

almost rose to her feet, and, as she did so, she cast a glance at Lillian, hoping that she had not heard; but, by the expression on her face, she saw that not only had she heard, but that it was no news to her.

This, then, was the explanation of all that had been so mysterious.

Ralph Beauvois was married.

Lillian knew it, and they loved each other.

"Poor Ralph!" Kitty thought. "No wonder he hid himself abroad, if this painted and powdered creature was what he had to introduce to his family as Lady Beauvois."

The two ladies refused all offers of escort, and went home alone.

Once in the brougham, they instinctively put out their hands, and Kitty held Lillian's in a sympathetic grasp, not saying a word, though she felt the tears dropping from the other's eyes.

## CHAPTER VII.

To Ralph, who also was now in town, the daily meetings with Lillian were almost more than he could bear.

At last, he could endure it no longer; and one day, after a long evening spent with Lillian, he went off to Paris without seeing her again.

From there he wrote, telling her all, and his passionate, loving letter almost reconciled her to his absence.

Some weeks later she received another anonymous letter—

"This evening you can prove to your own satisfaction that Lord Beauvois is only amusing himself with you. You think he is abroad, but he will be at the Academy soiree tonight with his wife!"

Lady Carruthers was announced as Lillian finished reading this epistle, and hastily crumpling it up she thrust it into her pocket.

Kitty looked pale and anxious.

"Lillian, dear," she said; "Ralph is in London."

"Ah, then it is true!" Lillian said. "When did he come back?"

"Yesterday."

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes, and he looks terribly ill."

"Kitty, Kitty, I wish I had never seen him. I wish I was dead!"

"He said almost the same thing; but, Lillian, will you see him?"

"I cannot see him today."

"Why not? He is wretched, and knows I have come to you."

"I have my reasons. Tell him to come tomorrow."

Lady Carruthers could not understand her friend.

She knew that Lillian was behaving cruelly.

And Lillian knew it too, but she must set her mind at rest about this evening; she would not see Ralph till she had been to the Academy.

Piccadilly was one long line of carriages, and inside Burlington House a very heterogeneous crowd was assembled.

Amongst the beautiful women who attracted a great deal of attention was Miss Nelly Temple, leaning on Sir Philip Fairfax's arm.

In the course of the evening, she had sent a telegram to Lord Beauvois—

"L. V. is going to Burlington House to meet Lady B. Beware!"

The telegram sent Ralph flying round to Lillian's house.

She had already left it for the Academy soiree.

He followed her hurriedly.

Lillian had not taken her eyes off the popular actress, who had purposely stationed herself near her hated rival, and presently she heard Beauvois's voice saying—

"Miss Vaughan, why are you here alone? Will you not take my arm and let me see you to your carriage?"

She was about to assent, when Miss Temple left the crowd of admirers gathered round her, and came to them.

"Going already?" she said. "Why?"

Lord Beauvois drew himself up.

"How dare you speak to this lady?" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed out his wife. "I think I heard you object to this lady being here alone. I, Lady Beauvois, am also here alone; do you not object to that?"

The crowd was already stopping near them, attracted by Miss Temple's voice.

"Sir Philip," she cried out, loudly; "since my husband neglects me to protect Miss Vaughan, I am forced to ask for your protection; will you give it me?"

Lord Beauvois paled and flushed under the insult, as Sir Philip Fairfax bowed to the actress, and offered her his arm.

"I suppose, Sir Philip Fairfax, that you hold yourself responsible for that lady's words?" he demanded.

"Certainly," said the other; but his attitude was scarcely that of a willing champion.

Ralph took Lillian to her carriage, and placed her in it without speaking, and she was so wretched she hardly dared raise her eyes to his; but as he closed the door of her brougham and lifted his hat in farewell, she could not repress a cry of pain.

"Ralph, will you not see me home?"

"I think not tonight; remember, I am to come to you tomorrow."

But the morrow only brought Lillian a few lines, to tell her he was starting for France, and would see her on his return.

She did not cry; her brain seemed on fire, and to burn away her tears.

She knew what the journey to Paris meant, and could not prevent it.

It was too late for that, but she would, she must, prevent the duel.

The thought of his possible death made her cry aloud in her agony of mind.

"Ah, no, no!" she wailed. "It cannot be! I will kill Sir Philip first with my own hands. Oh, Ralph, my love, my life, come back to me, come back!"

Lillian paced up and down her room, her hands clenched, her face set with misery, and Kitty Carruthers, who, of course, had heard all about it, started in amazement at the change twenty-four hours had wrought, when she called upon her friend.

She had spent the day in vain wanderings as to what could be done, and had finally come to Lillian to see if she had thought of some plan—some means of saving the men they loved.

