My Love Story.

CHAPTER I.

'So this is Barbaba,' exclaims Aunt Jan ette, placing both hands upon my shoulders and kissing me affectionately. Welcome, my dear, welcome to your new home-and how pretty you are, to be sure. I'm glad of that, for I should not care to adopt a plain-looking girl. I mean to dress you well and introduce you into society, and it will not be my fault, if you don't make the match of the season.'

Her words made me flush scarlet; she is kindness itself, but, fresh from a simple country home like mine, it seemed little else than degrading to hear marriage

spoken of so carelessly. Aunt Janette is my dead father's sister, and, after not noticing our existence for years past, has suddenly written to my mother, offering to adopt one of us.

I have been selected, and have only arrived in town to day.

She has already planned out a programme of amusement for me, and we start to-night

with the opera. It is Faust that we are going to see, and I am bewildered, enchanted, terrified by the novelty of my position.

Aunt Janette seats herself very leisurely when we arrive, taking a long, deliberate look all around.

Presently the door of our box gives a click, and a gentleman enters. 'Ah! Sir Harry,' she says, with a wel-

coming smile. 'You are a great patron of the opera-why-yes, of course you may stay it you like; did you come with a party 'I came in the hope of seeing you here,'

he replies, looking at me with a long, steady stare that disquiets me very much. Of course, I am quite unversed in the ways of society, but it hardly seems to be possible that a gentleman could have such

bold eyes, especially after he sees how uncomfortable he makes me. Presently, however, I lose myself entirely in the wild romance, live only for the

spectacle before me on the stage. I forget everything but the characters in

I shudder as the fiend tempts or taunts I glory in his agonies at the sight of the

I weep with Marguerite in her mental

anguish, and when the curtain drops for a brief space, and I am called back to real life, I am very surprised to find in our box more visitors—two other gentlemen besides Sir Harry, who, by-the-bye, still honors me with no small share of attention.

'Well!' exclaims Aunt Janette with a laugh, as I turn towards her at the tall of the curtain, after the first act. 'I do not think it possible for anyone to enter into a thing as you have done, Barbara; your face was a perfect study-your lips were parted—you hardly drew your breath Have you never seen Faust before, child?"

'Oh no,' I reply eagealy. 'I have never been inside a theatre, you know. Is it—can is be—all unreal—It is so very very beautiful?'

She laughs again with hearty enjoyment; then, catching sight of another friend, who is just entering the stalls, she waves her fan to him, smiles and nods; after a very slight hesitation, he turns back again and in another minute or so he, too, enters our

'We have just room for you,' she says, gaily. 'What a long time since I have seen you! Let me see where did you last meet ?

'In Venice at the carnival,' he replies,

'An! to be sure, so it was; and, before that, in Paris.

'Wouldn't you like a stroll rounc?' suggests Sir Harry; and she replies that she would, very much, but locks hesitatingly

the crush-room is so draughty. I flush scarlet as I hastily beg to be left

behind; for in truth, I have no cold at all, and instinct tells me that she is ashame ! of my country made dress.

Barbara, you have such a bad cold, and

'Let me remain and keep her in count enance, then,' puts in Sir Harry, coolly, 'whilst you take a turn, and then Colonel Treherne shall 'reliet guard,' and take my place during the next interval.'



'Please not,' I cry, turning to Aunt Janette with real distress in my face, for to be left with this man would be dreadfull, I think. 'I would rather be alone, I assure

'That would never do she answered lightly. 'We will certainly avail ourselves of your kind ofler, Sir Harry. The theatre is so close and stuffy to-night, and these

shall be back before you know we are gone.' arm, she sails away, a perfect picture of one brief evening. tashionable contentment.

By some strange oversight, she has forgotten to introduce me to her friend, which I know that he is Sir Harry something or ress me. At least, I think so, until he says in a reproachful tone—

having me for a companion? Oh! worthy namesske of the heartless Barbara Allen.' I flush crimson, but cannot think of any-

thing to say in reply; the tamiliarity of the tone borders on insolence, to my mind, you.' added to the look with which it is accompanied.

