THE

HEAVENLY TWINS

BY

SARAH GRAND

Author of "IDEALA," *etc., etc.*

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

"They call us the Heavenly Twins.'
"What, signs of the Zodiac?" said the Tenor.
"No; signs of the times," said the Boy.

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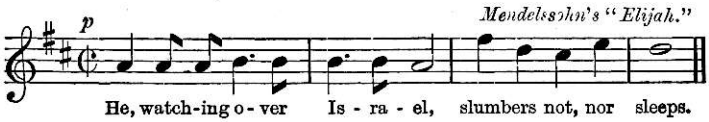
THE HEAVENLY TWINS

The time is racked with birth-pangs; every hour
Brings forth some gasping truth, and truth new-born
Looks a misshapen and untimely growth,
The terror of the household and its shame,
A monster coiling in its nurse's lap
That some would strangle, some would starve;
But still it breathes, and passed from hand to hand,
And suckled at a hundred half-clad breasts,
Comes slowly to its stature and its form,
Calms the rough ridges of its dragon-scales,
Changes to shining locks its snaky hair,
And moves transfigured into Angel guise,
Welcomed by all that cursed its hour of birth,
And folded in the same encircling arms
That cast it like a serpent from their hold!

—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

PROEM.



From the high Cathedral tower the solemn assurance floated forth to be a warning, or a promise, according to the mental state of those whose ears it filled; and the mind, familiar with the phrase, continued it involuntarily, carrying the running accompaniment, as well as the words and the melody, on to the end. After the last reverberation of the last stroke of every hour had died away, and just when expectation had been succeeded by the sense of silence, they rang it out by day and night—the bells—and the four winds of heaven by day and night spread it abroad over the great wicked city, and over the fair flat country, by many a tiny township, and peaceful farmstead, and scattered hamlet, on, on, it was said, to the sea—to the sea, which was twenty miles away!

But there were many who doubted this, though good men and true, who knew the music well, declared they had heard it, every note distinct, on summer evenings when they sat alone upon the beach and the waves were still; and it sounded then, they said, like the voice of a tenor who sings to himself softly in murmurous monotones. And some thought this must be true, because those who said it knew the music well, but others maintained that it could not

be true, just for that very reason; while others again, although they confessed that they knew nothing of the distance sound may travel under special circumstances, ventured, nevertheless, to assert that the chime the people heard on those occasions was ringing in their own hearts; and, indeed, it would have been strange if those in whose mothers' ears it had rung before they were born, who knew it for one of their first sensations, and felt it to be, like a blood relation, a part of themselves, though having a separate existence, had not carried the memory of it with them wherever they went, ready to respond at any moment, like sensitive chords vibrating to a touch.

But everything in the world that is worth a thought becomes food for controversy sooner or later, and the chime was no exception to the rule. Differences of opinion regarding it had always been numerous and extreme, and it was amusing to listen to the wordy warfare which was continually being waged upon the subject.

There were people living immediately beneath it who wished it far enough, they said, but they used to boast about it nevertheless when they went to other places—just as they did about their troublesome children, whom they declared, in like manner, that they expected to be the death of them when they and their worrying ways were within range of criticism. It was a flagrant instance of the narrowness of small humanity which judges people and things, not on their own merits, but with regard to their effect upon itself; a circumstance being praised to-day because importance is to be derived from *its* importance, and blamed to-morrow because a bilious attack makes thought on any subject irritating.

Other people liked the idea of the chime, but were not content with its arrangement; if it had been set in another way, you know, it would have been so different, they asserted, with as much emphasis as if there were wisdom in the words. And some said it would have been more effective if it had not rung so regularly, and some maintained that it owed its power to that same regularity

which suggested something permanent in this weary world of change. Among the minor details of the discussion there was one point in particular which exercised the more active minds, but did not seem likely ever to be settled. It was as to whether the expression given to the announcement by the bells did not vary at different hours of the day and night, or at different seasons of the year, at all events; and opinions differed as widely upon this point as we are told they did on one occasion in some other place with regard to the question whether a fish weighed heavier when it was dead than when it was alive—a question that would certainly never have been settled either, had it not happened, after a long time and much discussion, that someone accidentally weighed a fish, when it was found that there was no difference. The question of expression, however, could not be decided in that way, expression being imponderable; and it was pretty generally acknowledged that the truth could not be ascertained and must therefore remain a matter of opinion. But that did not stop the talk. Once, indeed, someone declared positively that the state of a man's feelings at the moment would influence his perceptions, and make the chime sound glad when he was glad, and mournful when he was melancholy; but nobody liked the solution.

Let them wrangle as they might, however, the citizens were proud of their chime, and for a really good reason. It meant something! It was not a mere jingle of bells, as most chimes are, but a phrase with a distinct idea in it which they understood as we understand a foreign language when we can read it without translating it. It might have puzzled them to put the phrase into other words, but they had it off pat enough as it stood, and they held it sacred, which is why they quarrelled about it, it being usual for men to quarrel about what they hold sacred, as if the thing could only be maintained by hot insistence, the things they hold sacred, that is, although they cannot be sure of them, like the forms of a religion which admit of controversy, as distinguished from the God

they desire to worship, about whom they have no doubt, and therefore never dispute.

In this latter respect, however, the case of the people of Morningquest was just the reverse of that which obtains in most other places, for in consequenee of the hourly insistence of the chime, their most impressive monitor, they talked much more of Him whom they should worship, than of various ways to worship Him; and the most persistent of all the questions which occupied their attention arose out of the involuntary but continuous effort of one generation after another to define with scientific accuracy and to everybody's satisfaction, His exact nature and attributes; in consequence of which efforts, there had come to be several most distinct but quite contradictory ideas upon the subject. There were some simple-minded folk to whom the chime typified a God essentially masculine, and like a man, hugely exaggerated, but somewhat amorphous,because they could not see exactly in what the exaggeration consisted, except in the size of him. They pictured him sitting alone on a throne of ivory and gold, inlaid with precious stones; and recited the catalogue of those mentioned in the Book of the Revelation by preference, as imparting a fine scriptural flavour to the idea. And he sat upon the throne day and night, looking down upon the earth, and never did anything else, nor felt it monotonous. Buddha, himself, in Nirvana, could not have attained to a greater perfection of contemplation than that with which they credited this curious divinity,who served solely for a finish to their mental range, as the sky was to their visual; a useful point at which to aim their rudimentary faculty of reverence.

But others, again, of a different order of intelligence, had passed beyond this stage, and saw in him more

> . . . of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realized;

very like Jove, but unmarried. He was both beneficent and

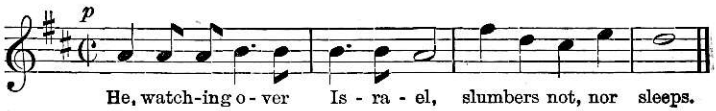
jealous, and had to be propitiated by regular attendance at church but further than that he was not exacting; and therefore they ventured to take his name in vain when they were angry, and also to call upon him for help, with many apologies, when there was nobody else to whom they could apply; although, so long as the current of their lives ran smoothly on, they seldom troubled their heads about him at all.

There were deeper natures than those, however, who were not content with this small advance, and these last had by degrees, as suited their convenience, but, without perceiving it, gradually discovered in him every attribute, good, bad, or indifferent, which they found in themselves, thus ascribing to him a nature of a highly complex and most extraordinarily inconsistent kind, less that of a God than of a demon. To them he was still a great shape like a man, but a shape to be loved as well as feared; a God of peace who patronized war; a gentle lamb who looked on at carnage complacently; a just God who condemned the innocent to suffer; an omnipotent God who was powerless to make his law supreme; and they reserved to themselves the right of constantly adding to or slightly altering this picture; but having completed it so far, they were thoroughly well satisfied with it, and, incongruous as it was, they managed to make it the most popular of all the presentments, partly because, being so flexible, it could be adjusted to every state of mind; but also because there was money in it Numbers of people lived by it, and made name and fame besides; and these kept it going by damaging anybody who ventured to question its beauty. For there is no faith that a man upholds so forcibly as the one by which he earns his livelihood, whether it be faith in the fetish he has helped to make, or in a particular kind of leather that sells quickest because it wears out so fast.

In these latter days, however, it began to appear as if the supremacy of the great masculine idea was at last being seriously threatened, for even in Morningquest a new voice of extraordinary

sweetness had already been heard, not *his*, the voice of man; but *theirs*, the collective voice of humanity, which declared that "He, watching," was the all-pervading good, the great moral law, the spirit of pure love, Elohim, mistranslated in the Book of *Genesis* as "He" only, but signifying the union to which all nature testifies, the male and female principles which together created the universe, the infinite father and mother, without whom, in perfect accord, and exact equality, the best government of nations has always been crippled and abortive.

Those who heard this final voice were they who loved the chime most truly, and reverenced it; but they did not speak about it much, only, when the message sounded, they listened with that full-hearted pleasure which is the best praise and thanks. Mendelssohn must have felt it when the melody first occurred to him, and the words had wedded themselves to the music in his soul!



And the chime certainly had power to move the hearts of many; but it would be hard to say when it had most power or upon whom. Doubtless, the majority of those who had ears to hear in the big old-fashioned city, heard not, use having dulled their faculties; or if, perchance, the music reached them it conveyed no idea to their minds, and passed unheeded. It was but an accustomed measure, one more added to the myriad other sounds that make up the buzz of life, and help, like each separate note of a chord, to complete the varied murmur which is the voice of "a whole city full."

But, of course, there were times when it was specially apt to strike home—in the early morning, for instance, when the mind was fresh and hope was strong enough to interpret the assurance into a promise of joy; and again at noon, when fatigue was growing and the mind perceived a sympathetic melancholy in the tones which

was altogether restful, but it was at midnight it had most power. It seemed to rise then to the last pitch of enthusiasm, sounding triumphant, like the special effort that finishes a strain, as if to speed the departing interval of time; but when it rang again, after the first hour of the new day, its voice had dropped, as it were, to that tone of indifference which expresses the accustomed doing of some monotonous duty which has become too much of a habit to excite either pleasure or pain. To the tired watcher, then, for whom the notes were mere tones conveying no idea, the soft melancholy cadence, dulled by distance, was like the half-stifled echo of her own last stifled sigh.

It is likely, however, that the chime failed less of its effect outside the city than it did within; but there, again, it depended upon the hearer. When the mellow tones floated above the heath where the gipsies camped, only one, perchance, might listen, lifting her bright eyes with pleasure and longing in them, dumbly, as a child might, yet showing for a moment some glimmering promise of a soul. But to many in the village close at hand, the chime brought comfort. It seemed to assure the sick, counting the slow hours, that they were not forsaken, and helped them to bear their pain with patience; it seemed to utter to the wayworn a word which told them their trouble was not in vain; it seemed to invite all those who waited and were anxious to trust their care to Him and seek repose. It was all this, and much more, to many people: and yet when it spread in another direction over the fields, it meant nothing to the yawning ploughman, either musical or poetical, had no significance whatever for him if it were not of the time of day, gathered, however, with the help of sundry other sensations of which hunger and fatigue were chief. It probably conveyed as much, and neither more nor less, to the team he drove.

But, perhaps, of all the affairs of life with which the chime had mingled, the most remarkable, could they be collected and recorded, would be the occasions on which the hearing of the message had

marked a turning point in the career of some one person, as happened, once on a summer afternoon, when it was heard by a Lancashire collier—a young lad with an unkempt mop of golden hair, delicate features, and limbs which were too refined for his calling, who was coming up the River Morne on a barge.

The river winds for a time through a fertile undulating bit of country, and nothing of the city can be seen until you are almost in it, except the castle of the Duke of Morningquest, high perched on a hill on the farther side, and the spire of the cathedral, which might not attract your attention, however, if it were not pointed out to you above the trees. When the chime floated over this sparsely-peopled tract, filling the air with music, but coming from no one could tell whence, there was something mysterious in the sound of it to an imaginative listener in so apparently remote a place; and once, twice, as the long hours passed, the young collier heard it ring, and wondered. He had nothing to do but listen, and watch the man on the bank who led the horse that was towing the barge; or address a rare remark to his solitary companion—an old sailor, dressed in a sou'-wester, blue jersey, and the invariable drab trowsers, tar-besprent, and long boots, of his calling, who steered automatically, facing the meadows in beautiful abstraction. He would have faced an Atlantic gale, however, with that same look.

When the chime rang out for the third time, the young collier spoke:

"It's the varse of a song, maybe?" he suggested.

"Ay, lad," was the laconic rejoinder.

The barge moved on—passed a little farmhouse close to the water's edge; passed some lazy cattle, standing in a field, flicking off flies with their tails; passed a patient fisherman, who had not caught a thing that day, and scarcely expected to, but still fished on. The sun sparkled down on the water; the weary man and horse plodded along the bank; far away, a sweet bird sang; and the collier spoke again.

