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FROM BLACKWOOD'S EDINBURGH MAGAZINE.

CHAPTER XXXII.—Continued.

"Yes, she has had a bad night, as I feared she would, Dr. Makin," Lady Julia announced to the little doctor the following morning. "She was over-excited in the afternoon, talking and seeing people."

"Major Gilbert was over, I suppose?"
 "No, not Major Gilbert. No, he has not seen her yet. But—but others. And they talked as young people do, and forgot that she was an invalid, and could not bear much. If I had been at home—but I was at church, at the afternoon service, and she came into the boudoir, and Lord Hartland joined her there," proceeded the simple lady, who invariably undid her own infantile efforts at diplomacy the instant after they were made.—"Lord Hartland was with her all the time—"

"Ah!"
 "And I found her quite tired out when I came home."
 "That was a pity."
 "And she has been very much exhausted ever since."

"No breakfast, eh?"
 "A cup of tea." Hardly anything besides.
 "Medicine suiting her?"

"She will tell you that best herself. I think her head aches, but it may not have had anything to do with the medicine."
 "Probably it has, though. If a composing draught is not allowed to take effect it is apt to produce headache. Revenges itself, as it were. Well, we must have no more exciting conversations. Lord Hartland will please to remember that. And as he is not Major Gilbert—"

"She is determined to see Major Gilbert to-day, however," said Lady Julia.
 "And I cannot stop it, unless—unless you—"

"and she regarded her kind old friend and adviser wistfully."
 "Suppose we go up and have a peep at our patient first, my lady, I will not let her see any one, nor do anything that is to harm her—you may be sure of that. If Major Gilbert is to prove as bad a companion as Lord Hartland," smiling, "we must just close the gates, and pull up the drawbridge." Saying which, he held open the door with his little air of old-fashioned courtesy, and followed his conductor up the staircase.

But his face was longer when he came down again. "She really is by no means so well as on Saturday," he pronounced very gravely, directly he and Lady Julia were again alone in the drawing-room. "Pulse and temperature both unsatisfactory. No appetite, and a good deal of fever. Colour too bright. Restless eye. I do not understand all this nervous excitement"—then he raised his head which had hung down as he ruminated, and cleared his throat with the look of a man who has taken a sudden resolution.

"Lady Julia, I am going to be very plain with you, and you must excuse my saying that I expect you to be equally plain with me. It is no possible good my coming and going and prescribing for my patient, unless I am put in full possession of all the facts of the case. I cannot undertake to benefit your niece in the slightest degree, if anything, any mental disquietude, any undermining source of trouble, is kept back from me. That something of the kind exists I cannot help surmising. I feel nearly sure that there is something or other weighing on Miss Rosamund's mind, and counteracting all our care. If that be the case, I may as well discontinue my prescriptions, for they will do her no good. Unless we can strike at the real evil—"

"Oh, if we could!"
 To his surprise, Lady Julia made the above ejaculation with an amount of fervour for which he had been unprepared.

"Well, my lady," he began.
 "Hush—sh—sh!" rejoined she, in a whisper so imperative and prolonged, that it seemed as if the echo of the final "sh!" would never die away; and then she looked round the large, many-windowed apartment, cautiously and fearfully. "These rooms are so very unsafe," she murmured. "It is almost impossible to be sure of not being overheard in a great room like this, with all these pillars, and stands, and statues. Is that door shut? No. But the sound could hardly have been carried so far. Still, would you oblige me by coming this way? The library is usually empty at this hour, and Hartland is out, I know, this morning. There we may speak freely; and I own, Dr. Makin, I do wish to speak freely. I must have a little unreserved conversation with you. Follow me, if you please." And she led the way to a smaller apartment, yet stately in its own fashion, lined with bookcases, and comfortably supplied with lounging-chairs, writing-tables, and light literature. A fire was burning brightly in the hearth, and its blaze was not the less welcome that the light from the large mullioned window was partially obscured by a heavy folding-screen, drawn midway across to keep out possible draughts. The softest of Turkey carpets

completed the luxury of the whole, and rendered a footfall almost inaudible.
 Lady Julia advanced nevertheless with a stealthy tread, as though conscious of being on an unusual errand; and it was not until she had first seen that no Lord Hartland was in his usual chair by the fire, that she beckoned her companion to follow and noiselessly slid the bolt of the door after him.

