

Literature, &c.

THE BRITISH MAGAZINES.

From the London People's Journal.

THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER.

BY SARAH SIMONDS.

Mrs MANVERS secretly felt some repugnance at the idea of the intrusion of a stranger on their quiet evenings; but she was too much attached to her daughter to oppose any of her wishes, more especially when the advantages were so obvious, and her consent was at once given to the plan, however disagreeable to her. Ere many weeks had passed however, she began to look forward to these dreaded evenings as the pleasantest part of the day. Madame de Haro was so lively, yet sweet in manner, so perfectly high-bred, yet simple as a child, that it would have been difficult for any one to withstand her fascinations, more especially as one of Mrs Manvers' few prejudices was propagated by discovering that she was of a most ancient Italian family, and that her husband had fallen a victim in one of the many political struggles in that fair but unhappy country. Mrs Manvers' kind heart and loving nature soon attached her to the charming *emigre*, and Isabella had the delight of seeing her mother's spirits gradually improve under the smiling atmosphere which always seemed to surround their new friend. She herself felt the charm in its full extent, and, moreover, made rapid progress under the tuition of such an instructress; who besides insisted on imparting to her some of her own musical proficiency; for Madame de Haro had been the pupil of some of the best masters in her own land of song; and the accomplishments she had acquired were now the means of subsistence in a foreign land.

'She could never repay Miss Manvers,' she always said in answer to Isabella's scruples, 'for all the care and kindness she lavished on her darling child.'

And in truth the lovely little Adele herself was scarcely less of a relief to Isabella, when turning to her from the dull or rebellious pupils by whom she was surrounded, than the pleasant evenings she now spent after the wearisome toil of her morning hours; for Adele was so docile and *spirituelle*, that her instruction was rather a pleasure than a task.

And thus time rolled away in tranquillity, if not happiness, and the close of Isabella's second half year was fast approaching, when, to her consternation, notices came in of the intended removal of several of her pupils.—Some were going to boarding schools, some were not satisfied with her mode of teaching, one or two did not like their children to associate with foreigners; but whatever the cause Isabella found that her school would be reduced nearly one-half ere she opened it after the vacation.

Even with the number she had hitherto had, she could with difficulty meet even their limited expenses, and now what chance was there of maintaining the comfort which was essential to her mother, without running into debt, and no prospect of liquidating it! It was a dreary future which once more stared them in the face; but Isabella was now better fitted, both in moral character and intellect, to cope with difficulties than she had been a twelvemonth before. In Madame de Haro, too, she had a sympathising friend, to whom she could venture to make known her anxieties, though she could but grieve for the young girl's unmerited distress.

Isabella had re-opened her school with her sadly diminished pupils; she had reduced as far as possible their already small expenses, and still she foresaw that the quarterly bills would far exceed the incomings, while rumors had reached her that the parents of the remaining pupils thought 'there must be something wrong, for so many to leave Miss Manvers at once.'

She felt as if everything was against her, and her long-sustained courage seemed on the point of giving way under these accumulated misfortunes.

'Do not scold me,' said Madame de Haro, entering their little drawing room more than an hour later than usual; 'I have been employed on your behalf, and moreover I am the bearer of good news.' And her sweet face was lighted up with pleasure, as she threw off her bonnet, and seated herself on a large ottoman at Mrs Manvers' feet. 'Isabella is to put on her best looks to-morrow, my dear Mrs Manvers; I am going to carry her off, rescue or no rescue, for two hours at least.'

'And where are you going to conduct your prisoner, my dear child?' said Mrs Manvers, who began to look on the lovely young foreigner as a second daughter.

'Oh, I want her to make conquests, not to be made a captive herself,' returned Madame de Haro, playfully; 'I want her take by storm the hearts of no less personages than my old friends Sir Godfrey Staunton and his lady, who are just now in sad want of some clever person—in short of an Isabella Manvers—to superintend the education of their two little girls; who by the way, are my pet pupils in music, for which they have a genius worthy of my own dear country. It was only to-day that I heard of the intended marriage of their present governess, and of Lady Staunton's earnest wish to have some one in her place whose manners, education, and, if possible, birth, should enable her to trust her as a second self. But I sadly fear it will be very difficult to find such a person who would take a situation as governess,' she added after telling me all this. I will not repeat

all I then said, to spare Isabella's blushes; but leave her to imagine all the ill I told of her, from Lady Staunton's desire to see her at four o'clock to-morrow, an hour I fixed, as I knew she would not leave her little torments before that time.'

