

"Ronny Kilmurray. He is Lady Ap-

"Ronny Kilmurray is your cousin!"

exclaimed Lady Cranstoun incredulous-

ly. "The man of whom every one is

talking—the most splendid fellow. I ac-

tually forgot he was Lady Appuldur-

combe's son, and you never reminded

Lady Cranstonn read the newspapers,

of course. All disappointed women do

when the page of life is unreadable or

"I did not know it myself till I got

about him, but he was very glad. He is

Lady Cranstoun stretched out her

"Dear," she said, "I'm so glad. The

arms and drew the girl's face down to

right man has come at last, and it is

"He has come-and gone," said Les-

ley in a whisper. "He has never said

one word of love to me, and-and there

"He does not love her now," said

Lady Cranstoun, putting Lesley away

that she might look in her face, and

reading it closely adding: "Perhaps

never did. Sometimes a man has no

choice in such matters-even a Ronny."

rested against the elder woman's cheek,

and for the first time since Ronny's soul

had surrendered itself to hers in Lady

Appuldurcombe's dining room she let

herself go, and the deep waters of an-

of sympathy warm about her that un-

locks most women's hearts, but when

she looked up at last, though her fore-

head was wet, the spirit that looked out

of her blue eyes was so indomitable that

Lady Cranstoun knew, though the girl

herself were broken in pieces like a pot-

ter's vessel, that spirit would be broken

"I can't talk about it-about her,"

the girl said steadily, "for she is my

friend. He is more than life to her, and

Lady Cranstoun turned her head

"Oh, the loyalty of it—the young,

lavish, beautiful loyalty," she thought,

"that could make one woman thus give

up to another the man she loved. Only

youth could be capable of such self sac-

rifice. Only such a girl as Lesley could

"And she accepted it?" said Lady

Cranstoun slowly. "Knowing that he

loved you, she was willing to make him

wretched, you wretched, to spoil both

your lives, so long as she fetched a piti-

ful rag of happiness to cover herself

withal? I despise the woman from my

soul. And, oh, Lesley, Lesley, my

dear"-and there was a ring of triumph

in her voice-"you have reckoned with-

out the man! You two women have

planned it all out very nicely, but you

have reckoned without-Ronny Kilmur-

ray. And from all a vave heard of Mr.

Ronny I should say he is a man never

to be turned aside from his purpose,

never to be balked of his heart's desire,

and if Malincourt does not see him very

"It would not matter," said Lesley,

who had risen and was now tidying her

dark ruffled locks. "You-you don't

know how I can make men hate me

getting ready her keenest armory against

the man she loved, Ronny was lying

shot through the back, and Dashwood,

his last deed of infamy committed,

CHAPTER XVIII.

have his "lassie" at home again, with

no fresh catalogue of misdemeanors

tacked on to her skirts or bombardment

of proposals for her following through

the post, rose on the second morning fol-

lowing her return with real enjoyment,

and as he shaved reflected that Bob's

chances had certainly been strengthened

by his (Malincourt's) strategic move-

He had received a kind—a very kind

-letter from Jane Appuldurcombe,

prompted, nay, almost dictated, by

Ronny before he set out for France, os-

tensibly to see after his horses, on the

day of Lesley's flight and speaking very

nicely of the girl and giving the impres-

sion that she had more or less retrieved

Whereupon, his heart light within

him, as looking the very picture of an

English country gentleman, he watched

Lesley pour out his coffee, he told him-

self that rest and fresh air and Bob

The oak furniture, the paneled walls.

again, and already the place was cram-

labeled when sent to town.

ment of packing Lesley off to town.

Lord Malincourt, only too rejoiced to

rested, a bullet through his heart.

And while she so straightened herself,

shortly I am very much mistaken."

when I really try."

I—shall—get—over it."

away, and her eyes were dim.

guish rolled over her head.

never.

make it."

Lesley did not reply. Her forehead

is another woman. She loved him first,

me," she added reproachfully.

not to their liking.

Ronny Kilmurray."

puldurcombe's son and my half cousin.

CHAPTER XVII.

Lady Cranstoun lay on a couch drawn close to a window commanding the avenue of beeches under whose colonnade she had been in the habit of looking for the approach of some one she loved. Ill, three weeks would be gone today -another week-and she smiled in anticipation of the bright presence, the intensely lovable personality of the girl whom she had come to love beyond any living thing on earth.

