A FAMILY AFFAIR.

[CONTINUED.] CHAPTER IV.

BEATRICE'S PROPOSAL. In describing Hazlewood House and its be-

longings, no mention has been made of Miss Clauson, for this reason—her position in that well-regulated establishment was, as yet, scarcely defined. She was neither mistress nor guest. She was, in short, the only daughter—indeed, the only surviving result of that brilliant marriage made by Miss Talbert when she allied herself with Sir Maingay Clauson, Bart.

There is no reason for enlarging upon the a imirable way in which Lady Clauson filled the position which her own merits had gained, or to which fate had assigned her. Socially and domestically—in the outward as well as the inward life—she was all a baronet's wife should be—all save that she presented her husband with no heir to his titles and estates. This was a sad omission, but, for the sake of her many other good qualities, Sir Maingay overlooked it, and made her a very good husband, as husbands go. When Lady Clauson died, some twelve years after the birth of the daughter who lived, Sir Maingay wept copi-ously. He even opened his Bible—the first

time for many years—and by the aid of "Cruden's Concordance," looked out a text appropriate to her many virtues. Moreover, for her sake, or his own, he remained single for five long years. Then he went the way of all middle-aged, titled, wife-bereft flesh,

and married again.

Beatrice Clauson, just about to leave school, a romantic young lady, whose head for the present was, however, only occupied by pretty, filial dreams of looking after her father, ministering to his comforts, ruling his house, and generally doing the best she could to fill the place of her dead mother, found herself, without a word of warning, presented to a new mother; one, moreover, but four years older than herse f. It was a crushing blow! It was a girl's first lesson in the vanity and unstability of mundane expectations. She ought, of course, to have anticipated

it; but she was young, and like most young people, considered her middle-aged father abnormally old and staid. Besides, she could remember her own mother well enough, and remembered also Sir Maingay's sincere grief when death claimed his wife. She remembered the way in which the weeping man threw his arms around herself, and told her that she was now his ALL-his treasured memento of his wife-his one tie to life. Recalling all this, she was sanguine enough to fancy that memory was even more vivid, that grief had graven its lines deeper with her father than with herself. So the bolt came from the bluest of the blue! At seventeen Beatrice Clauson was still a

spoiled child. All distracted widowers, until they marry again, spoil an only child; therewas spoiled. Moreover, we may at least suspect that she was both impetuous and stubborn, headstrong and romantic; also, in her own way, as proud as Lucifer.

The second Lady Clauson was a beauty, and nothing more. Her family was what is called respectable—a term, the signification of which no man or woman has as yet been able exactly to define. Like the Bible, we interpret it as we choose.

When the inforced meeting between Lady Clausen and her stepdaughter took place, the young lady, by means of those signs and tokens, the masonry of which women alone fully comprehend, showed the state of her mind so clearly that war to the knife was then and there declared.

And civil war in families-baronets or otherwise-is a deplorable thing; doubly dethe excitement of the internecine combat. For a while Sir Maingay's life was anything but a happy one.

It matters little who was most to blamethe girl for her unreasonableness and stubborn spirit, and want of resignation to the inevitable-Lady Clauson for retaliating with all an injured woman's pettiness and spite-Sir Maingay for the thoroughly man-like conduct in letting things drift. They did drift with a vengeance! The breach between the two ladies soon became too enormous to be bridged over by any family diplomatic engineering.

The skirmishes between the belligerents are not worth noticing. The battle-royal was fought when the time came for Miss Clauson to be presented. Lady Clauson asserted that ae was the proper person to present her stepaughter. Beatrice coldly declined her aid. Her ladyship insisted; her stepdaughter was firm in her refusal. Sir Maingay declared himself under his wife's banner, and for once attempted to exercise parental authority. Whereupon Miss Clauson cut the matter short, and declined being presented at all. It was a most dreadful state of affairs! You can, at least, drive a horse to the water, even if you can't make him drink; but you dare presence of a gracious sovereign.

following the prescribed usages of society, may not have been far wrong when she decared that "a baronet's daughter, who refured to be presented, was-well, a monstrosity!"

Sir Maingay began to wish his ancestors Roman Catholic communion. He could have sent his daughter to a nunnery. But then, he sadly reflected, she wouldn't have gone at any price. If put there by force, the Protestant league would soon have her out, and the amiable peculiarities of the "Tabbies' perhaps take her round the country spouting. The only thing the worried baronet could think of was to send for his rebel, and ask her advice as to the best means of disposing of her troublesome self.