'But, dearest Beatrice,' said Isabella, her face glowing with pleasure, yet a slight doubt clouded its happiness, 'will not Lady Staunton require a resident governess, and will she think me sufficiently qualified and experienced?'

'Oh, you little infidel,' exclaimed Beatrice, 'if you dare to doubt the wisdom of arrangements made by my prudent self, I'll commit perjury and unsay all the pretty things I pledged my word were true about you to-day. Know then that Lady Staunton does not want a resident governess at present, as she has a faithful old nurse who consigns the children to their slumbers somewhere about the time that the birds go to roost, so that the office would be a sinecure after that time. And as to experience and qualifications, your twelvemonth of school keeping has been equal to at least twenty years of ordinary governess' life; while, for ability, are you not my pupil? so disparage yourself if you dare.' And half playfully, half seriously, Madame de Haro managed to dissipate Isabella's fears, and to give her confidence, for the important interview of the morrow.

It must be confessed that Isabella's school duties were more than usually irksome to her the next day; and her thoughts not a little engrossed with the longed-for, yet dreaded, visit to Lady Staunton. But though time does seem sometimes to have 'crutches instead of wings,' yet the hours do roll on with steady pace, whether bringing with them joy or sorrow; four o'clock arrived, and found Isabella and her friend at the portico of Sir Godfrey Staunton's mansion in Park Lane. Madame de Haro observed with satisfaction that she had never seen Isabella look more charming; she had put off her mourning, being unwilling to renew it when her wardrobe was so well supplied with the dresses of better days; and though she had selected a simple costume, it became her admirably.

A very few minutes elapsed before Lady Staunton entered the room into which they had been conducted; she was a very lovely woman, of some thirty years of age. After greeting Madame de Haro with affectionate kindness, she went up to Isabella, and frankly extending her hand, said—

'My dear Miss Manvers, Madame de Haro has told me enough about you to make me feel happy in the prospect of committing my children to your care, and I am sure we shall very quickly understand each other. But before we enter on any details, let me assure you that I fully comprehend your position as a lady both by birth and education; and I shall cordially rejoice in having some one near me, as my children's governess, who is thus gifted.'

Isabella's speaking face sufficiently expressed the gratitude she felt for this kindness, and she soon became at ease to do full justice to Madame de Haro's commendation of her graceful and dignified manners; and before the hour which elapsed ere Lady Staunton's carriage came to the door for her daily drive was over, all necessary arrangements were made, and Isabella engaged, at a salary of one hundred pounds a year, to superintend the education of two little girls of six and eight years old, who were presented to her before she left the house.

Need we paint the joy of Isabella and her mother that evening, or their affectionate gratitude to the charming Beatrice, who was to the full as delighted as themselves? No; those of our readers who have experienced such relief from pressing anxiety will imagine it: those who have not would hardly comprehend the extent of happiness—the unspeakable repose which it brings to the heart.

Six months had passed away since Isabella had been installed as governess in Lady Staunton's family—six happy months; and it would have been difficult to decide which of the parties especially interested were most delighted with each other. The children looked on her as only second to their mother; while Lady Staunton became so fond of her that she treated her rather as a sister, or a favorite young friend, than a dependent, and was continually making excuses for detaining her during the evenings. Some gentlemen were coming to dinner, and Isabella must stay to help to entertain them, or 'there was to be a large party, and Isabella's assistance was indispensable,' or 'they were going to some concert or opera, which would delight her,' and though Isabella refused as far as possible these pressing invitations, on her mother's account, it would have been ungrateful not to avail herself at times of kindnesses so frankly offered; and no ordinary admiration was often excited, in the circles in which she was thus thrown, by the lovely graceful girl, so petted by the popular lady Staunton—albeit it was known that she was 'only a governess.'

And despite this fact, it soon became evident, to Lady Staunton, at any rate, that a cousin of hers, who was almost domesticated at her house, had conceived no common regard for her young *protégée*, and she watched its progress with interest and pleasure. True, the gentleman was some forty years of age; but then he was of excellent family, had a good fortune, and was by no means unattractive either in person or manners. In short, he was a very good *parti* for a portionless girl, and above all for one who was classed with the despised race of governesses.