"Dost tha' know the varse?" he said.

The old man had been brought up in those parts; he knew it well; and slowly repeated it to the lad, who listened without a sign, sitting with his dreamy eyes fixed on the water:—

"He, watching over Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps."

There was another long silence, and then the lad spoke once more, with apathetic gravity, asking: "Who's *He*?"

The old man kept his eyes fixed on a distant reach of the river, and moved no muscle of his face.

"I guess it's Christ," he said, at last.

"Ah niver 'eerd tell on 'im," the collier answered slowly.

"Hast 'niver eerd 'tell on Christ?" the old man asked in measured machine-like tones. "I thowt ivery one know'd on 'im. Why, what religion are you?"

"Well, me feyther's a Liberal—leastways 'im as brought me up," was the passionless rejoinder, slowly spoken; "but ah doant know no one o' the name o' Christ, an', what's more, ah's sure 'e doant work down our way,"—with which he sauntered forward with his hands in his trouser pockets, and sat in the bow; and the old man steered on as before.

How like a mind is to a river! both may be pure and transparent and lovable, and strong to support and admirable; each may mirror the beauties of earth and sky, and still have a wonderful beauty of its own to delight us; both are always moving onward, bound irresistibly to be absorbed in a great ocean mystery, to be swept away irreclaimably, without hope of return, but leaving memories of themselves in good or evil wrought by them; and both are pure at the outset, but can be contaminated, when they in turn contaminate; and being perverted in their use, become accursed, and curse again with all the more effect because the province of each was to bless.

The collier lad in the bow of the barge felt something of the fascination of the river that day. He saw it sparkle in the sun-

shine, he heard it ripple along its banks, he felt the slow and dreamy motion of the boat it bore; and his mind was filled with unaccustomed thought, and a strange yearning which he did not understand. There was something singularly attractive about the lad, although his clothes were tattered, his golden hair and delicate skin were begrimed, his great bright eyes had no intelligent expression in them, and there was that discontented undisciplined look about his mouth which is common to uneducated men. He had no human knowledge, but he had capacity, and he had music, the divine gift, in his soul, and the voice of an angel to utter it.

What passed through his dim consciousness in the interval which followed his last remark, no one will ever know; but the chime had once more sounded; and, suddenly, as he sat there, he took up the strain, and sang it—and the labourers in the fields, and the loiterers by the river, and the ladies in their gardens, even the very cattle in the meadows, looked up and listened, wondering, while he varied the simple melody, as singers can, finding new meaning in the message, and filling the summer silence with perfect raptures of ecstatic sound.

It was a voice to gladden the hearts of men, and one who heard it knew this, and followed the barge, and took the lad, and had him taught, so that in after days, the world was ready to fall at his feet and worship the gift.

And so time passed. Change followed change, but the chime was immutable. And always, whatever came, it rang out calmly over the beautiful old city of Morningquest, and entered into it, and was part of the life of it, mixing itself impartially with the good and evil; with all the sin and suffering, the pitiful pettiness, the indifference, the cruelty, and every form of misery-begetting vice, as much as with the purity above reproach, the charity, the self-sacrifice, the unswerving truth, the patient endurance, and courage not to be daunted, which are in every city—mixing itself with these as the light and air of heaven do, and with effects doubtless as unexpected

and as fine ;—and ready also to be a help to the helpless, a guide to the rash and straying, a comfort to the comfortless, a reproach to the reckless, and a warning to the wicked. Perhaps, an ambitious stranger, passing through the city, would hear the chime, and pause to listen, and in the pause a flash of recollection would show him the weary way he had gone, the disappointments which were the inevitable accompaniments of even his most brilliant successes, in the years of toil that had been his since he made the world his idol, and swerved from the Higher Life ; and then he would ask himself the good of it all, and finding that there was no good, he would go his way, cherishing the new impression, and asking of all things :

"Is it too late now ?"

And perhaps at the same moment a lady rolling past in her carriage would say : "How sweet ! " or the beauty of the bells might win some other thoughtless tribute from her, if she heard the chime at all; but probably she never heard it, because the accustomed tones were as familiar as the striking of the hour—the striking of an hour that bore no special significance for her, and therefore set no chord vibrating in her soul. The thoughts of her mind deafened her heart to it as completely as the thunder of a waggon had at the same time deafened the waggoner's ears while the bells uttered their message above him. And so it was with the doctor, overworked and anxious, hurrying on his rounds ; the grasping lawyer, absorbed in calculation, and all the other money-grubbers ; the indolent woman, the pleasure-seeker, and the hard-pressed toiler for daily bread : if they heard they heeded not because their hour had not yet come. At least this is what some thought, who believed that for every one a special hour would come, when they would be called, and then left to decide, as it were, between life and death-in-life ; if they accepted life, the next message would be fraught with strength and help and blessing ; but if they rejected it, the bells would utter their condemnation, and leave them to their fate.

BOOK I.

CHILDHOODS AND GIRLHOODS.

THE Spring is the pleasantest of the seasons; and the young of most animals, though far from being completely fashioned, afford a more agreeable sensation than the full grown; because the imagination is entertained with the promise of something more, and does not acquiesce in the present object of the sense.—*Burke on the Sublime.*

I AM inclined to agree with Francis Galton in believing that education and environment produce only a small effect on the mind of any one, and that most of our qualities are innate.—*Darwin.*

THE

HEAVENLY TWINS.

CHAPTER I.

At nineteen Evadne looked out of narrow eyes at an untried world inquiringly. She wanted to know. She found herself forced to put prejudice aside in order to see beneath it, deep down into the sacred heart of things, where the truth is, and the bewildering clash of human precept with human practice ceases to vex. And this not of design, but of necessity. It was a need of her nature to know. When she came across something she did not understand, a word, a phrase, or an allusion to a phase of life, the thing became a haunting demon only to be exorcised by positive knowledge on the subject. Ages of education, ages of hereditary preparation had probably gone to the making of such a mind, and rendered its action inevitable. For generations, knowledge is acquired, or rather instilled by force in families, but, once in a way, there comes a child who demands instruction as a right; and in her own family Evadne appears to have been that child. Not that she often asked for information. Her faculty was sufficient to enable her to acquire it without troubling herself or anybody else, a word being enough on some subjects to make whole regions of thought intelligible to her. It was as if she only required to be reminded of things she had learnt before. Her mother said she was her most satisfactory

child. She had been easy of education in the schoolroom. She had listened to instruction with interest and intelligence, and had apparently accepted every article of faith in God and man which had been offered for her guidance through life, with unquestioning confidence, at least she had never been heard to object to any time-honoured axiom. And she did in fact accept them all, but only provisionally. She wanted to know. Silent, sociable, sober, and sincere, she had walked over the course of her early education and gone on far beyond it with such ease, that those in authority over her never suspected the extent to which she had outstripped them.

It was her father who struck the key-note to which the tune of her early intellectual life was set. She was about twelve years old at the time, and they were sitting out on the lawn at Fraylingay one day after dinner, as was their wont in the summer; he, on this occasion, under the influence of a good cigar, mellow in mind and moral in sentiment, but inclining to be didactic for the moment because the coffee was late; she in a receptive mood, ready to gather silently, and store with care, in her capacious memory any precept that might fall from his lips, to be taken out and tried as opportunity offered.

"Where is your mother?" he asked.

"I dont know, father," Evadne answered. "I think she is in the drawing-room."

"Never say you *think*, my dear, about matters of fact," he said. "When it is possible to *know*, it is your business to find out, and if you cannot find out, you must say you don't know. It is moral cowardice, injurious to yourself, not to own your ignorance; and you may also be misleading, or unintentionally deceiving, someone else."

"How might the moral cowardice of not owning my ignorance be injurious to myself, father?" she asked.

"Why, don't you see," he answered, "you would suffer in two

ways? If the habit of inaccuracy became confirmed, your own character would deteriorate; and by leading people to suppose that you are as wise as themselves, you lose opportunities of obtaining useful information. They won't tell you things they think you know already."

Evadne bent her brows upon this lesson and reflected; and doubtless it was the origin of the verbal accuracy for which she afterwards became notable. Patient investigation had always been a pleasure, but from that time forward it became a principle also. She understood from what her father had said that to know the facts of life exactly is a positive duty; which, in a limited sense, was what he had intended to teach her; but the extent to which she carried the precept would have surprised him.

Her mind was prone to experiment with every item of information it gathered, in order to test its practical value; if she could turn it to account she treasured it, if not, she rejected it, from whatever source it came. But she was not herself aware of any reservation in her manner of accepting instruction. The trick was innate, and in no way interfered with her faith in her friends, which was profound. She might have justified it, however, upon her father's authority, for she once heard him say to one of her brothers: "Find out for yourself, and form your own opinions," a lesson which she had laid to heart also. Not that her father would have approved of her putting it into practice. He was one of those men who believe emphatically that a woman should hold no opinion which is not of masculine origin, and the maxims he had for his boys differed materially in many respects from those which he gave to his girls. But these precepts of his were after all only matches to Evadne which fired whole trains of reflection, and lighted her to conclusions quite other than those at which he had arrived himself. In this way, however, he became her principal instructor. She had attached herself to him from the time that she could toddle, and had acquired from his conversation a proper

male vs female educat

appreciation of masculine precision of thought. If his own statements were not always accurate, it was from no want of respect for the value of facts; for he was great on the subject, and often insisted that a lesson or principle of action is contained in the commonest fact; but he snubbed Evadne promptly all the same on one occasion when she mentioned a fact of life, and drew a principle of action therefrom for herself. "Only confusion comes of women thinking for themselves on social subjects," he said. "You must let me decide all such matters for you, or you must refer them to your husband when you come under his control."

Evadne did not pay much attention to this, however, because she remembered another remark of his with which she could not make it agree. The remark was that women never had thought for themselves, and that therefore it was evident that they could not think, and that they should not try. Now, as it is obvious that confusion cannot come of a thing that has never been done, the inaccuracy in one or other of these statements was glaring enough to put both out of the argument. But what Evadne did note was the use of the word control.

As she grew up she became her father's constant companion in his walks, and, flattered by her close attention, he fell into the way of talking a good deal to her. He enjoyed the fine flavour of his own phrase-making, and so did she, but in such a silent way that nothing ever led him to suspect it was having any but the most desirable effect upon her mind. She never attempted to argue, and only spoke in order to ask a question on some point which was not clear to her, or to make some small comment when he seemed to expect her to do so. He often contradicted himself, and the fact never escaped her attention, but she loved him with a beautiful confidence, and her respect remained unshaken.

When she had to set herself right between his discrepancies, she did not dwell on the latter as faults in him, but only thought of how wise he was when he warned her to be accurate, and felt

grateful. And in this way she formed her mind upon his sayings; and as a direct result of the long, informal, generally peripatetic lectures to which she listened without prejudice, and upon which she brought unsuspected powers of discrimination to bear, he had unconsciously made her a more logical, reasoning, reasonable being than he believed it possible for a woman to be. Poor Papa! All that he really knew of his most interesting daughter was that she was growing up a good child, physically strong and active, morally well-educated, with a fortunately equable temper; and that she owed a great deal to him. What, precisely, was never defined. But when the thought of his kindness recurred to him it always suffused him with happiness.

He was a portly man, with a place in the country, and a house in town; not rich for his position, but well off; a magistrate, and much respected; well educated in the ideas of the ancients, with whom his own ideas on many subjects stopped short, and hardly to be called intellectual; a moderate Churchman, a bigoted Conservative, narrow and strongly prejudiced rather than highly principled. He was quite ignorant of the moral progress of the world at the present time, and ready to resent even the upward tendency of evolution when it presented itself to him in the form of any change, including of course changes for the better, and more especially so if such change threatened to bring about an improvement in the position of women, or increase the weight of their influence for good in the world. The mere mention of the subject made him rabid, and he grew apoplectic whenever he reflected upon the monstrous pretensions of the sex at the present time. But the thing that roused his scorn and indignation most was when a woman ventured to enter any protest against the established order of iniquity. He allowed that a certain number of women must of necessity be abandoned, and raised no objection to that; but what he did consider intolerable was that any one woman should make a stand against the degradation of her own sex. He thought that immoral.

He was well enough to live with, however, this obstinate English country gentleman, although without sympathetic insight, and liable to become a petty domestic tyrant at any moment. "Sound" was what he would have called himself. And he was a man to be envied upon the whole, for his family loved him, and his friends knew no ill of him.

CHAPTER II.

EVADNE, like the Vicar of Wakefield, was by nature a lover of happy human faces, and she could be playful herself on occasion; but she had little if any of the saving sense of humour.

Her habit was to take everything *au grand serieux*, and to consider it. When other people were laughing she would be gravely observant, as if she were solving a problem; and she would sooner have thought of trying to discover what combination of molecules resulted in a joke, with a view to benefiting her species by teaching them how to produce jokes at will, than of trying to be witty herself. She had, too, a quite irritating trick of remaining, to all outward seeming, stolidly unmoved by events which were causing an otherwise general commotion; but in cases of danger or emergency she was essentially swift to act—as on one occasion, for instance, when the Hamilton House twins were at Fraylingay.