'Your glove is unfastened; pray allow me, he says, atter an almost imperceptible pause, and, ere I am aware of his intention ne seizes my hand, and, before securing the one button that has afforded him the pre-

I snatch my hand away, a trifle too quick. ly, I am afraid, but I feel burning with inmer, give me country, that is all.

'I will not trouble you, thanks,' I say, they will hardly perform their task.

sight of them. It may be a long time be- me in my morning walks.' fore we have the luck to be alone together again. There they are, coming back. That is the gay widow's laugh. Quick! tell me most annoyed. 'He took you for my -where can I see you?'

'Is the man mad?' I wonder, trembling all over with rage and mortified pride.

The curtain goes up again, and in following Marguerite's stage troubles I forget

They are to be recalled, however, sooner than I have anticipated.

At the next fall of the curtain. Aunt Janette ises quickly to her feet, and bending towards me says, hurriedly but kindly—

You must excuse my leaving you again, Barbara. I met an old triend of mine in the crush-room just now-Lady Curtonand before we had time to exchange greetings, we had to part. I promised to meet her outside during the next interval. Au

'Stay!' I whisper, hurriedly rising to my

feet. 'I will come with you-'Another time,' she replies, in the same low tone. 'I want you to look your very best before I bring you out. That dress' -with a faint grimace-'will not bear inspection—is too outre for my niece to be

I sink again into my seat, thoroughly miserable, and meet Sir Henry's eyes fixed quizzically upon my vexed face.

'Again I will share your solitude, cruel Barbara,' he murmurs in my ear.

And, casting a hurried look all around for some way of escape, I encounter another pair of eyes, fixed curiously upon my face, with a different expression, however -proud, yet not repellant; haughty, without being severe.

'Luck favors us,' whispers Sir Harry, as if he is imparting a piece of information which is sure to please. 'Rsise those glorious eyes to mine, and contess that the tete-a-tete is as welcome to you as it is to

The last comer, the fourth man, whose name I have not yet caught, slowly prepares to follow the others. If I am to avoid a second hateful tete-a-

tete with my tormentor, I must not delay. There is no time to consider the modesty or the wisdom of the action, but I rise to my feet, lay my hand upon the stranger's

arm, and falter, hurriedly-

'Don't go-please stay-that is---' In an instant he turns back sgain, picks up my fan, puts it into my hand, drops into the chair next the one I have seated myself in, and commences to talk in a low voice, with a faint drawl in its intonation that is rather pleas a to listen to; at least, I think so afterwards, but when I first hear it, I am too sgitated to notice anything or even tollow what he says.

After the first minute or two, I somewhat regain my self-possession, and then gather that he is talking of Nice, of Rome of Paris, as if we had met there at some

I also see that Sir Harry is thoroughly disconcerted by this new turn of events and gazes at us in angry doubt.

Apparently he is not quite sure whether we are old friends or not, and he is visibly impressed ty the repect with which my unknown friend treates me.

I tremble when I think of my audacity, my boldness, in addressing a perfect stranger, and apparently flinging myself at his head; and yet I congratulate myself also-whoevever he is, and whatever fault I may afterwards discover him to possess he is a gentleman, and has earned my undyirg gratitude for coming to my assistance at the most embarrassing moment it has ever been my lot to endure.

CHAPTER II.

'Well, Barbara, and how did you enjoy

your first taste of London life ? asks Aunt | possible acknowledgment of the introduc-Janette, as, after having breakfasted alone -as I am given to understand will always be the case—she comes down stairs, perfectly dressed, looking wonderfully pretty and youthful, somewhere about noon.

'Ob, Aunt Janette! I thought Faust beyond all praise! It will be something to think of and dream over for months to come; and yet it fills me with a vague wild misery that I cannot entirely shake mortified. off, even after a good night's rest.'