And lady Staunton was not a little delight-

ed when Mr De Grey applied to her one morning, while taking an early walk in Kensington Gardens, for her advice and opinion as to his chance of success with Miss Manvers.

'I am at least twice her age,' was his somewhat desponding observation, 'and she is so beautiful that I scarcely dare hope she can love me, a steady country gentleman, old enough to be her father.'

'And gifted, moreover, with those trifling attractions, a kind heart, high principles, a cultivated mind, and equally cultivated estate,' interrupted lady Staunton, playfully.—'No, no, good cousin mine, if I know Isabella aright, she would prefer these qualities to any more showy gifts and endowments, which may distinguish the young men who flatter about her, but who would shrink, in spite of her loveliness and ancient birth, from a union with 'Lady Staunton's governess.' But I will speak to her myself on the subject, and spare you the pain which you would feel should her answer be unfavorable.'

And lady Staunton hastened to return home telling her cousin to come to her next morning and learn his fate.

'I am going to play Lady of Misrule this afternoon,' she said, entering the school-room soon afterwards, 'and give Edith and Agnes a holiday, while I carry off their governess for a long drive with me to Fulham.'

'I had a long walk with my cousin De Grey this morning,' observed lady Staunton, when fairly out of the noise of London pavements; 'he paid my discretion the compliment of making me his confidante, and asking my advice on a subject of great interest to him just now, and no little anxiety also.'

'And I am sure he did a very wise thing,' returned Isabella affectionately, 'as you dear lady Staunton, possess the two great qualifications for a councillor, excellent judgment and true regard for himself: and indeed it would be difficult for any one not to honor and admire Mr De Grey.'

'But there is one in particular, who he especially wishes not only to honor and admire but to love him,' replied lady Staunton, watching her young friend's countenance as she spoke, and somewhat provoked not to see the slightest change of color at the words: 'do you think he will succeed?' she added.

'You are paying my divining powers a greater compliment than Mr De Grey did your discretion, dear lady,' replied Isabella; 'how can I judge, without even knowing the object of his affection?'

'But in this case the only divining powers you need is to ascertain the state of your own heart, my dear,' returned her companion, 'since my cousin's most true and excellent heart is given to no other person than Isabella Manvers.'

Lady Staunton had no reason to complain of the composure of Isabella's color now; for a deep flush overspread her face, and then left it much paler than was its wont.

'I have startled you, my love,' she said; 'but Mr De Grey's feelings have been long so obvious to me, that I thought you must have perceived them also; and I have been too abrupt in fulfilling the mission with which he has charged me. But since it is now done, forgive me, and tell me that I may give the encouragement to my cousin which I gave him hope he might expect. And believe me his is a heart which any woman might be proud to win; and a marriage with him would restore you to the position to which your birth and qualities so well entitle you.'

Isabella was silent for a moment; she was moved by Mr De Grey's offer, and lady Staunton's affectionate kindness; and yet she felt pained and perplexed at this unexpected declaration. She had always liked and esteemed De Grey, and felt pleased when he devoted himself to her in any of their parties; but considering him a confirmed bachelor, and always remembering her own position in his cousin's family, she had looked upon his attentions as the effect of kindness and consideration, rather than any particular admiration of herself. And now, it needed not any deliberation to feel sure that she had not the slightest possible inclination to return his affection; and an equal certainty that she had not forgotten the frank, noble, intellectual Edmund Thornton, even though more than three years had passed since he quitted Thurlstone. Yet how could she refuse an offer which would secure to her beloved mother comfort and luxury in her declining years, and give pain to the excellent De Grey, and kind lady Staunton?

'You do not speak, Isabella,' said her friend at length, 'and I see by your countenance that something disturbs you. Tell me exactly what you feel, my dear girl; I desire your happiness as much as that of my good cousin; and I cannot judge for either unless you confide in me.'

'I will confide in you, dear lady Staunton,' said Isabella, 'and you shall tell me how I ought to act. I have the very highest opinion of Mr De Grey, and believe his wife would be a most happy woman; but I do not know whether I could feel for him what he so well deserves; and surely mere esteem would be an unworthy return for his generous affection; and besides—'

'Besides,' said lady Staunton, seeing Isabella's color deepen, 'you were not always as insensible as you are just now; is it not so?'

'It is,' said Isabella, ingenuously; 'and though I do not suppose I shall ever see the person again who certainly excited some regard in my heart, yet I hardly think I ought to accept any one else while a shadow remains of that regard.'