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But what was this advancing under ! the trees, something white, moving as to town. Dad never even mentioned only Lesley knew how to move, and him, and you know we never read the coming nearer every moment, resolving newspapers. I don't think auntie ever a blackboard that he was getting out of itself at last into Lesley's very own tall

Lady Cranstoun could have leaped to the most simple, modest"ret her, but with a cry of joy she sank back upon her pillows instead, glancing round her prison house at the litter of lovely useless things whereby womenkind bind themselves to the house beautiful because often it takes the place of health, of love, of that forward movement in life's glorious battle which is denied to most women who, to use another simile, while cultivating their own little corner plot, behold man walking in the middle path, with the whole wide garden in which to take his lordly pleasure. I think houses were originally made not to live in, but to rest in, for to neglect the whole panorama of nature to gaze upon beautiful pots and pans, the work of men's hands, is not what human muscles and flesh and blood were originally meant for.

It is those who spend the major part of their existence in the open air who get the most out of life, and the man who has his health and with his hurdy gurdy tramps the streets in foul weather or fine is a million times more to be envied than the rich man, who, surrounded by the boundless artificial beauty that wealth gives, lacks the health that living in the free air under heaven alone

Lesley came in swiftly, and kneeling down beside her friend put her arms gently about the frail figure and kissed her warmly. Somehow with Cynthia she always felt so old, with Lady Cranstoun

"Come back like a bad penny," she said. "But, oh, it's nice to find every one so glad to see that discredited coin! How have you been, dear? You never said a word about yourself when you wrote."

"And you wrote so often," said Lady Cranstoun, laughing. "Quite a diary, in fact. But the weekly papers supplemented your bald epistles very considerably."

Lesley laughed. "I'm like dad," she said, "a hopelessly bad correspondent. He did not even know I was coming home yester-

Lady Cranstoun looked with sudden scrutiny at the girl, who was just then sitting on her heels and with all the air of a naughty child determined not to own up to the jam with which its lips are palpably sticky.

"Lesley," she said, shaking her head, "you have been up to your tricks again, but that is of course. Has-has any one turned the tables on you—at last?"

Lesley got up and fetched a chair. When she had sat down in it, she took her friend's hand, noticing with a pang that it was thinner even than it had been three weeks ago, and kissed it ten-

"Go on," she said resignedly. "Ask what you please, and I'll answer ...at I'm able. Do you know it would be quite refreshing to be some other impeccable person for a time? I'm tired of being put in the corner-and for such a very, very little too.'

"Well, then, how did the frocks turn

"Unlike me, they were beyond reproach. I'm indebted to them, through you, for all the fun and the few scraps of-of affection that fell to my lot in

"Only scraps?" said Lady Cranstoun

ith, you know! A man gives a seg ment of his vanity, a corner of his love of annexation, a big slice of his fancy, and thinks it's his heart. I haven't done any real damage really. Even Yelverton isn't so hard hit but he'll recover."

"Roger Yelverton? If he has taken the fever, he'll have it badly. I know the man. But it is not Yelverton, Lesley, and yet there is some one"-

"Does my face tell such tales?" said poor Lesley, putting up her hand as if to hide it. "Then I hope Bob has read it aright, and that now he will have the grace to let me alone. Why will unsuccessful lovers come to chivy you when you're just off a long journey and haven't eaten anything since half past 6 o'clock in the morning? And that is what Bob did yesterday."

"Was your hurry to leave town so pressing as all that?" said Lady Cranstoun, raising the delicate brows that went so well with the delicate aquiline of her face.

"I did not even wish my aunt goodby," said Lesley, with a guilty air, "or Ronny." She brought the name out boldly. She would have to get used to mentioning her cousin in everyday conversation now.

"And who is Ronny? You never mentioned him in your diaries."

"I've asked about a dozen men for the 1st," said Lord Malincourt when he had put away a breakfast that would have disgraced a plowboy, "and if your cousin Kilmurray isn't already booked perhaps he'll come too. And Jane," he added, smiling, "do you think ten days or so of the country would kill her?"