When alone with her father Beatrice always although the remembrance of the tears, the in silence, then gave him her opinion on the

"I don't want to be a nuisance to you, papa. I am eighteen now—too old to go back to school. It's nonsense, of course, to say I should like to earn my own living, because when I come of age I shall have some money.

May I go and live at Fairholme?" Fairholme was Sir Maingay's seldom-used

seat in one of the southern counties. "But you can't live there alone," he said.

"Yes, I could. Mrs. Williams could take ire of me. I shall be happy enough."

"My dear girl, why not be reasonable and make friends with Lady Clauson? Then we could all go abroad together." Lady Clauson, who was by no means a fool, had by this time found out that she needed

something more than mere good looks to go down, or go up, in the society her heart longed for. She had, therefore, made up her mind to become a traveled woman, and had arranged that Sir Maingay should take her to a variety of foreign countries. The proposed tour was to be an affair of years, and her ladyship had a dim idea of writing, or of getting some one else to write a book, describing the well-worn pathways she meant to tread. She hoped to take the world by storm as a literary woman.

In which to had better come out and give look after. Come up and see him sleeping. In which the hall. The child had made great progress during Horace's absence. The curate was tickling him and the better come out and give look after. Come up and see him sleeping. We had made great progress during Horace's absence. The curate was tickling him and the better come out and give look after. Come up and see him sleeping. We had made great progress during Horace's settled himself into his chair and showed by the action that a legion of alcohola.

"I can't go abroad with you," said Beatrice. "I shall be miserable myself and make you miserable."
"But if you stay in England you must be

resented and come out and all that sort of

Sir Maingay's cheek reddened. He was much hurt by the sarcasm. Poor old King Lear found a fitting simile for an ungrateful child, but the sharpness of a sarcastic child is more painful than a whole jawful of serpent's teeth. He did not reply; but the worthy baronet was at his wits' end. What could he do with this girl? He had very few relations-he cared for none of them. Old Mr. Talbert, of Hazlewood House, was a confirmed invalid; Horace and Herbert were ressing him. Miss Clauson kissed him again main in England. He had suffered much during the last few months from the dissensions of his wife and daughter. But where soothing touches. to bestow Beatrice?

At last he remembered an aunt of his own who lived in quiet retirement in one of the suburbs of London. It was of course absurd had he better sleep?" for Beatrice to think of living at Fairholme. in a half-closed house with a housekeeper and one or two servants. So it was arranged that ner great-aunt should take her while Sir Maingay and Lady Clauson were on the Continent. So to Mrs. Erskine's she went, and, as that lady was very old, very deaf, and saw no company, it may be presumed that Miss Clauson had scarcely a merry time of it during her father's absence—an absence which from one reason or another lasted quite four | isn't he a perfect cherub?"



BEATRICE CLAUSON. was saving enough money to refurnish the son. town house from top to bottom whenever and gave her devoted husband two fine boy-

middle age-Sir Maingay thought little of Mr. Mordle! He had only known Beatrice a the troublesome, obstinate girl he had left in week, and was already beginning to dream a England. His wife and his boys all but turned her out of his heart. So here was Beatrice in the extraordinary position of being a baronet's daughter with scarcely a a friend in the world. At last the Clausons returned to England. | they had been discussing every possible the-Whether her ladyship wrote her book or not ory which might account for the child's apis a matter of uncertainty; anyway, it was pearance among them, so the subject was

never published. Beatrice made no objection | threadbare, and they sat in silence trying to plorable for the neutral parties, who lack to rejoining the family circle. Her father invent fresh causes. Suddenly a most curious and his wife found her greatly changed. She and startling suspicion entered Horace Talwas quieter, more reserved, more amenable bert's mind-a suspicion which now and again to reason. It seemed to Sir Maingay that she | made him glance at his brother. Could Herhad passed her time at Mrs. Erskine's in study. | bert by any chance know all about the mat-The learning she had acquired almost fright- ter? He had certainly seemed greatly taken ened the baronet; but he was glad to see she with the little boy. Horace remembered how had grown into a beautiful woman, and so much at home the child had made himself he felt quite proud of his neglected daughter, with Herbert. How, when he, Horace, came and hoped that things would for the future out of the drawing-room with Beatrice, he run smoothly.

His hopes were vain. This time there was no doubt as to with whom the fault lay. A lages in Herbert's life about which he knew beauty like Lady Clauson could not endure nothing? He pooh-poohed the thought; but the constant presence of a younger, fresher it came again and again. and even more beautiful beauty. She was also jealous at the way in which her own children took to Beatrice. Besides, she had never forgiven the girl. Relations soon grew strained, and towards the end of the year Beatrice wrote to her uncles, and asked if they would give her a home.