'And unless some engagement exists, I do

not fear to say that you both may and ought,' returned her friend, 'I am quite certain that De Grey cannot fail to win your affection in time, and he can hardly expect that you can be in love all at once with a staid bachelor of forty; and as to this other fancy, depend on it, it will vanish under the influence of new duties and fresh interests. So do not let these scruples influence you, my love, but, unless you have any real repugnance to such an union, accept an offer which is so advantageous both for yourself and mother.'

'Give me a few few hours to think of it, and decide what I ought to do,' replied Isabella, after a pause; 'perhaps you are right dear lady; but it is all so new to me, that I must have a little time to reflect. To-morrow morning I will tell you what answer you must give to your generous cousin's offer.'

And satisfied as to the result, according to the old proverb, '*Chateau qui parle et femme qui écoute, vont toujours se rendre*,' lady Staunton dropped the subject, and turned the conversation to other topics.

Isabella did reflect much and sadly, during the hours of that sleepless night; and without seeking advice of her mother or Beatrice, strove to form her determination aright. She felt that it would be a cruel disappointment to both to hear of such an offer only to hear her refusal of it; and she wished to ask her own heart whether she could with honor and good faith pledge herself to Mr De Grey. The struggle was long and severe between duty and inclination; but ere morning dawned she had schooled herself into a fixed resolution to dismiss Edmund Thornton from her thoughts; and, if De Grey was content with such affection as she could frankly tell him was all she had to give, she would for her mother's sake accept his offer. And such was the answer which she gave to lady Staunton, on meeting her that morning, and by her communicated to Mr De Grey; who soon, however, sought her presence, to have it confirmed by her own lips.

'I never expected more was his reply to Lady Staunton; I did not imagine a lovely young girl like that could fall in love with my sober self. But if I can make her happy, and she is willing to commit herself to me, I am more than satisfied.'

And Isabella could not but be content when she witnessed the manly happiness of her lover, and heard his honest and warm expression of affection.

He only left her to visit her mother, and obtain her consent to the engagement—of which, indeed, there could be little doubt—and then was to return to dinner, as lady Lady Staunton insisted on Isabella remaining with her during the evening.

Six o'clock came, and no De Grey had arrived. The dinner hour was half past six, and still the cook's patience was tried to the utmost; and the wonder of the friends had changed into alarm. The meal passed over in open conjectures and secret uneasiness; when just as the cloth was removed, Sir Godfrey was summoned from the room, and after an absence of a quarter of an hour returned with a countenance of more than usual gravity.

'Any news of De Grey?' inquired his wife anxiously.

'Yes, a messenger has just come from his house. He is unable to be here to night; he has had an accident in riding. His horse fell with him in Baker street; and it will be some time, I fear, before he is able to go out again.'

Lady Staunton eagerly enquired for more particulars, and by degrees her husband gently unfolded to her and Isabella the melancholy truth. Poor De Grey had been thrown from his horse and taken up insensible, tho' still alive, but since then he had breathed his last; and his attached servant had come to Sir Godfrey in great affliction, to communicate the tidings and receive instructions. Grief and horror contended for the mastery in the two so deeply interested. Lady Staunton had looked upon her cousin as a dear elder brother, and mourned him as such; while Isabella, who had so lately listened to his vows of warm affection, and who appreciated the generosity of his attachment, was deeply affected by his sudden and untimely end. He was gone who would have been, she knew, a zealous guardian of her happiness; at the moment too when, as he had assured her, a new and bright existence was opening before him; and though her heart had been certainly untouched in the ordinary acceptance of the term, her tears flowed long and sadly for the noble hearted De Grey.

Six months had elapsed since this melancholy event, and the sensation it had produced in the gay world had long died away, and people now only spoke of it in connection with the probable character and conduct of De Grey's heir, a young officer distantly related to him, to whom the estates descended on condition of his taking the name and arms, and who was now expected home from foreign service.

'Isabella, dearest, you must remain with me to-day,' said lady Staunton, entering the school room one day about this period. 'I have just heard from Sir Godfrey, that poor De Grey's heir, now captain De Grey, is arrived and will dine with us this evening; and, weak as it may seem, I really dread meeting him. I must have you remain to support my courage.'

Isabella consented; and indeed she had recently become more in requisition than ever; Lady Staunton appearing really to consider her as the relative she had been on the point of becoming.