The twins had arrived somewhat late in the married lives of their parents, and had been welcomed as angel visitants, under which fond delusion they were christened respectively Angelica and Theodore. Before they were well out of their nurse's arms, however, society, with discernment, had changed Theodore's name to Diavolo, but "Angelica" was sanctioned, the irony being obvious.

The twins were alike in appearance, but not nearly so much so as twins usually are. It would have been quite easy to distinguish them apart, even if one had not been dark and the other fair, and for this mercy everybody connected with them had reason to be thankful, for as soon as they reached the age of active indiscretion, they would certainly have got themselves mixed if they could. Angelica was the dark one, and she was also the elder, taller,

stronger, and wickeder of the two, the organizer and commander of every expedition. Before they were five years old, everybody about the place was upon the alert, both in self-defence and also to see that the twins did not kill themselves. Bars of iron had to be put on the upstairs windows to prevent them making ladders of the traveller's joy and wisteria, modes of egress which they very much preferred to commonplace doors; and Mr. Hamilton-Wells had been reluctantly obliged to have the moat, which was deep and full of fish, and had been the glory of Hamilton House for generations, drained for fear of accidents. Argument was unavailing with the twins as a means of repression, but they were always prepared to argue out any question of privilege with their father and mother cheerfully. Punishment, too, had an effect quite other than that intended. They were interested at the moment, but they would slap each other's hands and put each other in the corner for fun five minutes after they had received similar chastisement in solemn earnest.

They would have lived out of doors altogether by choice, and they managed to make their escape in all weathers. If the vigilant watch that was kept upon them were relaxed for a moment, they disappeared as if by magic, and would probably only be recovered at the farthest limit of their father's property, or in the kitchen of some neighbouring country gentleman, where they were sure to be popular. They were always busy about something, and when every usual occupation failed, they fought each other. After a battle they counted scars and scratches for the honour of having most, and if there were not bruises enough to satisfy one of them, the other was always obligingly ready to fight again until there were.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells had great faith in the discipline of the Church Service for them, and was anxious that they should be early accustomed to go there. They behaved pretty well while the solemnity was strange enough to awe them, and one Sunday when Lady Adeline—their mother—could not accompany him, Mr. Hamilton-Wells

ventured to go alone with them. He took the precaution to place them on either side of him so as to separate them and interpose a solid body between them and any signals they might make to each other ; but in the quietest part of the service, when everybody was kneeling, some movement of Diavolo's attracted his attention for a moment from Angelica, and when he looked again, the latter had disappeared. She had discovered that it was possible to creep from pew to pew beneath the seats, and had started to explore the church. On her way, however, she observed a pair of stout legs belonging to a respectable elderly woman who was too deep in her devotion to be aware of the intruder, and being somewhat astonished by their size, she proceeded to test their quality with a pin, the consequence being an appalling shriek from the woman, which started a shrill treble cry from herself. The service was suspended, and Mr. Hamilton-Wells, the most precise of men, hastened down the aisle, and fished his daughter out, an awful spectacle of dust, from under the seat, incontinently.

When Mr. and Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells went from home for any length of time they were obliged to take their children with them, as servants who knew the latter would rather leave than be left in charge of them, and this was how it happened that Evadne made their acquaintance at an early age.

It was during their first visit to Fraylingay, while they were still quite tiny, and she was hardly in her teens, that the event referred to in illustration of one of Evadne's characteristics occurred.

The twins had arrived late in the afternoon, and were taken into the dining-room, where the table was already decorated for dinner. It evidently attracted a good deal of their attention, but they said nothing. At dessert, however, to which Evadne had come down with the elder children, the dining-room door was seen to open with portentous slowness, and there appeared in the aperture two little figures in long night-gowns, their forefingers in their mouths, their

inquisitive noses tilted in the air, and their bright eyes round with astonishment. It was like the middle of the night to them, and they had expected to find the room empty.

"Oh, you naughty children!" Lady Adeline exclaimed.

"The *darlings!*" cried Mrs. Frayling, Evadne's mother. "*Do* let them come in," and she picked up Angelica, and held her on her knee, one of the other ladies at the opposite end of the long table taking Diavolo up at the same time. But the moment the children found themselves on a level with the table, they made a dart for the centre-piece simultaneously on their hands and knees, regardless of the smash of dessert plates, decanters, wine glasses, and fruit-dishes, which they upset by the way.

"It *is!*" shrieked Angelica, thumping the flat mirror which was part of the table decorations, triumphantly.

"It is *what?*" cried Lady Adeline, endeavouring to reach the child.

"It's looking-glass, mamma. Diavolo said it was water."

There was much amusement at the words, and at the quaint spectacle of the two little creatures sitting amid the wreckage in the middle of the table not a bit abashed by the novelty of their conspicuous position. Only Evadne, who was standing behind her mother's chair, remained grave. She seemed to be considering the situation severely, and, acting on her own responsibility, she picked Diavolo up in the midst of the general hilarity, and carried him out of the room with her hand pressed tight on his thigh. The child had come down armed with an open penknife, with which to defend Angelica, should they encounter any ogres or giants on the stairs, and in scrambling up the table he had managed to strike himself in the thigh with it, and had severed the femoral artery; but, with the curious shame which makes some children dislike to own that they are hurt, he had contrived to conceal the accident for a moment with his night-gown under cover of the flowers, and it was only Evadne's observant eye and presence of mind that had saved

his life. No one in the house could make a tourniquet, and she sat with the child on her knee while a doctor was being fetched, keeping him quiet as by a miracle, and stopping the hemorrhage with the pressure of her thumb, not even his parents daring to relieve her, since Diavolo had never been known to be still so long in his life with anybody else. She held him till the operation of tying the artery was safely accomplished, by which time Mr. Diavolo was sufficiently exhausted to be good and go to sleep; and then she quietly fainted. But she was about again in time to catch him when he woke, and keep him quiet, and so by unwearied watching she prevented accidents until all danger was over.

Diavolo afterwards heard his parents praise her in unmeasured terms to *her* parents one day in her absence. She happened to return while they were still in the room, and, being doubtless wide-awake to the advantages of such a connection, he took the opportunity of promising solemnly, in the presence of such respectable witnesses, to marry her as soon as he was able.

She had added the word "Tourniquet" to her vocabulary during this time, and having looked it up in the Dictionary, she requested the Doctor to be so good as to teach her to make one. While doing so, the Doctor became interested in his silent, intelligent pupil, and it ended in his teaching her all that a young lady could learn of bandaging, of antidotes to poisons, of what to do in case of many possible accidents, and also of nursing, theoretically.

But this was not a solitary instance of the quiet power of the girl which already compelled even elderly gentlemen, much overworked, and self-absorbed, to sacrifice themselves in her service.

CHAPTER III.

It is a notable thing, that in almost every instance, it was her father's influence which forced Evadne to draw conclusions in regard to life quite unlike any of his own, and very distasteful to him. He was the most conservative of men, and yet he was continually setting her mind off at a tangent in search of premises upon which to found ultra-liberal conclusions.

His primitive theories about women and "all that they are good for," for one thing, which differed so materially from the facts as she observed them every day, formed a constant mental stimulus to which her busy brain was greatly indebted. "Women should confine their attention to housekeeping," he remarked once, when the talk about the higher education of women first began to irritate elderly gentlemen. "It is all they are fit for."

"Is it?" said Evadne.

"Yes. And they don't know arithmetic enough to do that properly."

"Don't they; why?" she asked.

"Because they have no brains," he answered.

"But some women have been clever," she ventured seriously.

"Yes, of course; exceptional women. But you can't argue from exceptional women."

"Then ordinary women have no brains, and cannot learn arithmetic?" she concluded.

"Precisely," he answered irritably. Such signs of intelligence always did irritate him somehow.

Evadne found food for reflection in these remarks. She had done a certain amount of arithmetic herself in the schoolroom,

and had never found it difficult, but then she had not gone far enough perhaps. And she went at once to get a *Colenso* or a *Barnard Smith* to see. She found them more fascinating when she attacked them of her own free will and with all her intelligence than she had done when necessity, in the shape of her governess, forced her to pay them some attention, and she went through them both in a few weeks at odd times, and then asked her father's advice about a book on advanced mathematics.

"Advanced mathematics!" he exclaimed. "Can you keep accounts?"

"I don't know," she answered doubtfully.

"Then what is this nonsense about advanced mathematics?"

"Oh, I have finished *Barnard Smith*, and I thought I should like to go on," she explained.

"Now, isn't that like your sex!" he observed, smiling at his own superiority. "You pick things up with a parrot-like sharpness, but haven't intelligence enough to make any practical application of them. A woman closely resembles a parrot in her mental processes, and in the use she makes of fine phrases which she does not understand to produce an effect of cleverness—such as 'Advanced mathematics!'"

Evadne bent her brow, and let him ruminate a little in infinite self-content, then asked abruptly: "Can men keep accounts who have never seen accounts kept?"

"No, of course not," he answered, seeing in this a new instance of feminine imbecility, and laughing.

"Ah," she observed, then added thoughtfully as she moved away: "I should like to see how accounts are kept."

She never had any more conversation with her father upon this subject, but from that time forward mathematics, which had before been only an incident in the way of lessons, became an interest in life, and a solid part of her education. But, although she found she could do arithmetic without any great difficulty, it never occurred

to her either that her father could be wrong or that there might be in herself the making of an exceptional woman. The habit of love and respect kept her attention from any point which would have led to a judgment upon her father, and she was too unconscious of herself as a separate unit to make personal application of anything as yet. Her mind at this time, like the hold of a ship with a general cargo, was merely being stored with the raw materials which were to be distributed over her whole life, and turned by degrees to many purposes, useful, beautiful—not impossibly detestable.

But that remark of her father's about "all that women are fit for," which he kept well watered from time to time with other conventional expressions of a contemptuous kind, was undoubtedly the seed of much more than a knowledge of the higher mathematics. It was that which set her mind off on a long and patient inquiry into the condition and capacity of women, and made her, in the end, of the nineteenth century essentially herself. But she did not begin her inquiry of set purpose; she was not even conscious of the particular attention she paid to the subject. She had no foregone conclusion to arrive at, no wish to find evidence in favour of the woman which would prove the man wrong. Only, coming across so many sneers at the incapacity of women, she fell insensibly into the habit of asking why. The question, to begin with, was always: "Why are women such inferior beings?" But, by degrees, as her reading extended, it changed its form, and then she asked herself doubtfully: "Are women such inferior beings?" a position which carried her in front of her father at once by a hundred years, and led her rapidly on to the final conclusion that women had originally no congenital defect of inferiority, and that, although they have still much way to make up, it now rests with themselves to be inferior or not, as they choose.

She had an industrious habit of writing what she thought about the works she studied, and there is an interesting record still in existence of her course of reading between the ages of twelve and

nineteen. It consists of one thick volume, on the title page of which she had written roundly, but without a flourish, *Commonplace Book*, and the date. The first entries are made in a careful, unformed, childish hand, and with diffidence evidently; but they became rapidly decided both in caligraphy and tone as she advanced. The handwriting is small and cramped, but the latter probably with a view to economy of space, and it is always clear and neat. There are few erasures or mistakes of grammar, or spelling, even from the first, and little tautology; but she makes no attempt at literary style or elegance of expression. Still, all that she says is impressive, and probably on that account. She chooses the words best calculated to express her meaning clearly and concisely, and undoubtedly her meaning is always either a settled conviction or an honest endeavour to arrive at one. It is the honesty, in fact, that is so impressive. She never thinks of trying to shine in the composition of words; there was no idea of budding authorship in her mind; she had no more consciousness of purpose in her writing than she had in her singing, when she sang about the place. The one was as involuntary as the other, and the outcome of similar sensations. It pleased her to write, and it pleased her to sing, and she did both when the impulse came upon her. She must, however, have had considerable natural facility of expression. Writing seems always to have been her best mode of communication. She was shy from the first in conversation, but bold to a fault with her pen. Some of the criticisms she wrote in her *Commonplace Book* are quite exhaustive; most of them are temperate, although she does give way occasionally to bursts of fiery indignation at things which outrage her sense of justice; but the general characteristic is a marked originality, not only in her point of view, but also in the use she makes of quite unpromising materials. In fact, the most notable part of the record is the proof it contains that all the arguments upon which she formed her opinions were found in the enemy's works alone. She had drawn

her own conclusions; but after having done so, as it happened, she had the satisfaction of finding confirmation strong in John Stuart Mill on *The Subjection of Women*, which she came across by accident—an accident, by-the-way, for which Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells was responsible. She brought the book to Fraylingay, and forgot it when she went home, and Evadne, happening to find it throwing about, took charge of it, read it with avidity, and found for herself a world of thought in which she could breathe freely.