'I can tell you, you may plume yourself upon the corquest you made of Sir Henry Grasmore. I have never seen him pay so much attention to an unmarried towards one another with keen, scrutiniswoman before-

'Oh! Aunt Janette I break in quickly. whilst my cheeks express my discomfiture. chairs so very uncumfortable. There, we as well as my voice. Please don't. He is a horrible man-a low, rude, impertinent And, taking Colonel Treherne's proffered | fellow. Oh! how he made me hate him in

. Why, Barbara,' she exclaims, in great surprise, 'what can you mean! Sir Harry is a great catch in increases my embarrassment, for, although the matrimonial market-a bachelor, I know that he is Sir Harry something or a baronet, and very wealthy; he somebody, he does not know how to add- is a great favorite with ladies, I assure you, and there will be many sore heart when he does throw the handkerchief. 'How could you be so cruel as to say Low!-impertinent! My dear,' in a slightthat you preferred being left by yourself to ly annoyed tone, 'you must never apply those words to any of my friends. My circle is most select; I am in the best set, and Sir Harry goes everywhere-knows everyone. Come; tell me now he offended

> 'In the first place, we were not introduced,' I reply, hesitatingly, for I find it very awkward to put my complaint into actual words; 'he did not know my sur-name, and called me barbara.'

'Really!' she says, with a slight laugh; well, that was rather shocking I admit; text for touching me, contrives to unfasten | but the fault was mine. At first I purposehalf a dozen more, evidently meaning to ly did not introduce you, and afterwards I take his own time in fastening them again. | ly did not introduce you, and afterwards I forgot—mea culpa. Will you absolve both me and Sir Harry from blame?'

'You, certainly,' I reply, holding up my dignation. It he is a sample of London | face to be kissed, I find my new aunt very lovable; but Sir Harry, never. Oh Aunt restore me to my normal condition. Janette, he was so impertinent when you icily; 'I am accustomed to wait upon my- left me in his care for a few minutes; callself, but my fingers tremble so much that | ing me by my Christian name was his smallest offence. He paid me the most 'Cruel girl,' he whispers in my ear, 'why | tulsome compliments, asked for a glance would you not give me one glance of those from my glorious eyes, squeezed my hand, have any, and I begin to wonder if we are lovely eyes to night? I was languishing for and begged to know where he could join to sit here all night.

'I see it all,' cries Aunt Janette, unable to repress a smile, although she also lookwhere you take your walk in the morning mair, or a new companion—the wretch! But men are all alike, or with very tew exceptions. My not introducing you, that high dress-for it isn't cut at all, you know, and has sleeves-at the Opera. people-well, you saw for yourself, didn't you, Birbara, all the material is put in the trains; there isn't much required for the bodice.

'Yes; he little thought that you were my niece—that you would tell me everything. Oh! we will pay him out for his impertinence, but he will be the most mortified when he finds out his mistake. Take my advice, don't appear to recognise him next time you meet. I will introduce you formally. There! can that be half-past twelve that is striking? How very late we are. We must rush off at once, or we shall find Madame Cerise unable to see us.'

CHAPTER III.

'Do not run away, Barbara; I want to introduce you to everyone-Colonel Treherne, Bertie Dalcourt, Lady Haselmere,

the Dowager Duchess of Surrey.' One after another stretches torth a kindly hand and makes some remark as we become acquainted, after the manner laid down by Mrs. Grundy, then passes on

into the already crowded room. The duchess is a handsome, elderly lady, with quantities of snow-white hair, dressed in a very becoming tashion, in a coil at the back of her head, and a dainty little lace cap, hardly larger than a butterffy, at the top.

Her gown is of silver brocade, and her

diamonds are supero. 'Sir Harry Grasmore my neice, Miss Courtseine-Miss Courtseine, Sir Harry

Grasmore. A strange expression crosses his face as the words reaca his ears, and he puts out his hand almost with the air of an old ac-

He has only just arrived as I was speaking to the Duchess, and the full nature of his mistake the other evening seems to dawn upon him, as with the slightest

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WILD

tien, I turn to greet the new comer. 'Sir Anthony Nigel,' announces the footman, and with an indefinable feeling of mingled pleasure and embarrasment, I turn with relief from the other to him.

This one gives no sign that we have ever m't before, but passes on into the room with a curtly yet distant bow. I feel just a triffle nonplussed, perhaps our feet.