"He is sure to have made his plans, dad," said Lesley, her little face white as privet flowers above her pink cotton gown, "and I do think it would kill Aunt Jane-honestly."

"What sort of a chap is he-head a ers of tweed.

"He is too great a man to put any side' on," flashed out Lesley, adding quickly: "Dad, we really ought to take some paper in besides Bell's Life. It would have saved me from some rather considerable blunders when I went up

"Well, you are not going again," said her father contentedly, "and I'd rather give you Smollett's and Fielding's books to read than one daily paper. And now, my dear, I'm just going down to the Home farm for a few hours." He rather tripped over the words, making for the door as he spoke, and Lesley knew as well as if he had announced the fact on quite forgave me for knowing nothing | the way to leave a clear field for Bob.

He turned to wave her a farewell, but she laughed and shook her head at his elaborately unconscious glance, then danced up to him, and seizing the lapels of his coat said: "You thought to punish me, dad, by sending me to town, didn't you, dad? Well-I-I"- She drew a deep breath and enjoyed it.

knowing that he had sent her to the glory, the anguish, the awakening from long slumber that love brings to a woman child. "I felt pretty bad about it, lassie, I can tell you, and I don't believe I had one real night's rest while you were away-woke up at all hours-for I couldn't bear to think that I had discredited you, but 'pon my word, lassie, you know, you cut me to the quick about Bob. The others had themselves to blame, but he-well, well"- And he kissed her fondly and bolted.

Lesley stood motionless for some time, then walked up to a full length picture of her mother that hung above | same chances, might have done even the fireplace. Long and intently she She neither moaned nor sighed, and no studied it, seeing many things that with even a greater pride and joy in him. tears came, even with that human touch | this new light in her mind she had never seen before and trying to realize how, with all her waywardness and charm and esprit, her lovely mother had been content to give up that world in which she shone so brilliantly to marry and settle down happily with a-Bobin the heart of the country. And she had died at 30, not of the country, as Jane Appuldurcombe suggested, but of a fever contracted in visiting a sick child of the village where she was adored.

And was it not a beautiful, self sufficing life, after all, this peaceful country one where rich and poor knew one another well, where conduct was everything and fashion less than nothing, where health came first and in its natural train love, and wealth last of all, since, without health to enjoy love and

love to enjoy wealth, is not all vanity? Cecilia had made her bed, lain down on it and been happy. Was it the last and best gift of the gods that she died young and passionately regretted, instead of living to weep for those others who at every step fell out of the marchmore, only long for the time when she would have to find, not leave, all that she had loved best on earth?

Questioning those happy eyes, Lesley asked if there had ever been a Ronny in Cecilia's life. And the blue eyes, so like Lesley's own, gave back the answer that if there had been he had been effectually smudged out by the personality of a Bob, for Lord Malincourt's name, too, was Robert.

"You can't help me, mother," said Lesley desolately as she turned away, and indeed no one can help us in our struggles with fate or ourselves. For the most part we must climb unaided out of every pit into which we have blindly fallen, and the gleam of angels' wings, smiting the walls of our prison house and stooping to us in succor, is so rare as to merit the designation of a miracle itself.

CHAPTER XIX.

Bob Heatherley was of that order of man which knows what it wants and is quite determined to get it; so, having very early after breakfast drawn Malincourt to the park, the gardens and every known covert, blank, he went farther afield and at last found Miss Lesley perched on the top of a high gate that had been a favorite vantage ground of hers from childhood upward, since it gave a splendid outlook whence to view the approach of her pastors and masters and later on those lovers whom it had been her aim in life to escape.

She colored with anger at her own folly when he approached her, for had she not, in her brief engagement to him, given up the keys of at least one of the childish secrets of her life? Yet she had not the least idea of running away from this lover who until three weeks ago had alone come within appreciable measuring distance of what

she was pleased to call her heart. the character with which she had been "Good morning, Lesley," he said, lifting his cap, that left his resolute handsome face entirely uncovered to her intent gaze as he drew near, but she did not speak-she was rating, valuing him at his just value; so much he would soon restore her lost bloom, and | felt as she looked down upon him, and that no matter what she did he would | all at once he knew that she had hit the not send his lassie away from him | blot-the reason he did not please her. But what was it? He did not know, but Lesley knew. He was every whit as took a new and almost jocund air now | good as Ronny, in some respects better the young, flitting presence was here | -for he was infinitely better looking, had a sweeter nature—but this is wommed with flowers, a duty that in her an's law, and it was Lesley's, that the absence was much neglected by Mr. experience she cannot get for herself she must get at secondhand, and it is the

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bit turned?" inquired her father as he lit a cigar, looking the squire all over in his comfortable coat and knickerbockers of tweed.