The Vicar of Wakefield was one of her early favourites. She read it several times, and makes mention of it twice in her *Commonplace Book*. Her first notice of it is a childish little synopsis, very quaint in its unconscious irony; but interesting, principally from the fact that she was struck even then by the point upon which she afterwards became so strong.

"The Vicar," she says, "was a good man, and very fond of his wife and family, and they were very fond of him, but his wife was queer, and could only read a little. *And he never taught her to improve herself although* he had books and was learned.* He had two daughters who were spiteful, and did not like other girls to be pretty. They had bad taste too, and wanted to go to church overdressed, and thought it finer to ride a plough-horse than walk. It does not say that they ever read anything either. If they had they would have known better. There is a very nasty man in the book called Squire Thornhill, and a nice one, called Sir William Thornhill, who was his uncle. Sir William marries Sophia and Squire Thornhill marries Olivia, although he does not intend to. Olivia was a horrid deceitful girl, and it served her right to get such a husband. They have a brother called Moses, who used to talk philosophy with his father at dinner, and once sold a cow for a gross of green spectacles. A gross is twelve dozen. Of course they were all annoyed, but the Vicar himself was cheated by the same man when he went to sell the horse. He seemed to think a great deal of knowing Latin and Greek, but it was not much use to him then. It was funny that he should be conceited about what he knew himself, and not want his wife to know anything. He said to her once: 'I never dispute your abilities to make a goose pie, and I beg you'll leave argument to me,' which she might have thought rude, but perhaps she was not a lady, as ladies do not make goose pies. I forgot, though, they had lost all their money. They had great troubles, and the Vicar was

* This is the point alluded to.

put in prison. He was very ill, but preached to the prisoners, and everybody loved him. I like *The Vicar of Wakefield* very much, and if I cannot find another book as nice I shall read it again. *Turn, Gentle Hermit,* is silly. I suppose *Punch* took Edwin and Angelina out of it to laugh at them."

Quite three years must have elapsed before she again mentions *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and in the meantime she had been reading a fair variety of books, but for the most part under schoolroom supervision, carefully selected for her. Some, however, she had chosen for herself—during the holidays when discipline was relaxed; but it was a fault which she had to confess, and she does so always, honestly. Lewes' *Life of Göethe* was one of these. She wrote a glowing description of it, at the end of which she says:—

"I found the book on a sofa in the drawing-room, and began it without thinking, and read and read until I had nearly finished it, quite forgetting to ask leave. But of course, I went at once to tell father as soon as I thought of it. Mother was there too, and inclined to scold, but father frowned, and said: 'Let her alone. It will do her no harm; she won't understand it.' I asked if I might finish it, and he said, 'Oh, yes,' impatiently. I think he wanted to get rid of me, and I am sorry I interrupted him at an inconvenient time. Mother often does not agree with father, but she always gives in. Very often she is right, however, and he is wrong. Last week she did not want us to go out one day because she was sure it would rain, but he did not think so, and said we had better go. It did rain—poured—and we got wet through, and have had colds ever since, but when we came in, mother scolded me for saying, 'You see, you were right.' She said I should be saying 'I told you so!' next, in a nasty jeering way as the boys do, which really means rejoicing because somebody else is wrong, and is not generous. I hope I shall never come to that; but I know if I am ever sure of a thing being right which somebody else thinks is wrong, it won't matter what it is or who it is, I shall not give in. I don't see how I could."

Her pen seldom ran away with her into personal matters like these, in the early part of the book; but from the first she was apt to be beguiled occasionally by the pleasure of perceiving a powerful stimulant under the influence of which everything is lost sight of but the point perceived. She had never to fight a daily and exhausting battle for her private opinions as talkative people have, simply because she rarely if ever expressed an opinion; but her

father stood ready always, a post of resistance to innovation, upon which she could sharpen the claws of her conclusions silently whenever they required it.

When next she mentions *The Vicar of Wakefield*, she says expressly:—

"I do not remember what I wrote about it the first time I read it, and I will not look to see until I have written what I think now, because I should like to know if I still agree with myself as I was then."

And it is interesting to note how very much she does agree with herself as she "was then"; the feeling in fact is the same, but it has passed from her heart to her head, and been resolved by the process into positive opinion, held with conscious knowledge, and delivered with greatly-improved power of expression.

"*The Vicar of Wakefield* makes me think a good deal," she continues, "but there is no order in my thoughts. There is, however, one thing in the book that strikes me first and foremost and above all others, which is that the men were educated and the women were ignorant. It is not to be supposed that the women preferred to be ignorant, and therefore I presume they were not allowed the educational advantages upon which the men prided themselves. The men must accordingly have withheld these advantages by main force, yet they do not scorn to sneer at the consequences of their injustice. There is a sneer implied in the Vicar's remark about his own wife: 'She could read any English book without much spelling.' That her ignorance was not the consequence of incapacity, is proved by the evidence which follows of her intelligence in other matters. Had Mrs. Primrose been educated she might have continued less lovable than the Vicar, but she would probably have been wiser. The Vicar must always have been conscious of her defects, but had never apparently thought of a remedy, nor does he dream of preventing a repetition of the same defects in his daughters by providing them with a better education. He takes their unteachableness for granted, remarking complacently that an hour of recreation 'was taken up in innocent mirth between my wife and daughters, and in philosophical arguments between my son and me,' as if 'innocent mirth' were as much as he could reasonably expect from such inferior beings as a wife and daughters must necessarily be. The average school-girl of to-day is a child of light on the subject of her own sex compared with the gentle Vicar, and incapable, even before her education is half over, of the envy and meanness which the latter thinks it kindest to take a humorous view of, and of the disingenuousness at which he also smiles as the inevitable outcome of feminine inferiority—at least *I* never met a girl in

my position who would not have admired Miss Wilmot's beauty, nor do I know one who would not answer her father frankly, however embarrassing the question might be, if he asked her opinion of a possible lover."

The next entry in the book is on the subject of *Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures*, and, like most of the others, it merits attention from the unexpected view she takes of the position. It does not strike her as being humorous, but pathetic. She feels the misery of it, and she had already begun to hold that human misery is either a thing to be remedied, or a sacred subject to be dwelt on in silence; and she considers Mrs. Caudle entirely with a view to finding a cure for her case.

"The Caudles were petty tradespeople," she says, "respectable in their own position, but hardly lovable according to our ideas. Mr. Caudle, with meek persistency, goes out to amuse himself alone when his day's work is done. Mrs. Caudle's day's work never is done. She has the wearing charge of a large family, and the anxiety of making both ends meet on a paltry income, which entails much self-denial and sordid parsimony, but is conscientiously done, if not cheerfully, nevertheless. It is Mr. Caudle, however, who grumbles, making no allowance for extra pressure of work on washing days, when she is too busy to hash the cold mutton. The rule of her life is weariness and worry from morning till night, and for relaxation in the evening she must sit down and mend the children's clothes; and even when that is done she goes to bed with the certainty of being roused from her hard-earned rest by a husband who brings a sickening odour of bad tobacco and spirits home with him, and naturally her temper suffers. She knows nothing of love and sympathy; she has no pleasurable interest in life. Fatigue and worry are succeeded by profound disheartenment. One can imagine that while she was young, the worn garments she was wont to mend during those long lonely evenings were often wet with tears. The dulness must have been deadly, and dulness added to fatigue time after time ended at last not in tears, but in peevish irritation, ebullitions of spleen, and ineffectual resistance. The woman was thoroughly embittered, and the man had to pay the penalty. Whatever pleasure there might have been in their joint lives he had secured for himself, leaving her to stagnate for want of a little variety to keep her feelings flowing wholesomely; and she did stagnate dutifully, but she was to blame for it. Had she gone out and amused herself with other wives similarly situated, and had tobacco and beer, if she liked them, every evening, it would have been better for herself and her husband."

There must have been some system in Evadne's reading, for *The*

Naggletons came immediately after *Mrs. Caudle*, and are dismissed curtly enough.

"Vulgar, ill-bred, lower middle-class people," she calls them. "Objectionable to contemplate from every point of view. But a book which should enlighten the class whom it describes on the subject of their own bad manners. *We* don't nag."

She owed her acquaintance with the next two books she mentions to the indirect instigation of her father, and she must have read them when she was about eighteen, and emancipated from schoolroom supervision, but not yet fairly entered upon the next chapter of her existence; for they are among the last she notices before she came out.

The date is fixed by an entry which appears on a subsequent page with the note:—"I was presented at Court to-day by my mother." After this entry life becomes more interesting than literature, evidently, for the book ceases to be a record of reading and thought with an occasional note on people and circumstances, and becomes just the opposite, viz., a diary of events interspersed with sketches of character and only a rare allusion to literature. But, judging by the number and variety and the careful record kept of the works she read, the six months or so immediately preceding her presentation must have been a time of the greatest intellectual activity, her father's influence being, as usual, often apparent as primary instigator. Once, when they were having coffee out on the lawn after dinner, he began a discussion in her hearing about books with another gentleman who was staying in the house, and in the course of it he happened to praise *Roderick Random* and *Tom Jones* eloquently. He said they were superior in their own line to anything which the present day has produced. "They are true to life in every particular," he maintained, "and not only to the life of those times but of all time. In fact, you feel as you read that it is not fiction but human nature itself that you are studying; and there is an education in moral philosophy on every page."

Evadne was much impressed, and being anxious to know what an education in moral philosophy might be, she got *Roderick Random* and *Tom Jones* out of the library when she went in that evening, and took them to her own room to study. They were the two books already referred to as being among the last she read just before she came out. They did not please her, but she waded through them from beginning to end, conscientiously, nevertheless, and then she made her remarks.

Of *Roderick Random*, she wrote :—

"The hero is a kind of king-can-do-no-wrong young man; if a thing were not right in itself, he acted as if the pleasure of doing it sanctified it to his use sufficiently. After a career of vice in which he revels without any sense of personal degradation, he marries an amiable girl named Narcissa, and everyone seems to expect that such a union of vice and virtue would be productive of the happiest consequences. In point of fact, he should have married Miss Williams, for whom he was in every respect a suitable mate. If anything, Miss Williams was the better of the two, for Roderick sinned in weak wantonness, while she only did so of necessity. They repent together, but she is married to an unsavoury manservant named Strap as a reward; while Roderick considers himself entitled to the peerless Narcissa. Miss Williams, moreover, becomes Narcissa's confidential friend, and the whole disgraceful arrangement is made possible by Narcissa herself, who calmly accepts these two precious associates at their own valuation, and admits them to the closest intimacy without any knowledge of their true characters and early lives. The fine flavour of real life in the book seems to me to be of the putrid kind which some palates relish, perhaps; but it cannot be wholesome, and it may be poisonous. The moral is :—Be as vicious as you please, but prate of virtue."

Tom Jones she dismissed with greater contempt, if possible :—

"Another young man," she wrote, "steeped in vice, although acquainted with virtue. He also marries a spotless heroine. Such men marrying are a danger to the community at large. The two books taken together show well the self-interest and injustice of men, the fatal ignorance and slavish apathy of women ; and it may be good to know these things, but it is not agreeable."

The ventilation of free discussion would doubtless have been an advantage to Evadne at this impressionable period, when she was still, as it were, more an intellectual than a human being, travelling

upon her head rather than upon her heart—so to speak—and one cannot help speculating about the probable modification it would have wrought in some of her opinions. Unfortunately, however, her family was one of those in which the *clôture* is rigorously applied when any attempt is made to introduce ideas which are not already old and accustomed. It was as if her people were satisfied that by enforcing silence they could prevent thought.

CHAPTER IV.

It is interesting to trace the steps by which Evadne advanced: one item of knowledge accidentally acquired compelling her to seek another, as in the case of some disease mentioned in a story-book, the nature of which she could not comprehend without studying the construction of the organ it affected. But haphazard seems to have determined her pursuits much more than design as a rule. Some people in after life, who liked her views, said they saw the guiding hand of Providence directing her course from the first; but those who opposed her said it was the devil; and others again in idleness or charity, or the calm neutrality of indifference, set it all down to the Inevitable, a fashionable first cause at this time, which is both comprehensive, convenient, and inoffensive, since it may mean anything, and so suits itself to everybody's prejudices.

But she certainly made her first acquaintance with anatomy and physiology without design of her own. Her mother sent her up to a lumber room one day to hunt through an old box of books for a story she wanted her to read to the children, and the box happened to contain some medical works, which Evadne peeped into during her search. A plate first attracted her attention, and then she read a little to see what the plate meant, and then she read a little more because the subject fascinated her, and the lucid language of a great scientific man, certain of his facts, satisfied her, and carried her on insensibly. She continued standing until one leg tired, then she rested on the other; then she sat on the hard edge of the box, and finally she subsided on to the floor, in the dust, where she was found hours later, still reading.

