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## Gonvellette.

## VIOLA DALRYMPLE.

## CHAPTER I.

The end of summer; just when the waning season is at its fairest, every hedgerow dotted with the pure white caps of the poppy and the rich blue of the cornflower mingle; and the lanes—our lovely English lanes!—dark and cool, even at noon day, with the luxuriance of the foliage arching high over head.

In such a lane, in one of the prettiest parts of one of the midland counties, sauntered two young ladies, glad of the refuge from the fervid heat, and talking merrily and freely of any and everything which was interesting to devoted friends who had just met after a parting of years.

"I never dreamed your home was so lovely as this!" cried Clara Forester, stopping short, to gaze around. "How I shall hate our dull, flat, half-town, half-no, imitation—country house at Kensington, after these rural scenes! I wish my mother would not like the environs of London."

"Please to remember, Mademoiselle," said Viola Dalrymple, smiling at her companion's enthusiasm, "that winter comes here as well as everywhere else. How would you survive the monotony of a residence in the country, where there are no theatres, no concerts, within reach;—no neighbors, and only half-a-dozen balls within as many months?"

"But you always love Nature, ever-beautiful Nature!" replied Clara, sentimentally; "the birds, the flowers, and the hills, and the valleys."

"Yes," said Viola, laughing outright; "and these paths that you tread so delightfully, and the fields which you pronounce worthy the pencil of a Claude or a Constable. But the fields are impassable half the year for wet clay, and we cannot get to the village this way for mud."

"It's no use talking to you," said Clara, giving herself a little vexed shake. "I declare you have not a bit of romance in your composition and yet you live here."

"Of course," replied Viola. "It is my home. I am not complaining but pointing out some of the disadvantages."

"And I don't thank you for your pains," cried her friend gaily; "and what's more, I'll not hear another word. Tell me what this fence hides from us—fields?"

"No, a park—Lisle park," was the reply; "the largest estate in the neighborhood."

Clara stood on tiptoe, and made ineffectual attempts to see more than the branching elms which the park palings hid not.

"Who lives there, Viola?" she asked—any one you visit?

"No one's there at present," replied Viola. "Sir Vernon Lisle has been on the continent ever since he succeeded to the baronetcy. I wish you had come a week earlier, and we would have spent a pleasant day in the house and grounds. It is quite a show place; but we could not go now, for the owner is expected home very shortly, and they are making great preparations for his reception."

"How sorry I am!" exclaimed Clara. "Then I must content myself with a peep, if I can climb this bank."

"You climb?" cried the amazed Viola.

"Better not try; you are inexperienced."

"You forget," said Clara, undauntedly, "that I have had three days' initiation. After the horrid stifles you have dragged me over, no feat seems impossible."

By dint of little exertion the young lady succeeded in reaching a spot from whence she could peep through a knot-hole at the beautiful domain of Sir Vernon Lisle.

"What magnificent trees! what emerald turf!" she exclaimed. "Oh Viola, the little I can see is perfectly delicious! What fine champagne might be given under those branches! Is this absent baronet old and ugly?" she asked, as she slid down on the bank to recover her breath.

"By no means old," replied Viola. "Sir Vernon is of no more than twenty-three or twenty-four."

"Young, and of course handsome," said Clara. "I should like to stay and make his acquaintance."

Again Viola's merry laughter was heard, as she stood plucking the blossoms of the trailing dewberries.

"But handsome is not a matter of course in this case," she said. "Judging from what my own recollections of Vernon Lisle were when he used to visit me in his boyhood, he must be sandy-haired, short, and plain; so you need not grieve that we leave here on Monday for Lytham and sea-bathing."

"What a shame to dispel one's illusions so remorselessly!" cried Clara. "Never mind—he must be amiable; and, in a wealthy young baronet, one might dispense

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with good looks, if there were nothing else wanting."

"I am afraid you are born to be disappointed, my poor Clara," said her friend. "Vernon was a rude, disagreeable boy, whom I could not endure for his rough manners and teasing propensities; and I have no doubt that possessions of great wealth, with none near to check or admonish him, has made his faults grow with his growth. For myself, I almost dread his coming."

Clara jumped down from her elevated position, and, declaring herself rested, began to question her friend.

"Dread his coming!" said Clara. And why?"

Half the reply must have been inaudible to any ears but her own, conveying nothing but the word, "Papa has always wished—such old friends—Vernon and I so nearly of an age;" and then an emphatic, "but I could never consent—never!"

As the young ladies, engrossed in the subject they were discussing, walked on, two gentlemen, in the light, easy summer dress of tourists, rose from the root of the tree in the park on which they had been resting, and peeped at them; they then turned to each other, and with a comical look, laughed heartily.