She was now nearly twenty-three. Having when she came of age succeeded to her late mother's third of old Talbert's possessions, she was independent both by age and by income. She was willing to live at Hazlewood House, if her uncles would take her. If not, she resolved to start an establishment of her own. She was still in her former anomalous posinot haul a refractory young woman into the tion-a baronet's daughter who had never made a proper entrance into society. As Lady Lady Clauson, who was rigidly exact in Clauson said, she must have been a wrongminded young woman, as this omission

seemed to trouble her very little. The Talberts who liked the little they had seen of their niece went into solemn conclave on the request. They decided, in the event c Sir Maingay giving his consent-on that point had not separated themselves from the they were most exacting—she might come them. Sir Maingay raised no objections, so Beatrice Clauson came to Hazlewood House, where since her arrival, about a week ago,

she had lived in a state of amused wonder as

gradually revealed themselves to her. She had, of course, intended to make herself useful to her uncles. It may have been the want of some occupation other than study which made her turn her eyes to Hazlewood House and the two bachelors. She was no behaved prettily. She was very fond of him, longer a schoolgirl, so at once broadly hinted that she was willing to regulate their housetext, the distracted vows, when contrasted | 'told matters. The silent horror with which with his second marriage for nothing but the proposal was received told her at once that good looks, made her look upon him with a her place was to be a sinecure. She saw that little contempt. She did not know that man her uncles would on no account dream of in is so gregarious a creature that it is not meet | trusting their researches into domestic econ for him to live alone. She heard his remarks omy to any hands save their own, and the surpassing capability of those hands was deeply impressed upon her when, the day after her arrival, she found Uncle Horace bending over the maid who did the plain sewing, and in the patientest and gravest way teaching her the most approved fashion of handling a needle

and thread. After having lived at Hazlewood House for a week Miss Clauson must have been ready to welcome any event of interest. It is no won der that when Horace Talbert, at Mr. Mordle's suggestion, walked into the drawing room and told his niece what had happened, her curiosity and excitement rose to a high

pitch. "Is it a pretty child?" she asked. "Wonderfully so. Mordle and Herbert are

petting it like a couple of women." Beatrice did not run at once to see for herself. "What do you mean to do about it, uncle Horace?" she asked.

"I don't know. I suppose we must keep it till to-morrow and see if the mystery is ex-plained. You had better come out and give

his bright hair in quite a paternal way. Even the respectable Whittaker was smiling

"What a dear little man!" exclain Beatrice, as she walked to the table and looked at the sturdy urchin.

She was the first woman the child had seen "If ever I do get married," said Beatrice since he left his friends at the refreshment room. Maid servants, with the curiosity of was, on my marriage." their sex and kind, had peeped surreptitiously over the balustrade, but had not attracted notice. At such a tender age as his, woman is a child's natural protector. He at once quitted his stalwart friends and ran across the table to the fair girl, who smiled and opened her arms. The little man darted into them, and with a chirrup of delight laid his head on the girl's shoulder and seemed perfectly happy and at rest. He was so pretty that no woman could have refrained from eamen without homes or wives. Sir Maingay and again, then, like every one who came was willing enough that Beatrice should re- near him, fell to stroking his golden locks and twining them round her fingers. The child's eyes began to close under her soft and

"He must go to bed," said Beatrice, de-"Certainly," said uncle Horace. "Where

"Jane has a most comfortable bed." said

Jane was the parlor-maid, but Herbert in his housewifely capacity knew the quality of every bed in the house; even the amount of bedding on each. Mr. Mordle turned away. He was afraid of disgracing himself by a burst of ill-timed mirth.

"No, no," exclaimed Beatrice; "he shall sleep with me. Look at him, uncle Horace;

"He's a pretty little boy; but we don't know where he comes from, my dear. I hardly think you ought to take a strange infant to sleep with you."

"Oh, nonsense, uncle Horace! See what a clean, beautiful boy it is. Whittaker, send a large can of hot water to my room. Come, my pet; I will see how I can act the part of a nursemaid."

Singing and crooning and carrying the child in the most approved fashion, Miss Clauson proceeded to bear her prize away. "You had better look at his linen, Beatrice," said Horace, "It may be marked

with his name." After this the three men went back to the dining-room and talked the curious occurrence over and over.