"My dear child, where *have* you been?" her mother exclaimed

irritably, when at last she appeared. "I sent you to get a book to read to the children."

"There it is, mother, *The Gold Thread*," Evadne answered. "But I cannot read to the children until after their tea. They were at their lessons this morning, and we are all going out this afternoon." She had neither forgotten the children nor the time they wanted their book, which was eminently characteristic. She never did forget other people's interests, however much she might be absorbed by the pleasure of her own pursuits.

"And I found three other books, mother, that I should like to have; may I?" she continued. "They are all about our bones and brains, and the circulation of the blood, and digestion. It says in one of them that muriatic acid, the chemical agent by which the stomach dissolves the food, is probably obtained from muriate of soda, which is common salt contained in the blood. Isn't that interesting? And it says that pleasure—not excitement, you know—is the result of the action of living organs, and it goes on to explain it. Shall I read it to you?"

"My dear child, what nonsense have you got hold of now?" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed, laughing.

"It is all here, mother," Evadne remonstrated, tapping her books. "Do look at them."

Mrs. Fraylingay turned over a few pages with dainty fingers:—"Tracing from without inwards, the various coverings of the brain are," she read in one. "The superior extremity consists of the shoulder, the arm, the forearm, and the hand," she saw in another. "Dr. Harley also confirms the opinion of M. Chaveau that the sugar is not destroyed in any appreciable quantity during its passage through the tissues," she learnt from the third. "Oh, how nasty!" she ejaculated, alluding to the dust on the cover. "And what a state you are in yourself! You seem to have a perfect mania for grubbing up old books. What do you want with them? You cannot possibly understand them. Why, *I* can't! It is all vanity, you know. Here, take them away."

"But, mother, I want to keep them. They can't do me any harm if I don't understand them."

"You really *are* tiresome, Evadne," her mother rejoined. "It is quite bad taste to be so persistent."

"I am sorry, mother. I apologize. But I can read them, I suppose, as you don't see anything objectionable in them."

"Don't *you* see, dear child, that I am trying to write a letter? How do you suppose I can do so while you stand chattering there at my elbow? You won't understand the books, but you are too obstinate for anything, and you had better take them and try. I don't expect to hear anything more about them," she added complacently, as she resumed her letter. Nor did she, but she felt the effect of them strongly in after years.

When Evadne went out for a ride with three of her sisters that afternoon her mind was full to overflowing of her morning studies, and she would like to have shared such interesting information with them, but they discouraged her.

"Isn't it curious," she began, "our skulls are not all in one piece when we're born——?"

"I call it simply *nasty*," said Julia. She was the one who screamed at a mouse.

"You'll be a bore if you don't mind," cried Evelyn, who monopolized the conversation as a rule.

Barbara politely requested her to "Shurrup!" a word of the boys which she permitted herself to borrow in the exuberance of her spirits and the sanctity of private life whenever Evadne threatened, as on the present occasion, to be "*too* kind."

Evadne turned back then and left them, not because they vexed her, but because she wanted to have her head to the wind and her thick brown hair blown back out of her eyes, and full leisure to reflect upon her last acquisition as she cantered home happily.

CHAPTER V.

EVADNE was never a great reader in the sense of being omnivorous in her choice of books, but she became a very good one. She always had a solid book in hand, and some standard work of fiction also; but she read both with the utmost deliberation, and with intellect clear and senses unaffected by anything. After studying anatomy and physiology, she took up pathology as a matter of course, and naturally went on from thence to prophylactics and therapeutics, but was quite unharmed, because she made no personal application of her knowledge as the coarser mind-masculine of the ordinary medical student is apt to do. She read of all the diseases to which the heart is subject, and thought of them familiarly as "cardiac affections," without fancying she had one of them; and she obtained an extraordinary knowledge of the digestive processes and their ailments without realizing that her own might ever be affected. She possessed, in fact, a mind of exceptional purity as well as of exceptional strength, one to be enlightened by knowledge, not corrupted; but had it been otherwise she must certainly have suffered in consequence of the effect of the curiously foolish limitations imposed upon her by those who had charge of her conventional education. Subjects were surrounded by mystery which should have been explained. An impossible ignorance was the object aimed at, and so long as no word was spoken on either side it was supposed to be attained. The risk of making mysteries for an active intellect to feed upon was never even considered, nor did anyone perceive the folly of withholding positive knowledge, which, when properly conveyed, is the true source of healthy-mindedness, from a child whose intelligent perception was already sufficiently

keen to require it. Principles were dealt out to her, for one thing, with a generous want of definition which must have made them fatal to all progress had she been able to take them intact. Her mother's favourite and most inclusive dictum alone, that "everything is for the best, and all things work together for good," should have forced her to a matter-of-fact acceptance of wickedness as a thing inevitable which it would be waste of time to oppose, since it was bound to resolve itself into something satisfactory in the end, like the objectionable refuse which can be converted by ingenious processes into an excellent substitute for butter. But she was saved from the stultification of such a position by finding it impossible to reconcile it practically with the constant opposition which she found herself at the same time enjoined to oppose to so many things. If everything is for the best, it appeared to her, clearly we cannot logically oppose ourselves to anything, and there must accordingly be two trinities in ethics, good, better, best, and bad, worse, worst, which it is impossible to condense into one comprehensive axiom.

But most noticeably prominent, to her credit, through all this period are the same desirable characteristics, viz., that provisional acceptance already noticed of what she was taught by those whom she delighted to honour and obey, and the large-minded absence of prejudice which enabled her to differ from them, when she saw good cause, without antagonism. "Drop the subject when you do not agree: there is no need to be bitter because you know you are right," was the maxim she used in ordinary social intercourse; but she was at the same time forming principles to be acted upon in opposition to everybody when occasion called for action. Another noticeable point, too, was the way in which her mind returned from every excursion into no matter what abstruse region of research, to the position of women, her original point of departure. "Withholding education from women was the original sin of man," she concludes.

Mind as creator appealed to her less than mind as recorder,

reasoner, and ruler; and for one gem of poetry or other beauty of purely literary value which she quotes, there are fifty records of principles of action. The acquisition of knowledge was her favourite pastime, her principal pleasure in life, and there were no doubts of her own ability to disturb her so long as there was no self-consciousness. Unfortunately, however, for her tranquillity, the self-consciousness had to come. She approached the verge of womanhood. She was made to do up her hair. She was encouraged to think of being presented, coming out, and having a home of her own eventually. Her liberty of action was sensibly curtailed, but all supervision in the matter of her mental pursuits was withdrawn. She had received the accustomed education for a girl in her position, which her parents held, without knowing it themselves, perhaps, to consist for the most part in being taught to know better than to read anything which they would have considered objectionable. But the end of the supervision, which should have been a joy to her, brought the first sudden sense of immensity, and was chilling. She perceived that the world is large and strong, and that she was small and weak; that knowledge is infinite, capacity indifferent, life short,—and then came the inevitable moment. She does not say what caused the first overwhelming sense of self in her own case; but the change it wrought is evident, and the disheartening doubts with which it was accompanied are expressed. She picks her

"Flower in the crannied wall,"

and realizes her own limitations:

" . . . but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

And from this time forward there is less literature and more life in the *Commonplace Book*.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. and Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells, with the inevitable twins, came constantly to Fraylingay while Evadne was in the schoolroom, and generally during the holidays, that she might be at liberty to look after the twins, whose moral obliquities she was supposed to be able to control better than anybody else. They once told their mother that they liked Evadne, "because she was so good;" and Lady Adeline had a delicious moment of hope. If the twins had begun to appreciate goodness they would be better themselves directly, she was thinking, when Diavolo exclaimed: "We can shock her easier than anybody," and hope died prematurely. They had been a source of interest, and also of some concern to Evadne from the first. She took a grave view of their vagaries, and entertained doubts on the subject of their salvation, should an "All-wise Providence" catch them peering into a sewer, resolve itself into a poisonous gas, and cut them off suddenly—a fate which had actually overtaken a small brother of her own who was not a good little boy either—a fact which was the cause of much painful reflection to Evadne. She understood all about the drain and the poisonous gas, but she could not fit in the "All-wise Providence acting only for the best," which was introduced as primary agent in the sad affair by "their dear Mr. Campbell," as her mother called him, in "a most touching and strengthening" discourse he delivered from the pulpit on the subject. If Binny were naughty—and Binny *was* naughty beyond all hope of redemption, according to the books, there could be no doubt about that, for he not only committed one, but each and every sin sufficient in itself for condemnation, all in one day, too, when he could, and twice

over if there were time. He disobeyed orders. He fought cads. He stole apples. He told lies—in fact, he preferred to tell lies; truth had no charm for him. And all these things he was in the habit of doing regularly to the best of his ability when he was "cut off;" and how such an end could be all for the best, if the wicked must perish, and it is not good to perish, was the puzzle. There was something she could not grasp of a contradictory nature in it all that tormented her. The doctrine of Purgatory might have been a help, but she had not heard of it.

She told the twins the story of Binny's sad end once in the orthodox way, as a warning, but the warning was the only part of it which failed to impress them. "And do you know," she said solemnly, "there were some green apples found in his pockets after he was dead, actually!"

"What a pity!" Diavolo exclaimed. If they had been found in his stomach it would have been so much more satisfactory. "How did he get the apples? Off the tree or out of the store-room?"

"I don't know," said Evadne.

"They wouldn't have green apples in the store-room," Angelica thought.

"Oh, yes, they might," Diavolo considered. "Those big cooking fellows, you know—they're green enough."

"But they're not nice," said Angelica.

"No, but you don't think of that till you've got them," was the outcome of Diavolo's experience. "Is your store-room on the ground floor?" he asked Evadne.

"No," she answered.

"Is there a creeper outside the window?" he pursued.

"No, creepers won't grow because a big lime-tree overhangs it."

The children exchanged glances.

"I shouldn't have made that room a store-room," said Angelica. "Lime trees bring flies. There's something flies like on the leaves."

"But any tree will bring flies if you smear the leaves with sweet

stuff," said Diavolo. "You remember that copper-beech outside papa's dressing-room window, Angelica?"

"Yes," she said thoughtfully. "He had to turn out of his dressing-room this summer; he couldn't stand them."

"But was Binny often caught, Evadne?" Diavolo asked.

"Often," she said.

"And punished?"

"*Always.*"

"But I suppose he had generally eaten the apples?" Angelica, suggested, anxiously.

"It's better to eat them at once," sighed Diavolo. "Did you say he did everything he was told not to do?"

"Yes."

"I expect when he was told not to do a thing, he could not think of anything else until he *had* done it," said Angelica.

"And now he's in heaven," Diavolo speculated, looking up through the window with big bright eyes, pathetically.

The twins thought a good deal about heaven in their own way. Lady Adeline did not like them to be talked to on the subject. They were indefatigable explorers, and it was popularly supposed that only the difficulty of being present at an inquest on their own bodies, which they would have thoroughly enjoyed, had kept them so far from trying to obtain a glimpse of the next world. They discovered the store-room at Fraylingay half-an-hour after they had discussed the improving details of Binny's exciting career, and had found it quite easy of access by means of the available lime-tree. They both suffered a good deal that night, and they thought of Binny. "But there's nothing in *our* pockets, that's one comfort," Diavolo exclaimed suddenly, to the astonishment of his mother who was sitting up with him. Angelica heaved a sigh of satisfaction.

Evadne's patience with the twins was wonderful. She always took charge of them cheerfully on wet days and in other times of trouble, and managed them with infinite tact.

"How do you do it, my dear ?" Lady Adeline asked. "Do you talk to them and tell them stories ?"

"No," said Evadne, "I don't talk much, I—just don't lose sight of them—or interfere—if I can possibly help it."

The twins had no reverence for anything or anybody. One day they were in Evadne's little sitting-room which overlooked the court-yard. It was an ante-chamber to her bedroom, and peculiarly her own by right of primogeniture. Nobody ever thought of going there without her special permission—except, of course, the twins; but even they assumed hypocritical airs of innocent apology for accidental intrusion when they wanted to make things pleasant for themselves.

On this particular occasion Evadne was sitting beside her little work-table busy with her needle, and the twins were standing together looking out of the window.

"There's papa," said Diavolo.

"He's going for a ride," said Angelica.

"Doesn't he mount queerly?" Diavolo observed. "He'd be safer in a bath chair."

"Not if we were wheeling him," Angelica suggested, with a chuckle.

"What shall we do?" yawned Diavolo. "Shall we fight?"

"Yes; let's," said Angelica.

"You must do no such thing," Evadne interfered.

"Not fight! Why?" Angelica demanded.

"We *must* fight, you know," Diavolo asserted.

"I don't see that," said Evadne. "Why should you fight?"

"It's good for the circulation of the blood," said Angelica. "Warms a body, you know."

"And there's the property, too!" said Diavolo. "We've got to fight for that."