Perhaps Kitty was the more to be pitied.

She loved Ralph almost as a brother, and she loved Philip as a true woman does, with all the strength of her heart, in spite of his utter indifference to her, his devotion to Lillian, and his subjection to Nelly Temple.

"Come, Lillian," she said, after the first silent greetings were over. "It is no good bemoaning our fate, we must be up and doing—we must try and undo this terrible business."

Lillian made a gesture of supplication, for Lady Carruthers' voice was stern in its firmness.

"Ah, Kitty, you will hate me also! If I had only done as you wished me to, had only seen Ralph yesterday."

Kitty kissed Lillian affectionately as she said—

"There, there, of course, we are wretched and miserable; but we must put our heads together, and see what can be done—we must go to Paris at once, we may yet be in time to see them before they fight."

At this Lillian brightened a little.

She was firmly persuaded that Ralph was going to be killed, but if she could only see him once more, hear him say he forgave her, she too could die, and happily—life without him would be no boon to her.

The two ladies were not long in preparing for their journey.

They had a vague idea that their presence might, of itself, prevent the duel, or that some inspiration, some God-sent prompting, would be dictated by which the desired result would be attained.

At Calais they were lucky in securing a coupe to themselves, and thanked God that it was so.

It would have been hard to bear the disturbing element of fellow passengers.

Lillian sat with her hands clasped on her lap, gazing out into the night; and Kitty leant back in her corner, thinking deeply.

Suddenly there was a frightful jerk, a terrible crash, and both ladies were thrown violently forward, and for a few moments stunned by the violence of the shock, but, soon recovering, moved, and raised themselves.

They found their carriage tilted to one side, and the front smashed in, but they themselves unhurt.

The train was at a standstill.

"Kitty," whispered Lillian; "there has been an accident."

"Yes; and I am afraid it is serious. Shall we see if we can get out?"

No one came to their assistance, though now they saw dark figures rushing about outside, and it was only by dint of great exertion that they managed to wrench open the door, and step out.

The guards were trying to detach some of the lamps to serve as lanterns; passengers were hurrying to and fro; the wounded were moaning and crying, and the whole scene one of unutterable confusion.

Presently a gentleman came along with a lamp in his hand, and stopped to inquire if he could be of any assistance.

Lillian thanked him, but said—

No, they were not hurt, and could they be of any use?

There are several women hurt down there. One poor creature, they say, is dead, but her husband is with her. Perhaps you might be of service, if you can stand the sight."

And he went on, to find out others in need of help.

Lady Carruthers and Lillian made their way as best they could, to the rear, where the train, having been more crowded, the casualties were more numerous.

During the last few minutes the moon had slowly passed out from behind the clouds, and now it shone out clearly, lighting up the weird scene with singular distinctness.

Its rays fell on the outstretched form of a woman, for whom a number of shawls and coats had been laid on the ground.

As yet, Lillian and Kitty were not quite near enough to distinguish her deathly-white features.

A man was kneeling on the ground beside her, whose figure seemed strangely familiar to both Miss Vaughan and Lady Carruthers.

As they went nearer, he moved, revealing to their astonished gaze the features of Sir Philip Fairfax.

Lillian Vaughan caught her breath deeply as Lady Carruthers grasped her arm, whispering, nervously—

"Look, Lillian! It is Philip Fairfax and Miss Temple."

Kitty said no more, but left Lillian standing alone, and went straight up to the prostrate figure.

Laying her hand gently on Sir Philip's shoulder, she said, kindly—

"Philip, you are in trouble. Can we help you?"

Sir Philip started violently, but did not rise; he held Nelly Temple's hand in his.

"Lady Carruthers! Miss Vaughan! You here—how is this?"

"We must have been traveling in the same train. Can we do nothing?"

Philip shook his head.

"No; this doctor says that she—Miss Temple—is dying." And, in a choking voice, he added: "She insisted on accompanying me, poor thing!"

Lady Carruthers bent over the poor creature, and, even as she did so, Nelly Temple opened her eyes, shuddered violently, and tried to turn away, as she gasped forth—

"Philip—there is that woman Ralph loves—she has come to gloat over me. Without her I should have been happy. Take her away—take her away—she will kill me, and I won't die—I can't die—ah!"

With one last effort she raised herself, to seize Sir Philip by the arm, but, before he could catch her, she fell back—dead!

It was a terrible scene, and those around shivered as they realized that the end had come.

The doctor spoke mechanically—

"She had broken her back—she could not live. Dieu merci! she did not suffer much."

And, with gentle hands, he raised Lady Carruthers to her feet, and laid an authoritative hand on Sir Philip's shoulder.

"Come, sir," he said; "you must be content that she did not suffer. See, these ladies require your attention, and there is another train ready to take us on."