In about half an hour's time Beatrice reappeared with the intelligence that the boy's clothing bore no mark of any kind. Indeed. it all seemed brand new. She was apparently much delighted with her new toy. She kept running up and down stairs, to ascertain that her protege was sleeping the sleep of innocent babyhood. At last she went away alto-

"Beatrice is more demonstrative than I believed her to be," said Horace, regretfully. After a while Sir Maingay almost forgot Herbert echoed the regret, but Mr. Mordle fore, if only on salutary grounds, a second be had a daughter. The Clausons settled said nothing. He thought the instinctive mee is to be recommended. We will, down to continental life for an indefinite kindness she showed towards this mysterithen, take it for granted that at the time of | time. Lady Clauson knew she was improv- ously sent child added another charm to the Sir Maingay's second marriage, Miss Clauson | ing herself, and moreover, that Sir Maingay | many he had already discovered in Miss Clau-

The three men sat together until it was too they did return to England. In the course of late to hope that matters would be cleared up the four years spent abroad, Lady Clauson that night. No mother, no telegram came. rectified her predecessor's sins of omission, The curate bade his friends good night and walked back to his lodgings in the village, babies. In the revived delights of paternity thinking what a charming picture Miss Claua paternity which is so especially dear to son with the child in her arms made. Poor foolish dream.

The brothers continued sitting one on either side of the fire. They were not early-to-bed people. Now that they were alone they said little more about the arrival. For three hours had found Herbert stroking and patting the little head. Could there be romantic pass-

Just after 1 o'clock, and when the brothers were thinking of retiring, to their great surprise Beatrice reappeared. She was in dainty dressing gown and slippers. After waiting until Mr. Mordle must certainly have gone she had come down-of course to hear if any news had arrived. Uncle Horace, with his eyes fixed on Herbert, expressed his conviction that no news was meant to arrive. Beatrice looked musingly into the fire. Her head was bent forward, her hands clasped round one of her knees. She made a pretty, almost classicalooking picture, no doubt duly approved of by those men of taste, her uncles.

"We will wait until to-morrow, or the day after; then put the matter into the hands of the police," said Horace decisively.

Herbert said nothing, so his brother's suspicions increased. Beatrice rose as if to say rood night. She stood for awhile on the rug, apparently intently interested in a series of iny circles which she was describing with the point of one slipper. Presently she looked up with a flushed cheek and spoke in a quick hur-

"If nobody comes for the boy would you



"If nobody comes for the boy would you mind my keeping him?"

"My dear!" cried Uncle Horace, aghast

"Here?" She clasped her hands. "Oh, Uncle Horace!" she said, "I have had such a dreary miserable life ever since I was seventeen. have nothing to do-nothing to live or care for. I could be so happy with that dear child to

would not mauce him to go and look at their lumbering forms. "Then you come. Uncle Herbert He is a prettier sight than any of your old mas-

Herbert gave his quiet smile. He was of less stern stuff than Horace—that is, if either of the Talberts could be called stern. He suffered Beatrice to lead him to her room, duly admired the little stranger, then, with his niece, returned to Horace. After this uncles, were of the girl, she was doubly dear manifestation of weakness Horace's unworthy to them because that look was indubitably suspicion was all but certainty.

"You will let me keep him?" pleaded Beatrice. "I am sure you will." Horace made no reply to her unreasonable request. In their usual dignified manner the two gentlemen made their preparations for shutting up. Beatrice went back to her room.

"She grows very, very impulsive," sighed Horace. This time Herbert said nothing. As he got into bed Horace Talbert told himself that Herbert knew all about the boy; he also told himself that no power on earth should induce him to tax Herbert with this knowledge. A man's private affairs were his own property; he himself had laid down this dogma and must now stick to it; the more so because on a former occasion he had broken with Herbert for six years because the latter had infringed on this rule.

CHAPTER V.

MR. MORDLE MAKES A RASH PROMISE. The next morning the Talberts did an unopening their letters before breakfast. They had a time and a place for everything, and their time for reading their correspondence was with their second cups of tea. But so anxious were they to see if their letters contained anything explanatory of last night's occurrence, that the seals were broken at once. They found a couple of invitations to posts ago, the usual amount of circulars, Clauson. tradesmen's lists and appeals for charity; but not a word about the child. Then the kettle was brought, and Herbert set about making the tea. Under some unwritten code of division of labor or honor, the younger brother MRS. always presided at the breakfast table.

Presently Miss Clauson made her appearance with the child on her arm. She had



Miss Clauson made her appearance with the child on her arm. washed him and dressed him, combed his hair

into a wavy mass of burnished gold, and so brought him to the breakfast table fresh, and sweet as a rose in June. She placed him on a chair beside her, by the aid of sundry cushions raising him up to a proper level. Having adjusted him to her satisfaction, she ordered bread and milk to be prepared.