Evadne did not understand, so Angelica kindly explained: "You see, I'm the eldest, but Diavolo's a boy, so he gets the property

because of the entail, and we neither of us think it fair; so we fight for it, and whichever wins is to have it. I won the last battle, so it's mine just now; but Diavolo may win it back if we fight again before papa dies. That's why he wants to fight now, I expect."

"Yes," Diavolo candidly confessed. "But we generally fight when we see papa go out for a ride."

"Because you are afraid he will catch you and punish you, as you deserve, if he's at home, I suppose, you bad children."

"Not at all," said Angelica. "It's because he looks so unsafe on a horse; you never know what'll happen."

"It's a kind of a last chance," said Diavolo, "and that makes it exciting."

"But wouldn't you be very sorry if your father died?" Evadne asked.

The twins looked at each other doubtfully.

"Should we?" Diavolo said to Angelica.

"I wonder?" said Angelica.

One wet day they chose to paint in Evadne's room because they could not go out. She found pictures, and got everything ready for them good-naturedly, and then they sat themselves down at a little table opposite each other; but the weather affected their spirits, and made them both fractious. They wanted the same picture to begin with, and only settled the question by demolishing it in their attempts to snatch it from each other. Then there was only one left between them, but happily they remembered that artists sometimes work at the same picture, and it further occurred to them that it would be an original method—or "funny" as they phrased it—for one of them to work at it wrong side up. So Angelica daubed the sky blue on her side of the table, and Diavolo flung green on the fields from his. They had large genial mouths at that time, indefinite noses, threatening to turn up a little, and bright dark eyes, quick-glancing, but with no particular expression in them—no symptom either of love or hate, nothing but living interest. It was pretty to

see Diavolo's fair head touching Angelica's dark one across the little table ; but when it came too close, Angelica would dunt it sharply out of the way with her own, which was apparently the harder of the two, and Diavolo would put up his hand and rub the spot absently. He was too thoroughly accustomed to such sisterly attentions to be altogether conscious of them.

The weather darkened down.

"I wish I could see," he grumbled.

"Get out of your own light," said Angelica.

"How can I get out of my own light when there isn't any light to get out of?"

Angelica put her paint brush in her mouth, and looked up at the window thoughtfully.

"Let's make it into a song," she said.

"Let's," said Diavolo, intent upon making blue and yellow into green.

"No light have we, and that we do resent,
And learning this, the weather will relent.
Repent! Relent! Ah-men."

Angelica sang. Diavolo paused with his brush half way to his mouth, and nodded intelligently.

"Now!" said Angelica, and they repeated the parody together, Angelica making a perfect second to Diavolo's exquisite treble.

Evadne looked up from her work surprised. Her own voice was contralto, but it would have taken her a week to learn to sing a second from the notes, and she had never dreamt of making one.

"I didn't know you could sing," she said.

"Oh, yes, we can sing," Angelica answered cheerfully. "We've a decided talent for music."

"Angelica can make a song in a moment," said Diavolo. "Let me paint your nose green, Evadne."

"You can paint mine if you like," said Angelica.

"No, I shan't. I shall paint my own."

"No, you paint mine, and I'll paint yours," Angelica suggested.

"Well, both together, then," Diavolo answered.

"Honest Injin," Angelica agreed, and they set to work.

Evadne sat with her embroidery in her lap and watched them. Their faces would have to be washed in any case, and they might as well be washed for an acre as for an inch of paint. She never nagged with, "Don't do this," and "Don't do that" about everything, if their offences could be summed up, and wiped out in some such way all at once.

"We'll sing you an anthem some day," Angelica presently promised.

"Why not now?" said Evadne.

"The spirit does not move us," Diavolo answered.

"But you may forget," said Evadne.

"We never forget our promises," Angelica protested as proudly as was possible with a green nose.

Nor did they, curiously enough. They made a point of keeping their word, but in their own way, and this one was kept in due course. The time they chose was when a certain Grand Duke was staying in the house. They had quite captivated him, and he expressed a wish to hear them sing.

"Shall we?" said Diavolo.

"We will," said Angelica. "Not because he's a prince, but because we promised Evadne an anthem, and we might as well do it now," she added with true British independence.

The Prince chuckled.

"What shall it be?" said Diavolo, settling himself at the piano. He always played the accompaniments.

"*Papa*, I think," said Angelica.

"What is '*Papa*'?" Lady Adeline asked anxiously.

"Very nice, or you wouldn't have married him," answered Angelica. "Go on, Diavolo. If you sing flat, I'll slap you."

"If you're impertinent, miss, I'll put you out," Diavolo retorted.

"Go on," said Evadne, sharply, fearing a fight.

But to everybody's intense relief the Prince laughed, and then the twins' distinguished manners appeared in a new and agreeable light.

"*Papa—Papa—Papa—*," they sang—"*Papa says—that we—that we—that we are little devils! and so we are—we are—we are and ever shall be—world without end.*"

"*I am a chip,*" Diavolo trilled exquisitely; "*I am a chip.*"

"*Thou art a chip—Thou art a chip,*" Angelica responded.

"*We are both chips,*" they concluded harmoniously—"*chips of the old—old block! And as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!*"

"You sang that last phrase flat, you—*pulp!*" cried Angelica.

"I can't both sing and play," Diavolo protested.

"You'll say you can't eat and breathe next," she retorted, giving his hair a tug.

"What did you do that for?" he demanded.

"Just to waken you up," she answered.

"Are they always like this?" the Prince asked, much edified.

"This is nothing," groaned Mr. Hamilton-Wells.

"Nothing if it is not genius," the Prince suggested, gracefully.

"The ineffectual genius of the nineteenth century, I fancy, which betrays itself by strange incongruities and contrasts of a violent kind, but is otherwise unproductive," Mrs. Orton Beg whispered to Mr. Frayling, incautiously.

Lady Adeline looked up: "I could not help hearing," she said.

"Oh, Adeline, I am sorry!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed.

"*I* thank you," said Lady Adeline, sighing. "Courtly phrases are pleasant plums, even to latter-day palates which are losing all taste for such dainties; but they are not nourishing. I would rather know my children to be merely naughty, and spend my time in trying to make them good, than falsely flatter myself that there

is anything great in them, and indulge them on that plea, until I had thoroughly confirmed them in faults which I ought to have been rigorously repressing."

"You're right there," said Mr. Frayling; "but all the same, you'll be able to make a good deal of that boy, or I'm much mistaken. And as for Angelica, why, when she is at the head of an establishment of her own, she will require all her smartness. But teach her housekeeping, Lady Adeline, that is the thing for *her*."

Evadne was sitting near her father, not taking part in the conversation, but attending to it; and Lady Adeline, happening to look at her at this moment, saw something which gave her "pause to ponder." Evadne's face recalled somewhat the type of old Egypt, Egypt with an intellect added. Her eyes were long and apparently narrow, but not so in reality—a trick she had of holding them half shut habitually gave a false impression of their size, and veiled the penetration of their glance also, which was exceptionally keen. In moments of emotion, however, she would open them to the full unexpectedly, and then the effect was startling and peculiar; and it was one of these transient flashes which surprised Lady Adeline when Mr. Frayling made that last remark. It was a mere gleam, but it revealed Evadne to Lady Adeline as a flash of lightning might have revealed a familiar landscape on a dark night. She saw what she expected to see, but all transformed, and she saw something beyond, which she did not expect, and could neither comprehend nor forget. So far, she had only thought of Evadne as a nice quiet little thing with nothing particular in her; from that evening, however, she suspended her opinion, suspecting something, but waiting to know more. Evadne was then in her eighteenth year, but not yet out.

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Orton Beg was a sister of Mrs. Frayling's, and an oracle to Evadne. Mrs. Frayling was fair, plump, sweet, yielding, commonplace, prolific; Mrs. Orton Beg was a barren widow, slender, sincere, silent, firm and tender. Mrs. Frayling, for lack of insight, was unsympathetic; Mrs. Orton Beg was just the opposite; and she and Evadne understood each other, and were silent together in the most companionable way in the world.

When Evadne went to her own room on the evening made memorable by the twins' famous anthem, she was haunted by that word "ineffectual," which Mrs. Orton Beg had used. "Ineffectual genius"—there was something familiar as well as high sounding in the epithet; it recalled an idea with which she was already acquainted; what was it? She opened her *Commonplace Book*, and sat with her pen in her hand, cogitating comfortably. She had no need to weary her fresh young brain with an irritating pursuit of what she wanted; she had only to wait, and it would recur to her. And presently it came. Her countenance brightened. She bent over the book and wrote a few lines; read them when she had blotted them, and was satisfied.

"I have it," she wrote. "Shelley=genius of the nineteenth century—'Beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain.'—*Matthew Arnold.*"

When she had done this, she took up a book, went to the fire, settled herself in an easy chair, and began to read. The book was *Ruth*, by Mrs. Gaskell, and she was just finishing it. When she had done so, she went back to the table, and copied out the following paragraph:—

"The daily life into which people are born, and into which they are absorbed before they are aware, forms chains which only one in a hundred has moral strength enough to despise, and to break when the right time comes—when an inward necessity for independent action arises, which is superior to all outward conventionalities."

She stopped here, and pushed the volume away from her. It was the only passage in it which she cared to remember.

She had lost the confidence of the child by this time, and become humbly doubtful of her own opinion; and instead of summing up *Ruth* boldly, as she would have done the year before, she paused now a moment to reflect before she wrote with diffidence:—

"The principal impression this book has made upon me is that Mrs. Gaskell must have been a very lovable woman.* The story seems to me long drawn out, and of small significance. It is full of food for the heart, but the head goes empty away, and both should be satisfied by a work of fiction, I think. But perhaps it is my own mood that is at fault. At another time I might have found gems in it which now in my dulness I have failed to perceive."

Somebody knocked at the door as she blotted the words.

"Come in, auntie," she said, as if in answer to an accustomed signal; and Mrs. Orton Beg entered in a long, loose, voluminously draped, white wrapper.

Evadne drew an easy chair to the fire for her.

"Sit down, auntie," she said, "and be cosy. You are late to-night. I was afraid you were not coming."

Mrs. Orton Beg was in the habit of coming to Evadne's room every evening when she was at Fraylingay, to chat, or sit silently sociable over the fire with her before saying good night.

"Do I ever fail you?" she asked, smiling.

"No. But I have been afraid of the fatal fascination of that great fat foreign Prince. He singled you out for special attention, and I have been jealous."

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* George Eliot thought so too, years before Evadne was born, and expressed the thought in a letter in which she also prophesied that *Ruth* would not live through a generation. The impression the book made upon Evadne is another proof of prescience in the great writer.

"Well, you need not have been, for he singled me out in order to talk about you. He thinks you are a nice child. You interest him."

"Defend me!" said Evadne. "But you mistake me, dear aunt. It was not of him I was jealous, but of you. The fat Prince is nothing to me, and you are a very great deal."

Mrs. Orton Beg's face brightened at the words, but she continued to look into the fire silently for some seconds after Evadne had spoken, and made no other visible sign of having heard them.

"I don't think I ought to encourage you to sit up so late," she said presently. "Lady Adeline has just been asking me who it is that burns the midnight oil up here so regularly."

"Lady Adeline must be up very late herself to see it," said Evadne. "I suppose those precious twins disturb her. I wish she would let me take entire charge of them when she is here. It would be a relief, I should think!"

"It would be an imposition," said Mrs. Orton Beg. "But you are a brave girl, Evadne. *I* would not venture."

"Oh, they delight me," Evadne answered. "And I know them well enough now to forestall them."

"When I told Lady Adeline that these were your rooms," her aunt pursued, "she said something about a lily maid high in her chamber up a tower to the east guarding the sacred shield of Lancelot."

"Singularly inappropriate," said Evadne. "For my tower is south and west, thank heaven."

"And there isn't a symptom of Lancelot," her aunt concluded.

"Young ladies don't guard sacred shields nowadays," said Evadne.

"No," answered her aunt, glancing over her shoulder at the open book on the table. "They have substituted the sacred *Commonplace Book*—full of thought, I fancy."

"You speak regretfully, auntie; but isn't it better to think and be happy, than to die of atrophy for a sentiment?"

"I don't think it better to extinguish all sentiment. Life without sentiment would be so bald."

"But life with that kind of sentiment doesn't last, it seems, and nobody is benefited by it. It is extreme misery to the girl herself, and she dies young, leaving a legacy of life-long regret and bitterness to her friends. I should think it small comfort to become the subject for a poem or a picture at such a price. And surely, auntie, sentiments which are silly or dangerous would be better extinguished?"

Mrs. Orton Beg smiled at the fire enigmatically.

"But the poem or the picture may become a lasting benefit to mankind," she suggested, presently.

"Humph!" said Evadne.

"You doubt it?"

