eager devotion. He was tall, with a certain florid grace of carriage; and ready, for his hand was on his heart, and his eyes expressed the joy he felt, almost before she knew who stood before her. "If it is any one I know, make me happy by commanding me."

"It is my brother!"

"Your brother?"

"But you would not know him!" she cried, stamping her foot with impatience.

"Not know him?" he answered gallantly. "Oh, ma'am, how little you know me!" And Hawkesworth extended his arm with a gesture half despairing, half reproachful. "How little you enter into my feelings if you think I should not know *your* brother? My tongue, I know, is clumsy, and says little, but my eyes"—and certainly they dwelt boldly enough on her blushing face—"my eyes must inform you more correctly of my feelings."

"Please, please do not talk like that!" she cried in a low voice; and wrung her hands in her distress. "I saw my brother and I came down to overtake him, and—somehow I have missed him."

"But I thought that he was at Cambridge," he said.

"He should be, but it was he," she replied. "It was he indeed. I ran to catch him, and—oh, I must go back at once! If you please, I must go back."

"In one moment you shall!" he cried, barring the road, but with so eloquent a look of admiration she could not resent the movement. "In one moment you shall! But Heaven has sent you to my side, Sophia, Heaven has taken pity on my passion and given me this moment of delight—will you be more cruel, and snatch it from me? Nay, but, sweet," he

continued with ardor, making as if he would kneel, and striving to get possession of her hand, "sweetest one, say that you, too, are glad! Say——"

"Mr. Hawkesworth, I am glad," she murmured, trembling, while her face burned with blushes; "for it gives me an opportunity I might otherwise have lacked, of—of—oh, I don't know how I can say it!"

"Say what, my own?"

"How I can take—take leave of you," she murmured.

"Take leave of me?" he cried.

"Yes. Believe me, sir—Mr. Hawkesworth," Sophia continued, beginning to stammer in her confusion, "I am not ungrateful for your intentions. But we—we must part."

"Never!" he cried, rising and looking down at her. "It is not your heart speaks now, or it speaks but a lesson it has learned."

Sophia was silent.

"It is your friends who would part us," he continued sternly and bitterly. "It is your cold blooded, politic brother in law, it is your proud sister——"

"Stay, sir," Sophia said unsteadily. "She is my sister."

"She is, but she would part us," he retorted. "Do you think I do not understand that? Do you think I do not know why, too? They see in me only a poor gentleman. I cannot go to them and tell them what I have told you. I cannot put my life in their hands—as I have put it in yours!" he continued, with a gesture that in the daylight might have seemed a little theatrical, but in the dusk of the alley and to the girl's romantic perceptions commended itself gallantly enough. "I cannot tell them that the day will come when Plomer Hawkesworth will stand on the steps of a throne, and enjoy all that a king's gratitude can confer. When he who runs daily, nightly, hourly, the risk of Laver's fate, whose head may any morning rot on Temple Bar and his limbs on York Gates——"

"Oh, no, no!" Sophia cried, shuddering and covering her eyes. "God forbid! God forbid, sir! Rather——"

"Rather what, sweet?" he cried; and he caught her hand.

"Rather give up this—this dangerous life," she sobbed, overcome by the horror of the things his words conjured up.

"Let others tread such ways and run such risks. Give up the Jacobite cause! Mr. Hawkesworth, if you love me, as you say you do——"

"Yes? Yes?" he cried; and across his handsome face, momentarily turned from her as if he would resist her pleading, there crept a look half derision, half triumph. "What?"

But her reply was never spoken; for as he finished the fireworks died down with startling abruptness, plunging the alley in which they stood into semi darkness. The change recalled the girl to a full and sudden sense of her position; to its risks and its consequences, should her absence, even for a moment, be discovered. Wringing her hands in distress, instead of the words that had been on her lips, "Oh, I must go!" she cried. "I must get back at once!" and she looked appealingly at her lover.

He did not answer, and she turned from him, fearing he might try to detain her. But she had not taken three steps before she paused in agitation, uncertain in the darkness which way she had come. A giggling, squealing girl ran by her into the grove, followed by a man; and at the same moment a distant fanfare of French horns, with the confused noise of a multitude of feet moving at once, announced that the entertainment was over and that the assembly were beginning to leave the gardens.

Sophia's heart stood still. What if she were missed? Worse still, what if she were left behind? "Oh!" she cried, turning blindly, her hands outstretched, "which is the way? Mr. Hawkesworth, please, please, show me the way! Please take me to them! Oh, what will they say!"

But the Irishman did not move.

### III.

It even seemed to Sophia that his face, as he stood watching her, wore a smirk of satisfaction, faint but odious; and in that moment, and for the moment, she almost hated him. She knew that in the set in which she moved much might be overlooked, and daily and hourly was overlooked, in the right people. But to be lost at Vauxhall at midnight, in the company of an unauthorized lover—this had a horribly clandestine sound, suffi-

cient to blacken the fame of a poor maid, or her country education was at fault. And knowing this, and hearing the confused sounds of departure rise each moment louder and more importunate, the girl grew frantic with impatience.