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Typewriter and Mimeograph That's right," he said heartily, not knowing that he had sent her to the interpretation in the had sent her to the interpretation

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man or action and experience who wins her, though the other man, had he the more brilliantly and thrilled her with

Bob knew her face too well to miss its meaning now, but he was stout hearted, as indeed he must have been to enjoy the honor of being really engaged to Lesley for about a week, so he leaned his arms on the top of the gate and waited for her to speak.

"It seems 100 years since I sat here last," said Lesley, looking out from the cool, long patch of shade in which she sat to the sunlit panorama beyond and around that her favorite "gap" afforded so magnificent a view of. And she had been enjoying it all so keenly when Bob came to spoil everything!

"And I've no doubt you've done 1,000 years' mischief in them," said Bob dryly. "Perhaps you've put them all on their parole, as you did me-not to approach you for a month?"

"Oh, for eternity!" said Lesley, growing flippant, as she always did when misunderstood. "If a courtesy were possible on the top of a gate, I'd drop you one-for your belief in my powers.

'Oh, I know you, Lesley,' cried ing ranks till at last she could weep no Bob, "how you can make a fool of any man you like! It isn't your beauty or your ways. It's that terrible sincerity about you that makes every man feel you couldn't love anybody who wasn't exactly right, and naturally everybody wants to be that man and tries to be!'

> Bob was saying just what Ronny had looked, and Lesley trembled as she gazed down on Bob's determined face, every whit as dominant in its masculinity as Ronny's own, and Lesley at heart was as intensely feminine as all women must be who greatly attract and influ-"Oh, you lovers," she said helpless-

> ly, "how alike you all are! I wonder if we women are just as much like one another and as uninteresting?" "Yes," said Bob with alacrity, "we

brutes of men are uncommonly alikeit's because there is only one Lesley that we all love you, and one of us being so very much like another, why not take me? You know you really thought seriously about it once-or why did you -did you''-he looked up at her, laughing all over his handsome face, "condescend to sit on my knee?"

"I—I didn't," said Lesley, blushing scarlet. "I-I only slithered! And it was not more than twice at the out-

"Anyway," said Bob imperturbably, "it showed you had some idea of-of" -he stopped teasing her when he saw how pale she had grown-"settling at Heather court."

"One doesn't always think the same thing two days running," said Lesley with an air that Bob knew only too

"And I will confess," he went on bravely, for all his heart sinking, "that when your father proposed the measure

of sending you to town for punishment, I shook in my shoes, and if you hadn't tied me down not to follow you I'd have | sat in the darkened room and heard the taken jolly good care no one came near | roll of life go past, time in which to enough to make you love him. Church- realize what a shamelessly selfish part ill told me the other day he saw you in the park, and you were having no end of a noble one Lesley, for now that through good time, but that there seemed to be no particular favorite! And anyway you've not come back engaged-and that's everything. You are ging to marry me," he added, with such absolute conviction that Leslev blanched a little-had Cecilia been selected by her-Bob-in the same masterful fashion and recognizing manhood he had towered head and the uselessness of fight yielded to her fate? She bowed her head in a way that | And why should he turn now? in any one but Lesley might well have betokened submission, but Bob did not dare to take her in his arms; he stooped instead to her shoestrings.



"I-I didn't." said Lesleu. "Dear little ankles," he said, taking both slender feet in one hand as he kissed them, "how do you manage to walk on them? I wonder they don't snap like sealing wax. And they are not strong enough to carry you away from me, Lesley, and if they did I should soon catch you' ---

But he did not feel quite so sure of this as, almost knocking Bob down in the swiftness of her descent, Lesley flew homeward, and he knew far better than dare to try to overtake her, while his prophecies rang foolishly in his own ears as he disconsolately turned his steps in the direction of Heather court.