The Talberts made no objection to Beatrice's proceedings, although they fancied the child would have been sent to breakfast with the servants. Being anxious to see him by daylight, they screwed their eye-glasses in place, and once more minutely inspected their sturdy little visitor. Even Uncle Horace nodded approval of his bonny looks and fearless bearing, whilst Herbert joined Beatrice in petting him. The boy seemed happy enough in his new

quarters. It is indeed a sad thing to remark how soon a child forgets its mother. He cries because he misses warmth, food or comfort-not on account of the absence of the being who has lavished oceans of love upon

This particular baby, having been so cruelly deserted, may perhaps be excused for making the best of his changed circumstances and laughing merrily when called upon so to do; but other babies cannot be absolved from the sin of callous indifference and non-reciprocation of love. Beatrice having ascertained that no news

had arrived, said nothing that bore upon her startling suggestion of last night. Perhaps she saw that the bright, saucy child interested "Then what will you do?" she asked, at and amused her uncles; so, with the diplomatic gifts natural to her sex, judged it better to let the matter rest for a while. As soon as breakfast was over, she led the child away, and spent the remainder of the day playing with and petting him to her heart's content. It really seemed as if Miss Clauson had found a new interest in life.

> And, to tell the truth, she was a young woman who appeared to want something to arouse her. She was now, at the age of twenty-two, very different from the girl who so hastily threw down the glove to her stepmother. Her quietness and undemonstrative manner, of which the Talberts so much approved, seemed scarcely natural to a girl with beauty, rank and riches. For, indeed, she was beautiful. If her face showed no color, its healthy pallor was more attractive to a right-minded man than all the rosy cheeks that ever existed. Her brown hair grew in a dress great masses, and low down on her well-shaped forehead. Her eyes were gray-a strange, wonderful gray-so deep in shade that most people would have called her dark-eyed. Her features were perfectly straight. Her face was oval. Her lips were just full enough to make her apathetic demeanor seem inconsistent with the dogmas of physiognomy. Beatrice Clauson was, in fact, a feminine

toned-down edition of the Talberts. The characteristics which were with them exaggerated with her were reproduced in exactly the right proportions. Their faces were elongated ovals-her face was a proper oval. Their noses were straight, but too long-her nose was straight, and just long enough. They were, if anything, too tall-she was only tall enough to be called a fine girl. Miss Clauson's per-sonal appearance was a living proof of how fitting had been the alliance between Sir Maingay Clauson and old Talbert's daughter. The first Lady Clauson had been the counterpart of her brothers. Sir Maingay was short, round faced and rather round bodied. With Beatrice, the blemishes which had detracted from her parents' good looks reappeared as

Moreover, she had that air of distin upon the possession of which the Talberts not unjustly prided themselves. They were glad to think it came to her from their side of the family-her father, the baronet, being like most baronets and other titled personages, a very ordinary-looking man. Ten to one, if you go to the charity ball or other mixed assembly, upon asking the names of the most distinguished looking men you will find them

painful to be told that the noble-presenced man who smiles so condescendingly is Mr. Smith, whilst that other insignificant-looking being is Lord This or the Duke of That. It upsets one's cherished ideal as to what the

aristocracy should be. Beatrice Clauson, then, was very fair to see, and had what silly people call a thorough-bred look. Fond as those amiable men, her owing to the Talbert strain of blood in her

This morning she threw books, music, paint ing, everything aside, and played with her new toy. It was Saturday. The "Tabbies," who invariably went shopping together, were bound to Blacktown to buy groceries. Before starting, Herbert found his way to Beatrice, and asked her if she had any commissions to be executed in the city. He discovered her with flushed face and rumpled hair romping with the child. He watched them with amusement; then, going up stairs, found after a little search in one of the attics, some antiquated, battered toys, which five and thirty years ago had been dear to Horace and himself. He carried them down stairs, and Beatrice thanked him for the kindly thought and act.

When, in a few hours' time, the brothers drove back with a wagonette full of tea, coffee, sugar, yellow soap, house flannel, Bath stone, emery paper, or whatever else was needful to make the wheels of household management run smoothly, they found usual thing; they broke one of their rules by Beatrice still engrossed by her charge. They did not say much to her. Saturday was too busy a day to think of anything save the affairs of the house, and as many precious minutes had been wasted in making inquiries at Blacktown station, the brothers were hardly pressed for time-so hardly pressed that when, about four o'clock, the curate called. they sent their apologies by Whittaker, and dinner, receipts for payments made two left their visitor to be entertained by Miss

[TOBE CONTINUED.]

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