"Which way? Which way?" she cried. "Do you hear me? Which way are the boxes, Mr. Hawkesworth? You know which way I came. Am I to think you a dolt, sir, or—or what?"

"Or what?" he asked, grinning feebly. To be candid, the occasion had not been foreseen, and the Irishman could not make up his mind how he would act.

"Or a villain!" she cried, with a furious glance. And in the effort to control herself the ivory fan sticks snapped in her small fingers as if they had been of glass. "Take me back this instant, sir," she continued regally, her head high, "or never presume to speak to me again."

What he would have said to this is uncertain, for the very good reason that before he could answer two men appeared at the end of the alley. Catching the sheen of Sophia's hoopskirt where it glimmered light against the dark of the trees, they espied the pair, and with a whoop of drunken laughter came towards them. One was Lord P——, no soberer than before; the other a brother buck flushed with wine to the same pitch of insolence, and ready for any folly or mischief. Crying, "So ho! A petticoat! A petticoat!" the two joined hands and swept down the green walk, prepared to carry all before them.

But it was in such an emergency as this that the Irishman was at his best. Throwing himself between the shrinking, frightened girl and the onset of the drunken rakes, he raised his cane with an air so determined that the assailants thought better of it; and, pausing with a volley of drunken threats, parted hands and changed their plan of attack. While one prepared to rush in and overturn the man, the other made a feint aside, and, thrusting himself through the shrubs, sprang on the girl. Sophia screamed, and tried frantically to free herself; but the scream and effort were alike premature. With a rapid twirl Hawkesworth avoided my lord's rush, caught him by the waist as he blundered by, and, swinging him off his legs, flung him crashing among the undergrowth.

Then whipping out his sword, he pricked the other, who had seized Sophia, in the fleshy part of the shoulder, and forced him to release her; after which, playing his point before the bully's eyes, he drove him slowly back and back. Now the man shrieked and flinched as the steel menaced his eyes; and now he poured forth a volley of threats and curses, as it was for a moment withdrawn. But Hawkesworth was unmoved, and at length the fellow, seeing that Hawkesworth was not to be intimidated either by his lordship's name or his own menaces, thought better of it—as these gentlemen commonly did when they were resisted; and springing back with a parting oath, he took to his heels, and saved himself down a by path.

The Irishman, a little breathed by his victory, wasted no time in vaunting it. He could trust the girl, who had witnessed it with worshiping eyes, to make the most of it. "Quick," he cried, "or we shall be in trouble!" And sheathing his sword, he caught the trembling Sophia by the hand and ran with her down the path. They turned a corner, and a little way before her she saw lights and the open space near the booths which she had seen her brother cross. The next moment a shrill childish voice cried, "Here she is; I've found her!" and Lady Betty flew to them. A little behind her, approaching at a more leisurely pace, was Sir Hervey Coke.

Lady Betty stared at Hawkesworth with all her eyes, and giggled. "Oh, Lord, a man!" she cried, and veiled her face, pretending to be overcome.

"I saw my brother," Sophia faltered, covered with confusion, "and ran down—ran down to—to meet him."

"Just so. But see here—brother," Lady Betty answered with a wink, "go's the word now if you are not a fool."

Hawkesworth hesitated an instant, looking from Sophia to Sir Hervey Coke; then muttering, "Another time!" he turned away, and in a moment was lost in the grove.

"She was with her brother," Lady Betty cried, breathlessly explaining the matter to Coke, who had seen all. "Think of that! She saw him and followed him. That's all. Lord! I wonder," she continued with a loud giggle, "if they would make such a fuss if I were missing. I



declare to goodness I'll try." And leaving Sophia to follow with Sir Hervey, she danced on in front until they met Mrs. Northey, who with her husband and several of her party were following in search of the culprit. Seeing she was found, the gentlemen winked at one another behind backs, while the ladies drew down the corners of their mouths. One of the latter laughed, maliciously expecting the scene that would follow.

But Lady Betty had the first word and kept it. "Lord, ma'am, what ninnies we are!" she cried. "She was with her brother. That's all!"

"Hee hee!" tittered the lady who had laughed before. "That's good. Her brother!"

"Yes, she was," Betty cried, turning on her like a spitfire. "I suppose seeing's believing, ma'am, though one is only fifteen—and not forty! She saw her brother going by the—the corner there, and ran after him while we were watching—watching the—but oh, I beg your pardon, ma'am, you were otherwise engaged, I think," with a derisive courtesy.