Is it that he does not recognize me, or thinks that I shall prefer to forget our first meeting altogether?

I see Sir Harry watch our deportment ing eyes. He smiles slightly at what he sees, and

nods thoughtfully, as if he has satisfied himself at last upon some dubious point. 'There !' exclaims Aunt Janette, with a sigh of relief, as the clock strikes eleven, to get up later on. we needn'; stand here any longer, Barbara; all the important guests have arrived; if any others come, they must find me. Let

us go and enjoy ourselves.' She moves forward towards the end of the room, where a few people are grouped together—the duchess, Colonel Treherne, Lady Curton, and several other choice friends.

I essay to follow ber, but what with the crush and one thing and another, soon found myself left behind, and, to my great annoyance, discover that I am face to face with my bete noire, Sir Harry, who is not slow to avail himself of the opportunity of further improving his acquaintance with

'Let me take you out of the crush for a while,' he observes, presently, drawing my hand through his arm, and trying to make headway towards an opening. 'You must have an ice or some fruit, and this room is getting insufferable.'

It is quite true, and reluctant as I am to have him for my escort, I feel that I really

am getting faint. We fight our way to the dining-room and the cooler atmosphere, coupled with some light refreshment, certainly tends to

Sir Harry shows no anxiety to return to the drawing-room, even after the pretext ot retreshment is over.

He drinke several glasses of champagne, and is inclined to ridicule my refusal to

If there were anything objectional in his manner or speech now, of course I could simply get up and leave him; but I have not that excuse, for, although he contrives to convey in every word and tone that he admires me and desires my society, yet he is careful to avoid giving actual offence.

My relief comes in an unexspected manner. I have noticed Sir Anthony Nigel pass in and out of the supper-room upon several

ocassions, sometimes bringing in a lady for an ice, sometimes alone. I do not see him glance in my direction.

therefore I am greatly surprised when he comes up to me after awhile, and remarks in a languid, indifferent tone-'I think I heard Mrs. Dashwood inquire tor Miss Courtseine a short time back; in

tact I promised to find you, and take you to her it---'I am taking care of Miss Courtseine,' puts in Sir Harry, with a scowl at the in-

terruption, and will conduct her to her aurt in the course of a few minutes.' I meet Sir Anthony's eyes for a mo-

ment, and they almost seem to question I answer by springing to my feet, and

placing my hand upon his arm. 'Oh, do take me to Aunt Janette l' I cry eagerly, 'I too want to see her.' Sir Harry, you need not hurry, Sir Anthony will take me to her,' and so glad I am to escape from my late companion, that I positively tug my present escort's arm in

my anxiety to get away. 'I am so glad she rembered me at last,' I say, with a sigh of relief, as we pass out of earshot, 'and I am much obliged to you for fetching me; I was so tired of sitting there. I thought she had torgotten me

altogether.' 'Why do you allow yourself to be victimised? Why didn't you ask Sir Harry Grasmore to take you back to the draw-

ing room ?' 'Oh, I did scores of times !' I reply, rucfully, 'or I tried to; but he wouldn't or he couldn't understand. He talked so fast about everything, he complained of the heat of the room, and reminded me how faint it had made me earlier in the evening.

'Then besides, I know no one here. -very shametacedly-that is, I have never been at a party like this before. feel so-so shy and embarrased in the presence of so many strangers. I may get to society in time, but'-rather vehemently -'I shall never like it.'

My Aunt is surrounded by a circle of friends when we return to her presence but she graciously beckons us to seat ourselves in her vicinity, which we-or rather I am glad enough to do.

Ere long I find myself the centre figure of the group, composed mostly of men of all ages, sizes, and appearances.