At Lillian's request, Lady Carruthers gently, but firmly, insisted on Sir Philip sharing their carriage.

It was not the moment for squeamishness, and they were not going to leave him to his own sorrowful reflections during the hours that still remained before they could reach Paris.

Lord Beauvois had gone to a quiet little hotel in the Rue de Rivoli, and had written to Sir Philip, before leaving London, to say where he was to be found.

The morning after his arrival, he was standing at the window of his private sitting-room, his breakfast waiting on the table.

It was a lovely day, and through the open window came bright sunshine and the sound of happy voices.

But there was a sense of misery dominating all.

He might never see Lillian again; he had parted from her coldly, after weeks of absence, and he loved her more passionately than ever.

Even though he knew that she, in a way, might cost him his life, he had no harsh thoughts of her.

He only longed to hold her once more in his arms, to feel her kisses on his lips, to hear her voice again.

What a wasted, useless life his had been! In his early youth he had been ambitious, and his father for him.

How all his dreams had been scattered to the winds by the touch of a woman's hand!

How he had thrown away his virility at the voice of passion, speaking through the temptress' lips, only to be her plaything of the moment, held up to his own scorn forever after!

And then he saw Lillian as he first saw her, smiling her thanks for his little act of courtesy, and again he felt his heart-strings tighten as he remembered her danger at the weir, and her pale, sweet face as he rowed her back to The Refuge.

Ah! why had he not taken warning then? He had felt himself in danger the very moment her eyes had met his in pity.

If only he had listened to the promptings of his better nature! Even when at Beauvois he had realized how, day by day, he was letting love take possession of him.

To remain, had been cruel to himself; but, oh! how much more so to her, who, in terror of losing him, had confessed her love for his unworthy self.

He had never forgotten the look on her face when he told her he was married.

He knew that she loved him with all her heart and soul, and the love which he himself bore her had raised him up once more in his own eyes from the depths of misery and self-reproach, into which his unfortunate marriage and its sequel had cast him.

And now, all was ended!

He did not ask himself who had brought about this coming duel.

Repinings were useless.

He had not many hours at his disposal, and he had still to write to Lillian.

That done, he would wait calmly for Sir Philip and the hand of Fate.

Towards noon, the friends he had sent for arrived.

He explained the case briefly.

"Is no compromise possible?" asked one of them.

"I know Philip Fairfax," answered Ralph, with a faint smile. "Even if he wished to, he could not apologize, for, after all, he was hardly in the wrong."

"He can't fight you. You saved his life not so very long ago."

"I have forgotten the past."

"But he has no right to."

But no words the Frenchmen said, no arguments they used, could make Lord Beauvois hesitate for one moment in believing the duel a foregone conclusion.

There was some fatality about the whole series of events; his friendship with Sir Philip; their unconscious rivalry about Lillian; Sir Philip's entanglement with Miss Temple, or rather Lady Beauvois, had only seemed to be brought about that the latter might use her lover as a tool against her husband, to satisfy her own defeated ambition.

His friends left Ralph, promising to hold themselves in readiness for any call upon their time; and once more he was alone.

Philip Fairfax must be in Paris by now.

Soon, oh! how terribly soon all would be over.

Was he going to Death, to Eternity, or was his friend?

Either way his life was ended.

It would be better for him to die, for if he lived could he ever ask Lillian to be his, even were he free to marry her, when his whole life would be shadowed by that awful stain of blood?

The street was a busy one, and from below came all the midday sounds; the cries of boys, the neighing of horses, whistlings, vociferations, mingled in the confusion of the living town; but above them all came one sound to Ralph's ears—a sound that made him start and turn pale—the sound of a voice he had thought thought never to hear again.

Lillian Vaughan was speaking, and Ralph Beauvois's heart beat wildly as he heard her words.

"This must be the room," the waiter said; "number eight."

And almost before he had time to reach the door, Lillian stood before him.

Lady Carruthers was with her, but with delicate tact she did not cross the threshold, and as she saw Ralph catch Lillian to his heart with a stifled cry, she closed the door between them, and went gently down to where Sir Philip Fairfax was waiting, knowing that when the time came the two men's hands would meet again in friendship, and that over the grave of the dead woman much would be forgiven, buried, and at last forgotten.

## ECONOMY IN ART.

From the Chicago Record.

"Your portrait was a failure."

"Yes; but I told the artist to paint an old-fashioned frock on it, so I could hang it up as an ancestor."

The Deacon—Surely, you would not regard as profane a man who uses the expression, "Gee whiz?"

The Parson—No—if that is what he means.