Unfortunately the lady who had laughed had a weakness for one of the gentlemen in company, which was so notorious that even her friends snickered. But with Mrs. Northey Lady Betty's advocacy was less effective. That pattern sister, from the moment she discovered Sophia's absence and divined the cause of it, had been fit to burst with spleen. Fortunately the coarse rating which she had prepared, and from which neither policy nor mercy could have prevailed upon her to refrain, died on her shrewish lips at the word "brother."

"Her brother?" she repeated, glowering at Lady Betty. "Here? What do you mean?"

"To be sure, ma'am, what I say. She saw him."

"But how did she know—that he was in London?" Mrs. Northey stammered, forgetting herself for the moment.

"She didn't know. That's the strange part of it," Lady Betty cried volubly. "She saw him, ma'am, and ran after him."

"Well, you have given us enough trouble, miss," Mrs. Northey retorted, addressing Sophia, who stood before them trembling with excitement and the varied emotions of the scene through which she

had passed in the alley. "Thank you for nothing, and Master Tom, too. Perhaps, if you have quite done, you'll come home. Sir Hervey, I'll trust her to you if you'll be troubled with her. Now, if your ladyship will lead the way. It's wondrous dark of a sudden."

The party turned and quickly made its way along the deserted paths towards the entrance. As they trooped by twos and threes down the Avenue of Delight, many of the lamps had flickered out, others were guttering in the sockets—fit images of wit and merriment that had lost their sparkle and fell dull on jaded ears. Coke walked in silence beside his companion until a little interval separated them from the others. Then, "Child," he said in a tone grave and almost severe, "are you fixed to take no warning? Are you determined to throw your life away?"

It was his misfortune and hers that he chose his seasons ill. At that moment her heart was filled to overflowing with her lover, her danger, his prowess, his brave defense of her. Her eyes were hot with joyful, happy tears hardly pent back. Her limbs trembled with a delicious agitation. All within her was a tumult of warm feelings, of throbbing sensibilities.

To oppose himself to her in that mood was to court defeat; it was to associate himself with the worldliness that to her in her rapture was the most hateful thing on earth. And he had his reward. "Throw away my life!" she cried curtly and contemptuously. "'Tis just that, sir, I am determined not to do."

"You are going the way to do it," he retorted.

"I should were I to entertain the suit of a spy," she cried, her voice trembling as she hurled the insult at him. "Were I to become the wife of a man who, even before he has a claim on me, dogs my footsteps, watches my actions, defames my friends! Believe me, sir, I thank you for nothing so much as for opening my eyes to your merits."

"Oh, Lord!" he exclaimed in despair almost comic.

"Thank you," she said. "I see your conduct is of a piece, sir. From the first you treated me as a child—a chattel to be conveyed to you by my friends with the least trouble to yourself. Y

scarcely stooped to speak to me until you found another in the field, and then only to backbite a gentleman whom you dared not accuse to his face!"

As she grew hotter, he grew cool. "Well, well," he said lightly, tapping his snuff box, "be easy; I shan't carry you off against your will."

"No, you will not!" she cried. "Don't think, if you please, that I am afraid of you. I am afraid of no one." And in the fervor of her love she felt that she spoke the truth. She was afraid of no one.

"Tis a happy state; I hope it may continue," Coke answered placidly. "You never had cause to fear me. After this you shall have no cause to reproach me. I ask only one thing in return."

"You will have nothing," she said rudely and stubbornly.

"You will grant me this, whether you will or no."

"Never!"

"Yes," he said; "for it is only this—and you cannot help yourself: when you have been married to that man a month

think of this moment and of me, and remember that I warned you."

He spoke soberly, but he might have spoken to the winds. She was in air, picturing her lover's strength and prowess, his devotion, his gallantry. Once again she saw the drunken lord lifted and flung among the shrubs, and Hawkesworth's figure as he stood like Hector above his fallen foe. Again she saw the other bully flinching before his steel, cursing, reviling, and hiccuping by turns; and Hawkesworth silent, inexorable, pressing on him. She forgot the preceding moment of dismay and doubt when she had turned to her lover for help, and read something less than respect in his eyes; when for an instant he had hung in the wind uncertain what course he would take with her. For she was only eighteen, and the scene in which he championed her had cast its glamour over her, distorting all that had gone before. He had defended her; he was her hero, she was his. What girl of sensibility could doubt it?

*(To be continued.)*

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#### WHEN SHE COMES HOME.

How will the air color and sweeten,  
And all the world grow young;  
This house we meet in and everywhere  
With prism lights be flung—  
When she comes home!

How will her eye drench my dry heart  
With one o'erbrimmèd glance;  
How, with a start, will passion cry  
And young desires dance—  
When she comes home!

I'll kiss her brow, her odorous hair,  
Her eyelids—ere her lips.  
I must beware lest from me now  
(As in the dream) she slips—  
When she comes home!

When she comes home, my love, my life,  
Comes heaven in her train;  
My sweet, my wife, heartsease will come,  
And breath of life again—  
When she comes home!

*Frank Crane.*