"Well, you see, auntie, there are two ways of looking at it. When you first come across the poem or the picture which perpetuates the sentiment that slew the girl, and beautifies it, you feel a glow all over, and fancy you would like to imitate her, and think that you would deserve great credit for it if you did. But when you come to consider, there is nothing very noble after all in a hopeless passion for an elderly man of the world who is past being benefited by it, even if he could reciprocate it. Elaine should have married a man of her own age, and made him happy. She would have done some good in her time so, and been saved from setting us a bad example. I think it a sin to make unwholesome sentiments attractive."

"Then Lancelot does not charm you?"

"No," said Evadne thoughtfully. "I should have preferred the King."

"Ah, yes. Because he was the nobler, the more ideal man?"

"No, not exactly," Evadne answered. "But because he was the more wholesome."

"My dear child, are you speaking literally?"

"Yes, auntie."

"Good heavens!" Mrs. Orton Beg, ejaculated softly. "The times *have* changed."

"Yes, we know more now," Evadne answered tranquilly.

"You are fulfilling the promise of your youth, Evadne," her aunt remarked after a thoughtful pause. "I remember reading a fairy tale of Jean Ingelow's aloud to you children in the nursery long ago. I forget the name of it, but it was the one into which 'One morning, O so early,' comes; and you started a controversy as to whether, speaking of the dove, when the lark said 'Give us glory,' she should have made answer, 'Give us peace' or 'peas.' The latter, you maintained, as being the more natural, and the most sensible."

"I must have been a horrid little prig in those days," said Evadne, smiling. "But, auntie, there can be no peace without plenty. And I think I would rather be a sensible realist than a foolish idealist. You mean that you think me too much of a utilitarian, do you not?"

"You are in danger, I think."

"Utilitarianism is Bentham's *greatest happiness principle*, is it not?" Evadne asked.

"Yes—greatest human happiness," her aunt replied.

"Well, I don't know how that can be dangerous in principle. But, of course, I know nothing of such questions practically. Only I do seem to perceive that you must rest on a solid basis of real advantages before you can reach up to ideal perfection with any chance of success."

"You seem to be very wide-awake to-night, Evadne," Mrs. Orton Beg rejoined. "This is the first I have heard of your peculiar views."

"Oh, I am a kind of owl, I think, auntie," Evadne answered apologetically. "You see, I never had anything to do in the schoolroom that I could not manage when I was half asleep, and so I

formed a habit of dozing over my lessons by day, and waking up when I came to bed at night. Having a room of my own always has been a great advantage. I have been secure all along of a quiet time at night for reading and thought—and that is real life, auntie, isn't it? I don't care to talk much, as a rule, do you? I like to listen and watch people. But I always wake up at this time of the night, and I feel as if I could be quite garrulous now when everybody else is going to sleep. But, auntie, don't use such an ominous expression as 'peculiar views' about anything I say, *please;* 'views' are always in ill-odour, and peculiarities, even peculiar perfections, would isolate one, and that I *do* dread. It would be awful to be out of sympathy with one's fellow creatures, and have them look suspiciously at one; and it would be no comfort to me to know that want of sympathy is the proof of a narrow nature, and that suspicion is the inevitable outcome of ignorance and stupidity. I don't want to despise my fellow creatures. I would rather share their ignorance and conceit and be sociable, than find myself isolated even by a very real superiority. The one would be pleasant enough, I should think, the other pain beyond all bearing of it."

Mrs. Orton Beg's heart contracted with a momentary fear for her niece, but she dismissed it promptly.

"The room to yourself has been a doubtful advantage, I fancy," she said. "It has made you theoretical. But you will lose all that by-and-by. And in the meantime, you must remember that in such matters we have small choice. We are born with superior or inferior faculties, and must make use of them, such as they are, to become inferior cooks or countesses, or superior ditto, as the case may be. But there are always plenty of one's own kind, whichever it is, to consort with. Birds of a feather, you know. You need not be afraid of being isolated."

"You are thinking of ordinary faculties, auntie. I was thinking of extraordinary. But even with ordinary ones we are hampered.

Birds of a feather would flock together if they could, of course, but then they can't always; and suppose, being superior, you find yourself forced to associate with inferior cooks of your kind, what then?"

"Be their Queen."

"Which, unless you were a Queen of Hearts, would really amount to being an object of envy and dislike, and that brings us back to the point from which we started."

"Evadne, you talk like a book; go to bed!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed, laughing.

"It is you who have made me talk, then," Evadne rejoined promptly, "and I feel inclined to ask now, with all proper respect, what has come to you? It must be the Prince!"

"Yes, it must be the Prince!" Mrs. Orton Beg responded, raising her slender white hand to smother a yawn. "And it must be good night, too—or rather, good morning! Just look at the clock. It is nearly three."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next morning all the guests left Fraylingay, and the family there settled into their accustomed grooves. Evadne and her father walked and rode, conversing together as usual, he enjoying the roll and rumble and fine flavour of his own phrase-making amazingly, and she also impressed by the roll and rumble. But when it was all over, and he had marched off in triumph, she would collect the mutilated remains of the argument and examine them at her leisure, and in nine cases out of ten it proved to be quartz that he had crushed and contemned, overlooking the gold it contained, but releasing it for her to find and add exultingly to her own collection. In this way, therefore, she continued to obtain her wealth of ore from him, and both were satisfied—he, because he was sure that, thanks to him, she was "a thoroughly sensible girl with no nonsense of new-fangled notions about her;" and she because, being his daughter, she had not altogether escaped the form of mental *myopia* from which he suffered, and was in the habit of seeing only what she hoped and wished to see in those she loved. Man, the unjust and iniquitous, was to her always the outside, vague, theoretical man of the world; never the dear undoubted papa at home.

Evadne was the eldest of six girls, and their mother had a comfortable as-it-was-in-the-beginning-is-now-and-ever-shall-be feeling about them all; but she prided herself most upon Evadne as answering in every particular to the conventional idea of what a young lady should be.

"The dear child," she wrote to Lady Adeline, "is *all* and *more* than we dared to hope to have her become. I can assure you she has never caused me a moment's anxiety in her life, except, of course, such anxiety for her health and happiness as every mother must feel. I have had her educated with the

utmost care, and her father has, I may say, *devoted* himself to the task of influencing her in the right direction in matters of opinion, and has ably seconded all my endeavours in other respects. She speaks French and German *well*, and knows a little Italian; in fact, I may say that she has a special aptitude for languages. She does not draw, but is a fair musician, and is still having lessons, being most anxious to improve herself; and she sings very sweetly. But, best of all, as I am sure you will agree with me, I notice in her a deeply-religious disposition. She is *really* devout, and beautifully reverential in her manner both in church and to us, her parents, and, indeed, to all who are older and wiser than herself. She is very clever too, they tell me; but of course I am no judge of that. I do know, however, that she is perfectly innocent, and I am indeed thankful to think that at eighteen she knows nothing of the world and its wickedness, and is therefore eminently qualified to make somebody an excellent wife; and all I am afraid of is that the destined somebody will come for her all too soon, for I cannot bear to think of parting with her. She is not *quite* like other girls in *some* things, I am afraid—mere trifles, however—as for instance about her presentation. I know *I* was in quite a flutter of excitement for days before *I* was presented, and was quite bewildered with agitation at the time; but Evadne displayed no emotion whatever. I never knew *anyone* so equable as she is; in fact, *nothing* seems to ruffle her wonderful calm; it is almost provoking sometimes! On the way home she would not have made a remark, I think, if I had not spoken to her. 'Don't you think it was a very pretty sight?' I said at last. 'Yes,' she answered doubtfully; and then she added with genuine feeling: '*Mais il-y-a des longuers!* O, mother, the hours we have spent hanging about draughty corridors, half dressed and shivering with cold; and the crowding and crushing, and unlovely faces, all looking so miserable and showing the discomfort and fatigue they were enduring so plainly! I call it positive suffering, and I never want to see another Drawing Room. My soul desires nothing now but decent clothing and hot tea.' And that is all she has ever said about the Drawing Room in my hearing. But wasn't it a very curious view for a girl to take? Of course, the arrangements are detestable, and one does suffer a great deal from cold and fatigue, and for want of refreshments; but still *I* never thought of those things when *I* was a girl, did you? I never thought of anything in fact but whether I was looking my best or not. Don't let me make you imagine, however, that Evadne was whining and querulous. She never is, you know; and I should call her tone sorrowful if it were not so absurd for a girl to be saddened by the sight of other people in distress—well, not quite in distress, that is an exaggeration; but at all events not quite comfortably situated—on what was really one of the greatest occasions of her own life. I am half inclined to fear that she may not be quite so strong as we have always thought her, and that she was depressed by the long fasting and fatigue, which would account for a momentary morbidness.

"But excuse my garrulity. I always have so much to say to *you!* I will spare you any more for the present, however, only *do* tell me all about yourself

and your own lovely children. And how is Mr. Hamilton-Wells? Remember that you are to come to us, twins and all, on your way home as usual this year. We are anxiously expecting you, and I hope your next letter will fix the day.—Ever, dear Adeline, your loving friend, ELIZABETH FRAYLING.

"P.S.—We return to Fraylingay to-morrow, so please write to me there."

The following is Lady Adeline's reply to Mrs. Frayling's letter :—

"Hamilton House, Morningquest, 30th July.

"My dear Elizabeth,—I am afraid you will have been wondering what h become of us, but I know you will acquit me of all blame for the long delay in answering your letter when I tell you that I have only just received it! We had left Paris before it arrived for (what is always to me) a tiresome tour about the Continent, and it has been following us from pillar to post, finally reaching me here at home, where we have been settled a fortnight. I had not forgotten your kind invitation, but I am afraid I must give up all idea of going to you this year. We hurried back because Mr. Hamilton-Wells became home sick suddenly while we were abroad, and I don't think it will be possible to get him to move again for some time. But won't you come to us? Do, dear, and bring your just-come-out, and, I am sure, most charming, Evadne for our autumn gaieties. If Mr. Frayling would come too, we should be delighted, but I know he has a poor opinion of *our* coverts, and I despair of being able to tempt him from his own shooting; and, therefore, I ask *you*, first and foremost, in the hope that you will be able to come whether he does or not.

"I have been thinking much of all you have told me about Evadne. She had already struck me as being a most interesting child and full of promise, and I do hope that now she is out of the schoolroom I shall see more of her. I know you will trust her to me—although I do think that in parts of her education you have been acting by the half-light of a past time, and following a method now out of date. I cannot agree, for instance, that it is either right or wise to keep a girl in ignorance of the laws of her own being, and of the state of the community in which she will have to pass her existence. While she is at an age to be influenced in the right way she should be fully instructed, by those she loves, and not left to obtain her knowledge of the world haphazard from anyone with whom accident may bring her acquainted—people, perhaps, whose point of view may not only differ materially from her parents, but be extremely offensive to them. The first impression in these matters, you know, is all important, and my experience is that what you call "beautiful innocence," and what I consider *dangerous ignorance*, is not a safe state in which to begin the battle of life. In the matter of marriage especially an ignorant girl may be fatally deceived, and indeed I have known cases in which the man who was liked well enough as a companion, was found to be objectionable in an unendurable degree as soon as he became a husband.

"You will think I am tainted with new notions, and I do hope I am in so far as these notions are juster and better than the old ones. For, surely, the elder ages did not discover all that is wisdom; and certainly there is still room for 'nobler modes of life' and 'sweeter manners, purer laws.' If this were not allowed, moral progress must come to a standstill. So I say, 'instruct! instruct!' The knowledge must come sooner or later; let it come wholesomely. A girl must find out for herself if she is not taught, and she may, in these plain-spoken times, obtain a whole erroneous theory of life and morality from a newspaper report which she reads without intention in an idle moment while enjoying her afternoon tea. We are in a state of transition, we women, and the air is so full of ideas that it would be strange if an active mind did not catch some of them; and I find myself that stray theories swallowed whole without due consideration are of uncertain application, difficult in the working, if not impracticable, and apt to disagree. Theories should be absorbed in detail as dinner is, if they are to become an addition to our strength, and not an indigestible item of inconvenience, seriously affecting our mental temper.

"But you ask me about my twins. In health they continue splendid, in spirits they are tremendous, but their tricks are simply terrible. We never know what mischief they will devise next, and Angelica is much the worst of the two. If we had taken them to Fraylingay, it would have been in fear and trembling; but we should have been obliged to take them had we gone ourselves, for they somehow found out that you had asked them and they insisted upon going, and threatened to burn down Hamilton House in our absence if we did not take them, a feat which we doubt not they would have accomplished had they had a mind to. Indeed, I cannot tell you what these children are! Imagine their last device to extort concessions from their father. You know how nervous he is; well, if he will not do all that they require of him, they blow him up literally and actually! They put little trains of gunpowder about in unexpected places, with lucifer matches that go off when they are trodden upon, and you can imagine the consequence! I told him what it would be when he would spoil them so, but it was no use, and now they rule him instead of him them, so that he has to enter into solemn compacts with them about not infringing what they call their rights, and, only fancy, he is so fond to foolishness as to be less annoyed by their naughtiness than pleased because, when they promise not to do anything again, 'honest Injun,' as they phrase it, they keep their word. Dr. Galbraith calls them in derision 'The Heavenly Twins.'