"Sandy, short, and ugly! Unfortunate Vernon!" said one mockingly.

"Rude, disagreeable, unchecked!" said the other.

"Oh, most miserable wight that I am! And this is the best that the handsomest girl in the county can say of me! Stanley, I'll go back to Venice, where carotary hair is a grace, and the faults of my youth are unknown. Is my hair very fiery though?"

"Dreadfully so," was the laughing reply; "but dyes are cheap, and wigs ditto."

"Throw 'em to the dogs, I'll have none of 'em," cried Sir Vernon, theatrically. "Going where, did you say?"

"To Lytham," was the reply. "A pretty little quiet bathing place in Lancashire, isn't it?"

Sir Vernon nodded, gazed after the graceful figures of the ladies, until they were quite lost to sight; and then, leaning his back against the fence, he mused until his companion uttered an inquiring, "Well?"

"And well," he repeated, slowly. "I think, if you have no objection to offer, we will for a time, renounce our intention of presenting ourselves at Lisle house, and receiving our good friends' and neighbors' congratulations on our safe return."

"As you will," said his friend. "But what, then, do you propose doing?"

"Taking a trip to Lytham alone," replied Sir Vernon, coloring a little.

"It is good policy to follow a retreating enemy," said Stanley Tremayne, laughing. "Better secure the field during her absence, and when you have established yourself in the good graces of the neutrals, and drawn them all over to your own side, why, let her come. You can afford to be magnanimous and forgive her."

"But I do not feel disposed to forgive her, until she recants," replied Vernon.

"Suppose she will do neither?" asked Stanley, maliciously.

"Why, then, I'll confess myself all she calls me, and the most conceited fool in the universe to boot," replied the baronet.

## CHAPTER II.

Lytham had not then obtained sufficient notoriety to be bustling, and noisy, and overfilled with people who are fussy, and fidgety, and dressy; but was just at that time a charming resort for those who really loved the sea and sands, and could sit and dream the hours away, with nothing to spoil their heartfelt enjoyment.

For two days after their arrival, Viola and Clara saw not a face they knew, and Mr. Dalrymple was their only companion in their rambles or rides; but on the evening of the third day, when they came out to join him on the beach, he was in an animated conversation with two gentlemen, who lifted their hats as the ladies slowly approached.

"Viola, my dear," cried her father, seizing her hand, "was there ever such a coincidence! Here is Sir Vernon Lisle, your old playfellow. He is touring round the coast with a friend, and is making a stay of a few days here for the sake of sketching."

Viola flushed a little as her father more formally introduced Sir Vernon and Mr. Tremayne, and her reception of the baronet was so frigid that, after murmuring a few words about his pleasure in meeting her again, he looked awkward and embarrassed, and finally attached himself to

Clara Forester, who graciously accepted his arm, and rather hastily decided that he was much better looking than her friend had predicted.

Mr. Dalrymple walked by the side of his daughter to his usual seat, in which, with a smiling apology for his lateness, he seated himself; and then Viola was left to the polite attentions of the guest Mr. Tremayne, who as yet had not spoken. But when, with some unnecessary speech about the weather, she broke the silence, he asked, "Do you find my friend much altered, Miss Dalrymple?"

"Yes—no," stammered Viola, glancing indifferently at the baronet, who was smiling at one of Clara's mirthful sallies; "he is improved, I think."

"Ah, his hair has darkened," said Mr. Tremayne. "It must have escaped your memory that in his boyhood it was red."

Miss Dalrymple palliated this. "She did not permit others the same license that she had allowed herself."

"Auburn, you mean," said she. "Sir Vernon's hair was never red."

"He would not thank me for discussing his personal appearance," said Mr. Tremayne smiling. "He has been spoiled of late by the attentions he has received."

Viola looked as if she could quite believe this.

"But his heart," continued the gentleman. "I think I may answer for it, that his heart is in the right place, and I have no doubt that when he settles down at Lisle Park he will try to do his duty as a country gentleman."

Miss Dalrymple's expressive face had the impress of being bored. It said rather too plainly, "this is nothing to me;" but Mr. Tremayne did not appear to see it.

"Of course he will marry," said he.

"In fact, there is, I believe, a contract between his uncle and a gentleman in the neighborhood of Lisle Park, that he shall."

"It is not true!" cried Viola indignantly. "If Sir Vernon is your author, he had suffered his egregious vanity to deceive him."

Having thus expressed herself, Viola walked on in haughty displeasure; but Mr. Tremayne was by her side instantly.