## THAT CATACOMB STORY.

Two of the three journalists were sharpening their pencils busily, while the tall one, she of the marvelous memory, looked on in pitying toleration as she adjusted a hairpin. She scorned notebooks, scorned pencils, satisfied in the thought that upon the tablet of her brain her impressions would be recorded unerringly.

The moist April breeze fluttered the curtains of our pretty salon in the Rue de Chaillot, No. 71, and an air of business excitement was upon us four damsels, who in trim tailor gowns and severe sailor hats awaited the coming of the Harvard man who had consented to be our pilot through the catacombs.

The serene peace of our little Parisian ménage had been rudely disturbed the day previous by the arrival of an American newspaper which announced a prize for the best article written on "The Catacombs of Paris."

Upon inspecting the figure offered by the editor my three journalistic friends, the tall one, the colleen and the little chaperon, all decided to compete. The tall one laid aside her fashion article and bundled some translation into a drawer. The little chaperon put by her weekly letter on the "Facts, Fads and Follies of French Life," and placed upon her desk a dozen sheets of virgin paper, selecting at the same time a fresh, favorite pen for the fray, while the colleen shelved two "penny dreadfuls," which she was writing at the same time and pigeonholed a great work also to join in the battle for red gold. Even the Harvard man, who lived at the pension over the way, deserted his realistic novel, which he fancied would give him the title of "The American Maupassant," and turned with covetous eyes toward that catacomb story.

I alone went merely as an onlooker—yes, a lotus eater, for I was going to write—nothing.

It was the chaperon, a charming mixture of thrift and spendthrift, who said to me: "My, but you're silly to spend five francs if you don't make copy of it and at least try to get your money back."

Still I went. Every heart knoweth its own bitterness, and, although I am reluctant to intrude my private griefs on the public, it was the moral lesson following this visit that has made me regard the spending of that five francs as the greatest extravagance of my life.

The Harvard man arrived serene and smiling. Having counted us, he made a swift, clever mathematical deduction that two cabs would be necessary, and so we started.

Of what we saw in the catacombs that day there shall fall from my poor pen a silence so weighty that it could be cut, but of my dear, busy scribes—ah, that is another matter!

We descended the interminable winding steps leading to that underground charnel house, and the tall girl, she of the marvelous memory and no notebook, dropped behind with me in that gloomy winding path and said in a sepulchral whisper (she is always consistent):

"I'm going to refer to these lines of grinning skulls. You might drop a hint of this to the others lest they think of using it. Will you?"

"But," I ventured meekly, not being a scribe myself, "have you reflected that none of these skulls have teeth? It is only those with teeth that grin."

She looked at me pityingly. "They shall grin," she said firmly, clenching her own molars vindictively. "A little thing like that doesn't bother me. And," she continued airily, "I'm also going to speak of the littleness, the absolute pettiness, of life, its aims and so forth, in the presence of the great ruler—you know—death. Veer the others off that if you hear they're going to use it. And—er—look here, don't fancy for one little instant that I have not been aware of your ideal platonic friendship with him," jerking her head in the direction of our male escort. "He's a nice boy, and I like him, in his place, but if you make your tender feeling any excuse for giving away my thought—"

"You're always so tactless, dear," I said viciously, turning away.

At this moment our Harvard man approached, his torch trembling with excitement.

"I've a fine idea," he breathed. "I hope the others aren't on its track. These kind of things are so beastly alike anyhow. Come here." He drew me over to a secluded spot.

"My thought is on—on— But never mind that now. Do you know, I'm never able to see you a moment alone. You've a corporal's guard about you the whole time!"

"You forget our French lessons and walks," I stammered furiously, realizing I was blushing.

"Oh, they don't count! I mean really alone, like this for instance, without a soul about, though even here the others are only a few paces on."

"Tell me your thought," I broke in, finding the conversation too personal.

"The thought?" he repeated dazedly. "Oh, yes. It's on life's absolute littleness, its subjugation—and—"

But just then his torch caught my flimsy veil, and it went up in a gauzy whirl of smoke, while I sputtered and choked with fear. I fled from the Harvard man minus the thought and one veil and was met by the little chaperon, her cheeks very red and her eye very bright.

"She's had a thought, too," I said to myself and tried to dodge her behind a column of bones, but in vain.

"My dear, I want to tell you something. Now, you know the others will treat this subject in the ordinary journalistic way, but I will not. I am going to treat it seriously. I am going to speak of this as Pluto's domain and say Poe's 'Raven' was inspired by a visit here. Switch the others off this, won't you, love? The colleen has just asked me how to spell Plutonian, and I'm a little suspicious of her. It would be a delicate matter for me, but a little finesse on your part will do it." And she hustled away.

A nudge at my elbow and I turned to find the colleen's pale face close to mine. "Listen!" she said. "They won't treat this subject as I shall. Why, I have this notebook