That done, however, courage appeared to return, and in her wonted quick, energetic tones she plunged at once into the heart of the matter.
 "Dr. Makin, you are right. Something is preying on Rosamund's mind; and it is this most unhappy, most unfortunate engagement to Major Gilbert which is the cause of her illness. She—"

A look—what was it? A gleam of horror and affright upon the face in front of her! The eyeballs starting from her companion's head! His lips falling apart! His raised, warning, imploring hand! What could it mean? Upon what was his terrified gaze fixed, above and beyond her? Upon something, or—oh, heaven!—some one? She turned. It was even so. She found herself confronted by Gilbert himself!

At the first sound of her voice he had awakened from a musing fit in the window embrasure, and although he had advanced on the instant, he had not been able to present himself, before he had distinctly caught every syllable uttered in Lady Julia's clearest, most emphatic accents. His movements had not been able to keep pace with her rapidity, and all could now perceive what had been done.

A frozen minute succeeded, grim to look back upon, terrible to experience.
 Dr. Makin was the first to recover himself. "I will look in again this afternoon," he said, hastily; and the door opened and shut after him, leaving two motionless figures within, breathing silently in each other's faces.

"I heard something so strange just now," said Gilbert at last, speaking slowly, and looking steadily at his companion, "that if I had been in any other house, or if it had been said by any other speaker—"

Lady Julia sank down upon a seat, and covered her face with her hands.
 "But you," continued the voice, which should have been familiar to her, and yet was one the like of which she had never heard before—"you who have been ever a kind friend, a true woman; you, whom I respect and esteem, whom I have ever had cause to be grateful to; you, who alone in this unfriendly neighbourhood have shown me frank hospitality and kindness, have welcomed me to your family hearth—"

"Stop—stop." She put out her hands as though to deny his words, but he took no notice.
 "You, I know, would not deceive me, would not resort to such a method—"

"Oh, no—believe me—indeed, indeed—"

She wrung her hands in anguish unbearable: no moment of her life had ever been like this.

"And yet I hear you say such words, and say them, too, in such a way, that had they been uttered by any one else—by any man at least—I would have dashed the lie from his lips," proceeded the speaker, with a calm that was far more appalling than tempest. "I hear you tell another, and him no subject for jest—I hear you make an announcement to him that is so—so strange—that concerns me so nearly, that I can only bid myself to remember you were once my friend, and ask if you were not dreaming—not wandering—when you thus spoke?"

She shook her head. She durst not look at him.
 "Not?" said he. He paused, and watched her for a few seconds.

"Have you any right—any authority—that you thus dare to make a statement which—"

He paused again.
 Still no word, no sound emanated from the bowed form at his side.
 "Lady Julia, I am entitled to a reply."
 "If Hartland were only here?" moaned she at length.

"Lord Hartland!"
 "He knows that it is the truth, only the truth; but oh! that you should have heard it thus!"

"If it be the truth, what matters how it is heard? But let me understand you, Lady Julia, and, I beseech you, no trifling. This is life and death to some of us. You spoke of this 'most unhappy, most unfortunate engagement.' To whom is it unhappy and unfortunate?"

She winced visibly.
 "I have a right to know," he said. He did not move from where he had taken up his stand by a hair's breadth, and the very muscles of his face were rigid.
 "It is her I have to think of—my own sister's own child," wimpered the frightened timid woman at last. "Oh, Major Gilbert, you do not know what Rosamund

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