"Miss Dalrymple," said he, "can I have said anything to annoy you? If so, believe that my offense has been unintentional. I would not incur your anger for the world."

His eyes seconded the speech so eloquently, that the young lady, ashamed of the interest she had evinced in his gossiping details, permitted herself to be appeased; and when Clara and her companion came toward them at the expiration of half an hour, she was listening with flattering attention to Tremayne's description of a snow-storm on the Apennines.

It had been very pleasant at Lytham, when Viola and Clara had only their own resources to depend upon; but it was pleasant still when two animated, intelligent young men were always at hand to accompany them in boating, walking and sketching excursions; and as the baronet, after a few rebuffs, kept aloof from his frigid playmate, or, if compelled to address her, never ventured on more than a few monosyllables, Viola contrived to endure his presence. More than this she could not be said to do, for Mr. Dalrymple seriously scolded her for rudeness, and Clara pronounced herself astonished at the prejudices which made her so blind to his merits. But Viola heard all they had to say without giving more than the one young ladyish reason for her bel avior—that she did not like him, and was so sure that she never should that it would be wasting time to try.

Her father denounced her obstinacy, and went away angry at the defeat of a long cherished plan; but a little coaxing and petting brought back his good humor; and Clara was too happy in Sir Vernon's society to be really anxious to relinquish his arm and his attentions to any one.

But now a new tormentor sprang up in the shape of Stanley Tremayne, who as he said, superintended Viola's sketches, guiding her hand, or cutting her pencils, blending with his instructions a very sober regret that she treated her friend so coldly. They were intimate enough now for him to venture this, and the young lady heard him without being offended; but his pertinacity vexed her at last, and, closing her portfolio, she rose to leave him.

"Are you going, Miss Dalrymple?" he asked. "Is the voice of a peacemaker so harsh in your ears?"

"Choose any other topic, and I will listen to you with pleasure," she said, resuming her seat.

"Should I be true to my cause if I obeyed this injunction?" he asked.

Viola glanced up furtively, but meeting his earnest gaze, she turned crimson.

"Do you then make Sir Vernon's cause yours?" she asked.

He hesitated, and then replied in the affirmative.

"I have not time to discuss this," he demanded Viola, with a scornful curl of her lip; "and if so, what am I expected to say?"

Mr. Tremayne seemed to find the question a difficult one; but at last he replied, "Sir Vernon longs to resume the frank and pleasant intercourse of early days."

"He is very kind," she said demurely; "but the cat he delighted to tease is dead, my doll I long have discarded, and I have outgrown my terror of great dogs. My own recollections of those early days are not so agreeable as to induce me to wish to recall them. The truth is, Mr. Tremayne, he was thought a very tormenting boy, and—"

"Miss Dalrymple a pretty, timid child, who could not perceive under the boy's rough exterior how charming and gentle he might be!" said Mr. Tremayne. "Was it not so?"

"I don't pretend to know what Sir Vernon really thought," she replied coloring deeply. "I only know that the most flattering attention I can remember to have received from him was the gift of a bird's nest."

"Which he risked his neck to procure," murmured Mr. Tremayne.

"Possibly," said the lady indifferently; "if so, I never knew it. My childish indignation, that he could think so barbarous an act would please me, swallowed up all other sensations." "Poor Vernon!" cried Mr. Tremayne, with an audible sigh; "must I then tell him that you are implacable?"

Viola stooped over her sketch for a moment, and then looking up steadily replied: "Will you believe my assurance that this railway is most unpleasant to me? To Sir Vernon's confidant it will perhaps be as well to add that I can never feel or think differently toward him from what I do now."

"If you knew how deeply—" Mr. Tremayne began; but Viola, with scarlet cheeks, had started up, and the sketches were scattered at her feet.

"Sir, this persistence is unkind, ungentlemanly," she said, as she walked proudly away, leaving him to collect the contents of the portfolio; amongst which, by-the-by, he found a very spirited sketch of his own features. As he drew near the house, Sir Vernon and Clara came up, and the latter ran away to look for her friend.

"Well?" asked one gentleman of another.

"And well?" was the thoughtful answer.

"There is no hope for poor Sir Vernon."

"Humph!" said he; "and Stanley Tremayne?"

"Has not ventured to plead for himself," was the reply.

At this moment Mr. Dalrymple came toward them, and the dialogue was ended.

## CHAPTER III.

"And so our pleasant sojourn at Lytham ends to-morrow?" said Stanley Tremayne, with a saddened tone.

Miss Dalrymple, who had forgiven him three days ago, looked up from her book, and drew her shawl around her with a little shiver.