The vie with one another to pay me honor, they listen with rapt attention to every word I utter, they applaud each trival re-mark, they pay metabsurd compliments, they even seem jealous if I speak more to one than another, they are so tenacious in retaining as near a position as possible to me that even Sir Henry Grasmore cannot force away to my side when he returns to the drawing room; and so he remains in sulky silence a few yards away, throwing glances of deep reproach in my direction. It is quite three o'clock in the morning before our guests leave us, and Aunt Jan-

etta and I find ourselves alone together

She is radiant with satisfaction and kisses me delightedly. 'My dear Barbara,' she cries, 'you will be the sensation of the season. The whole room could speak of nothing but your extraordinary beauty. Sir Harry Grasmore has lost his head completely. He simply

begged-craved-to be allowed to takelus to Covent Garden to morrow. Lord Felton offered to drive us down to Ascot. The duchess said you were 'sweet perfection'and offered to act as your chaperon upon such occasions as I might not be able to take you out myself. My receptions have been always fairly popular, but atter to night, we shall have all London at

·But I'm afraid that I forgot all about you for a time, Barbara; I had so much to do, you see, that your very existance slipe ped my memory from the time I left you at eleven o'clock until I saw you on Sir Anthony's arm, at hair past twelve.'

'Then you did not send tor me ?' I ask, with wide open eyes. 'I thought-'I am sorry to confess that I did not.' she replies, with a laugh. 'Now we had better say 'Good-night,' or you will be too tired

CHAPTER IV.

May I have the pleasure of a dance with

The speaker is Sir Anthony Nigel, the occasion my first ball.

I am wearing my new white satin dress, trimmed with real flowers, and I am teeling as wildly excited as it is possible for any

girl to do. I have seen a good deal of Sir Anthony lately, and I think he is the handsomest and most charming person that I have ever met; but, somehow, I cannot speak of him as treely to Aunt Janette as I do of other

A sudden shyness creeps over me, an embarrassment for which I am utterly unable to account, for our conversation is always upon the most ordinary of topicsoperas, plays, races, balls, books-he never, at any time, appears to be interested in me personally, and never makes the least effort to monopolise my attention as others

Yet my heart dances with secret joy when he meets us at Lady Curton's pall. and asks me for a dance, and a bitter feeling of disappointment seizes me when I discover that he has taken only one.

Mr. Curton, Colonel Treherne, Bertie Dalcourt, and Sir Harry Grasmore all succeed each other quickly, and Sir Harry, in his usual intolerant manner, says he means

to have half-a-dozen. 'I am not giving more than one to anyone,' I reply, trigidly, telling myself that, if I cannot have two with the only partner I want them with, certainly no one else

shall have them. Bertie Dalcourt gives me a terrible shock

in the interval after his dance. He proposes to me, implores me to marry him, and will hardly accept my refusal. I am released from my embarrassing position by the arrival of Sir Anthony to claim his dance, though I wonder a little how much of our conversation he has overheard.

He is very silent, but at last he awakes his reverie, and, strangely enough, touches upon the subject of my own reflections. 'Do you know,' he observes, 'that you are the only girl I have ever known who can suit berself to my mood. Some can

talk well and brilliantly, others can be silent, but so few-so very few-people can be both at the right time. 'It is not difficult to be silent,' I reply, pleased at his praise; 'but it is difficult to talk 'brilliantly.' That, I am afraid, does

not apply to me.' 'You never bore me,' he says, quietly. 'Most girls-country ones especially-are so insipid. You seem to unite the fresh innocence of the woods with the tact of one used to a society life. Is it really true what I unintentionally overheard you say to-night, that this is your first ball?"

'Yes,' I reply; 'quite true.' So, he was benind me longer than I thought; and I crimson all over at the knowledge that be overheard all that passed between Bertie Dalcourt and myself.

'I am afraid that I behaved disgracefully in not making my presence known sooner, he continues; 'although in justice to myself, I must say that I did try to do so several times; only, you were both too engressed to notice me; then-well'-in an abrupt tone-your words, your sentiments about love and marriage riveted me to the spot-1 could not tear myself away. Instead of the speech of a debutante receiving her first offer from a man of wealth and position, it seemed to be an angel replying in her guise. Always keep to your resolution, do not fall away and deteriorate as so many other well-meaners do. Never be persuaded into a marriage de convenance; act, decide for yourself. Dalcourt was quite right; you are very pretty-too pretty, I am atraid, and vet you seem so indifferent, so unconscious of it. That is your greatest charm, your

(CONTINUED ON FIFTEENTH PAGE)

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