CHAPTER XX.

The disappearance of the lovely Malincourt from the Row on Monday morning was the subject of much comment, and when she was neither to be seen walking nor driving that afternoon the tongue of scandal gave full cry, and things that had been merely whispered about her up to now were openly discussed by those whom she had scorned to propitiate.

She had come, she had gone, like a delicious breath of spring freshness athwart a dusty, broiling day, and her youth would no longer shame the other women or her brightness make them appear dull and stupid when beside her, and now that she had vanished-well, les absens ont toujours tort, and so had

Neither Ronny nor Yelverton, her two faithful henchmen, was anywhere about to hear, and long before evening it was known to all their set, save Lady Appuldurcombe and Cynthia, that Kilmurray and Dashwood had quarreled about Lesley, and that at some secret time and place abroad the insult to her would be wiped out in one or the other's blood, possibly both.

Cynthia did not know it for the simple reason that her mother was very ill with one of those heart attacks to which she was subject, and that by their very frequency failed to alarm those about

So the girl had ample time to think over her interview with Lesley as she deep humiliation she had passed to her heart's desire it tasted bitter between her lips, and something told her that it was all in vain.

Had she not loved Ronny because in him was no shadow of turning, because above a mob of insincere and shifting shoulders at once steadfast and true?

"Sweet as your smile shone on me ever," she whispered below her breath, "O God, grant that it may shine on me, not her!"

Yet as sne thought of his face at Sandown as he approached Lesley she knew that no such sunshine had ever come into it at sight of any other woman, and he was not one to be put off lightly, even if Lesley did run away from him. But perhaps she had not gone. What if. after all, she did love him, and they had met, and the man had swept aside like cobwebs the compact made between two foolish women? The thought became unendurable. Cynthia stole from the room, and calling her maid sent her across to Park lane with some trifling message to Miss Malincourt that required a verbal answer, then sat down and feverishly awaited the result.

She had not long to wait. "Miss Malincourt left for Somersetshire that morning." The maid did not add that Charville's extreme reticence had convinced her that something was amiss at Park lane or add that Nadege, in crossing the hall at a distance, had sent her a telepathic message that announced startling events. Cynthia drew a deep breath of relief as she shut the door and

went back to her mother's side. Se Lesley had kept her word, and if Ronny had tried to hinder her he had not succeeded. And now—what next and next Cynthia asked herself a little

The season would soon be over; they would all go different ways; it was not even certain that they would meet in Scotland, and in the autumn Ronny would rejoin his regiment, and though often in town on leave, even if she were here, the opportunities of seeing him would be limited unless he chose to make them for himself.

Hopelessly the girl looked out across the blue and scarlet flower boxes to the tree tops beyond, and the intense misery of being a woman, to be left or taken, at that moment pressed her hard.

Oh, to be the meanest, the most miserable thing alive, so long as it be a man, she thought, for he will always find some woman to love, to sacrifice herself for him. But a woman's lot is a cruel one. Without even the right of selection, she may be plucked or left to wither-it all depends on the eye of the passerby—but a man has love, love all the way along from birth to bier-so that no wonder that at last it tempts

'Cynthia,' said her mother's weak voice from the bed, "don't be frightened. dear, but I think I am more ill than usual this time. Will you send for the doctor-and the boys?"

"Oh, mother," cried Cynthia, roused in shame from her own selfish dreams, 'you have been more ill than this of ten!" But as she kissed the chilly face a foreboding that this was the last of those heart attacks that had been so much more prolonged of late swept over the girl's heart and left it more desolate than before.

"The boys," insisted the mother when a servant had driven off post haste for the doctor, and in a very few moments messages to them also were dispatched, and Lady de Salis, white as the pillows and surrounded by her wom en, was looking at the clock and praying that her boys might be in time yet.

For it is to her "boys" that the mothshe had played yesterday, and what a er's heart goes out passionately both in living and dying, and Cynthia felt this keenly as, with arms about her, she listened for the doctor's step, which came at last, more quickly than could have been expected.

"Can you do nothing?" she whisper ed when, his brief examination over, he stood looking gravely down on her moth-

He shook his head.

"I have expected this for years," he said in the same tone. "She will not suffer at all. Is there any one she particularly wishes to see? For time is