"Ours does," she replied. "We have lingered here much longer than my father originally intended; and it grows bleak and cold. I have not ventured beyond this verandah to-day, and Clara is sedulously practicing her long neglected music,—a proof that her thoughts are wandering homeward."

Mr. Tremayne glanced through the open window of the drawing room and smiled. Miss Forester was at the piano, certainly, but her hands were in her lap, and she was listening, with downcast eyes to the earnest whispers of the gentleman who leaned over her.

Viola's glance followed Stanley, and blushing she rose to enter the room, and recall Clara to a remembrance that there were lookers on.

"Don't go," said Tremayne, earnestly. "Don't go. They are happy; why interrupt them? You must have seen, Miss Dalrymple, that our friends have learned to love each other."

"I am so pleased!" said Viola, and her face wore a glad smile. "Clara's a dear girl, and will make him very happy. You are quite sure of this?"

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"I had it from his own lips that he intended to learn his fate to-day," was the reply; "and, if we may judge from appearances, the fair ruler of it has been propitious to his pleadings."

Miss Dalrymple smiled again, then began to look a little scandalized, and to remember that her good, easy father, who was so often so generous, was in some degree answerable for Clara's proceedings while under his protection.

"It is very sudden," she said, thoughtfully. "They have only known each other a few weeks. I hope Mrs. Forester will feel satisfied."

"Of course," replied Mr. Tremayne; "everything that is proper must be done; but I have no doubt my friend will be able to satisfy Mrs. Forester's scruples, if she has any."

Viola turned over the leaves of her book, and meditated, while her companion leaning carelessly against the trelis, gazed down upon her with something of tender admiration and secret uneasiness mingling in his glances.

"It will be delightful to have Clara so near," she broke the silence by saying. "Lisle Park has been shut up so long that it will be real enjoyment to see it thrown open again, and merry faces peopling it. Do you know Lisle? It is such a lovely place! I have often driven there in the pony chase for the gratification of wandering through the rooms, or reading in the oriel window of the noble library."

"Strange, Miss Dalrymple," said Mr. Tremayne, "to like the house so well, and yet detest the owner!"

"Detest him?" she said—"oh, no!—I have never detested him. Indeed, I believe him to be a very worthy young man, or I should not rejoice at his attachment to Clara."

"Rude, ill-mannered, and unattractive," said Mr. Tremayne.

"As a boy," replied Viola.

"Short, ugly and red-haired," continued Mr. Tremayne.

"Sir Vernon is almost as tall as yourself," said Viola, looking surprised and half affronted—"and I do not think I ever spoke of him in such terms to you, Mr. Tremayne."

"To me?" he said—"oh no! You have contented yourself with testifying a very quiet and decided dislike to one who came to England full of the sweet hope of winning the affections of his destined bride."

Viola averted her face for a moment, when she raised it again.

"Rest assured Mr. Tremayne, that it is for the best," said Viola, "I am very proud, and to know that the world—nay, Sir Vernon himself—might have believed that his wealth had something to do with my acceptance, would have stung me to the quick. Now I can have a very friendly liking for my old playfellow and rejoice in the felicity of my friend."

"Then," said Mr. Tremayne, detaining her as she rose, "you could have loved him but for these scruples? Your recollections of the rude, red-haired boy were not resentful ones?"

"You are not my confessor, Mr. Tremayne," said Viola, smiling.

"I would I were," he replied in a great agitation. "I am longing to ask you what I fear to hear you answer."

In great confusion she sank back on her seat, and he sat down beside her.

"Ah! Viola, you are too frank and generous to pretend to misunderstand me," he said. "Your heart divines my love. Nay, do not leave me! Tell me that I may hope!"

Viola's answer was so very indistinct that we cannot attempt to pen it; but, apparently it was satisfactory, for Stanley's arm stole round her, and when Mr. Dalrymple's nap ended in a loud yawn, she startled the couple at the pianoforte an engagement ring was on Viola's taper fingers and Stanley looked saucily happy.

"Poor papa," she whispered freeing herself with a cloud dimming the brightness of her glowing face, "poor papa! What shall we say to him? I am afraid when he hears all this he will be disappointed."

"I don't think he will, love," replied Stanley. "But come in; it is too chilly for you to sit here any longer."

Clara began to busy herself with finding a song as they entered, and Mr. Dalrymple started up, declaring the music had been so sweet that it had almost lulled him to sleep.

The young men met in the middle of the room with a hearty clasp of hands, and then both of them turned to Mr. Dalrymple.

(Concluded on fourth page.)