"But have I told you about Dr. Galbraith? He is the new master of Fountain Towers, and a charming as well as remarkable man, quite young, being in fact only nine-and-twenty, but already distinguished as a medical man. He became a professional man of necessity, having no expectation at that time of ever inheriting property, but now that he is comparatively speaking a rich man, he continues to practice for the love of science, and also from philanthropic motives. He is a fine looking young man physically, with a strong face

of most attractive plainness, only redeemed from positive ugliness in fact by good grey eyes, white teeth, and an expression which makes you trust him at once. After the first five minutes' conversation with him, I have heard people say that they not only could, but would positively have enjoyed telling him all the things that ever they did, so great is the confidence he inspires. He, and Sir Daniel Galbraith's adopted son—Sir Daniel is Dr. Galbraith's uncle—were my brother Dawne's great friends at Oxford, where the three of them were known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, because they passed unscathed through the burning fiery furnace of tempation to which young men of position at the Universities are exposed. Dr. Galbraith is somewhat abrupt in manner, and quick of temper, but most good-naturedly long-suffering with my terrible children nevertheless. Of course, they impose upon his good-nature. And they are always being punished; but that they do not mind. In fact, I heard Angelica say once: 'It is all in the day's work,' when she had a long imposition to do for something outrageous; and Diavolo called to her over the stairs only yesterday, 'Wait for me a minute in the hall till I've been thrashed for letting the horses and dogs loose, and then we'll go and snare pheasants in the far plantation!' They explained to me once that being found out and punished added the same zest to their pleasures that cayenne pepper does to their diet; a little too much of it stings, but just the right quantity relieves the insipidity and adds to the interest; and then there is the element of uncertainty which has a charm of its own: they never know whether they will 'catch it hot' or not! When they *are* found out, they always confess everything with a frankness which is quite provoking, because they so evidently enjoy the recital of their own misdeeds; and they defend themselves by quoting various anecdotes of the naughty doings of children which have been written for our amusement. And it is in vain that I explain to them that parents who are hurt and made anxious by their children's disobedience cannot see anything to laugh at in their pranks—at least not for a very long time afterwards. They pondered this for some time, and then arrived at the conclusion that when they were grown up and no longer a nuisance to me, I should be a 'very jolly old lady,' because I should have such a lot of funny stories all my own to tell people.

"But I shall weary you with this inexhaustible subject. You must forgive me if I do, for I am terribly anxious about my young Turks. If they are equal to such enormities in the green leaf, I am always asking myself, what will they do in the dry? I own that my sense of humour is tickled sometimes, but never enough to make me forget the sense of danger, present and to come, which all this keeps for ever alive. Come and comfort me, and tell me how you have made your own children so charming.—Ever lovingly yours, ADELINE HAMILTON-WELLS."

Mrs. Frayling wrote a full account of Evadne's presentation at

Court to her sister, Mrs. Orton Beg—who was wandering about Norway by herself at the time—and concluded her description of the dear child's gown, very charming appearance and dignified self-possession, with some remarks about her character to the same effect as those which she had addressed to Lady Adeline. It was natural, perhaps, that the last conversation Mrs. Orton Beg had had with Evadne at Fraylingay, which was in fact the first articulate outcome of Evadne's self-training, coming as it did at the end of a day of pleasurable interest and excitement, should have made no immediate impression upon her tired faculties; but she recollected it now and smiled as she read her sister's letter. "If that is all you know of your daughter, my dear Elizabeth," was her mental comment, "I fancy there will be surprises at Fraylingay!" But, in reply, she merely observed that she was glad Evadne was so satisfactory. She was too wise a woman to waste words on her sister Elizabeth, who, in consequence of having had them in abundance to squander all her life long, had lost all sense of their value, and would have failed to appreciate the force which they collect in the careful keeping of such silent folk as Mrs. Orton Beg.

Mrs. Frayling was not able to accept Lady Adeline's invitation that year.

CHAPTER IX.

This was the period when Evadne looked out of narrow eyes at an untried world inquiringly, and was warmed to the heart by what she saw of it. Theoretically, people are cruel and unjust, but practically to an attractive young lady of good social position and just out, their manners are most agreeable; and when Evadne returned to Fraylingay after her first season in town, she thought less and sang more.

> "A little bird in the air,
> Is singing of Thyri the fair,
> The sister of Svend the Dane;
> And the song of the garrulous bird
> In the streets of the town is heard,
> And repeated again and again"

She carolled about the house, while the dust collected upon her books. She took up one old favourite after another when she first returned, but her attention wandered from her best beloved, and all that were solid came somehow to be set aside and replaced, the nourishing fact by inflated fiction, reason and logic by rhyme and rhythm, and sense by sentimentality, so far had her strong simple earnest mind deteriorated in the unwholesome atmosphere of London drawing-rooms. It was only a phase of course, and she could have been set right at once had there been anybody there to prescribe a strengthening tonic; but failing that, she tried sweet stimulants that soothed and excited, but did not nourish; tales that caused chords of pleasurable emotion to vibrate while they fanned the higher faculties into inaction—vampire things inducing that fatal repose which enables them to drain the soul of its life-blood and compass its destruction. But Evadne escaped without perma-

nent injury, for, fortunately for herself, amongst much that was far too sweet to be wholesome, she discovered Oliver Wendell Holmes' *The Breakfast Table Series*, *Elsie Venner*, and *The Guardian Angel*, and was insensibly fixed in her rightful place and sustained by them.

Holmes

The sun streaming into her room one morning at this time awoke her early and tempted her up and out. There was a sandy space beyond the grounds, a long level of her father's land extending to the eastern cliffs, and considered barren by him, but rich with a certain beauty of its own, the beauty of open spaces which rest and relieve the mind; and of immensity in the shining sea-line beyond the cliffs, and the arching vault of the sky overhead dipping down to encircle the earth; and of colour for all moods from the vividest green of grass and yellow of gorse to the amethyst ling, and the browns with which the waning year tipped every bush and bramble—things which, when properly appreciated, make life worth living. It was in this direction that Evadne walked, taking it without design, but drawn insensibly as by a magnet to the sea.

She had thought herself early up, but the whole wild world of the heath was before her, and she began to feel belated as she went. There was a suspicion of frost in the air which made it deliciously fresh and exhilarating. The early morning mists still hung about, but the sun was brightly busy dispelling them. The rabbits were tripping hither and thither, too intent on their own business to pay much heed to Evadne. A bird sprang up from her feet, and soared out of sight, and she paused a moment with upturned face, dilated eyes, and lips apart, to watch him. But a glimpse of the gorse recalled her, and she picked some yellow blooms with delicate finger tips, and carried them in her bare hand, savouring the scent, and at the same time looking and listening with an involuntary straining to enjoy the perception of each separate delicate delight at once, till presently the enthusiasm of nature called forth some further faculty,

"further faculty," as in Beth Book

and she found herself sensible of every tint and tone, sight and sound, distinguishing, deciphering, but yet perceiving all together as the trained ear of a musician does the parts played by every instrument in an orchestra, and takes cognizance of the whole effect as well.

At the end of the waste there was a little church overlooking the sea. She saw that the door was open as she approached it, and she paused to look in. The early week-day service was in progress. A few quiet figures sat apart in the pews. The light was subdued. Something was being read aloud by a voice of caressing quality and musical. She did not attend to the words, but the tone satisfied. It seemed to her that the peace of God invited, and she slipped into the nearest pew. She found a Bible on the seat beside her, and opening it haphazard, her eyes fell upon the words:

"*They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.*"

The lap of the little waves on the beach below was distinctly audible, the bird-calls, and their twitterings, intermittent, incessant, persistent, came close and departed; and the fragrance of the blossoms, crushed in her hand, rose to remind her they were there.

"*They that go down to the sea in ships.*"

It was a passage to be felt at the moment with the sea itself so near, and as she paused to ponder it, her mind attuned itself involuntarily to the habit of holy thought associated with the place, while the scents and sounds of nature streamed in upon her, forming now a soft undercurrent, now a delicious accompaniment which filled the interval between what she knew of this world and all that she dreamt of the next. The cycle of sensation was complete, and in a moment her whole being blossomed into gladness. Her intellectual activity was suspended—her senses awoke. It was the morning of life with her, and she sank upon her knees, and lifted up

her heart to express the joy of it in one ecstatic note : " O blessed Lord ! "

Lord of the happy earth ! Lord of the sun and our senses He who comes to us first in Love's name, and bids us rejoice and be glad ; not He who would have us mourn.

CHAPTER X.

After the experiences of that early morning's walk, Evadne did not go to bed so late; she got up early and went to church. The agreeable working of her intellectual faculties during the early part of her absorbing self-education had kept her senses in abeyance; but when the discipline of all regular routine was relaxed, they were set free to get the upper hand if they would, and now they had begun to have their way—a delicate dreamy way of a surety, but it was a sensuous way nevertheless, and not at all a spiritual way, as her mother maintained it to be, because of the church-going. Sometimes sense, sometimes intellect, is the first to awake in us—supposing we are dowered with an intellect; but pain, which is the perfecting of our nature, must precede the soul's awakening, and for Evadne at that age with her limited personal knowledge of life, and scant experience of every form of human emotion which involves suffering, such an awakening was impossible. The first feeling of a girl as happily situated, healthy-minded, and physically strong as she was, is bound to be pleasurable; and had she been a young man at this time, she would not improbably have sought to heighten and vary her sensations by adding greater quantities of alcohol to her daily diet; she would have grown coarse of skin by eating more than she could assimilate; she would have smelt strongly enough of tobacco as a rule, to try the endurance of a barmaid; she would have been anxious about the fit of coats, fastidious as to the choice of ties, quite impossible in the matter of trousers, and prone to regard her own image in the glass caressingly. She would have considered that every petticoat held a divinity, or every woman had her price, according to the direction in which nature had limited her powers of

perception with a view to the final making of her into a sentimental or a vicious fool. When she should have been hard at work, she would have stayed in bed in the morning flattering her imagination with visions of the peerless beauties who would all adore her, and the proud place she would conquer in the world ; and she would have gone girl-stalking in earnest—*probably*—had she been a young man. But being as she was, she got up early, and went to church. It was the one way she had of expressing the silent joy of her being, and of intensifying it. She practised an extreme ritual at this time, and found in it the most complete form of expression for her mood possible. And in those early morning walks when she brushed the dew-bespangled cobwebs from the gorse, and startled the twittering birds from their morning meal ; in the caressing of healthy odours, the uplifting of all sweet natural sounds, the soothing of the great sea-voice, the sense of infinity in the level landscape, of beauty in form and colour, of rest and peace in the grateful shadow of the little church on the cliff ; but, above all, in the release from mental tension, and the ease of feeling after the strain of thought, she found the highest form of pleasure she had tasted, the most rarefied, the most intense. The St. Valentine's Day of her development was approaching, and her heart had begun already to practise the notes of the song-significant into which she would burst when it came.

It is a nice question that, as to where the sensuous ends, and the spiritual begins. The dovetail is so exact just at the junction, that it is impossible to determine, and it is there that " spirit and flesh grow one with delight " on occasion ; but the test of the spiritual lies in its continuity. Pleasures of the senses pall upon repetition, but pleasures of the soul continue and increase. A delicate dish soon wearies the palate, but the power to appreciate a poem or a picture grows greater the more we study them—illustrations as trite, by-the-way, as those of the average divine in his weekly sermon, but calculated to comfort to the same extent in that they possess the charm of familiarity which satisfies self-love by proving that we

know quite as much of some subjects as those who profess to teach them. Still, a happy condition of the senses may easily be mistaken for a great outpouring of spiritual enthusiasm, and many an aspiring soul unconsciously stimulates them in ways less pardonable perhaps than the legitimate joy of a good dinner to a hungry man, or the more subtle pleasure which a refined woman experiences while sharing the communion of well-dressed saints on a cushioned seat, listening to exquisite music, in a fashionable church. Sensations of gladness send some people to church whom grief of any kind would drive from thence effectually. It is a matter of temperament. There are those who are by nature grateful for every good gift, who even bow their heads and suffer meekly if they perceive that they will have their reward, but are ready to rebel with rage against any form of ineffectual pain. This was likely to be Evadne's case. Yet her mother had been right about her having a deeply-religious disposition.

The Vicar in charge of the church on the cliff—he of the musical voice, Mr. Borthwick, by name—became aware at once of Evadne's regular attendance. He was a young man, very earnest, very devout, worn thin with hard work, but happy in that he had it to do, and with that serene expression of countenance which comes of the habit of conscientious endeavour. As a matter of course, with such men at the present time, he sought solace in ritual. His whole nature thrilled to the roll of the organ, to the notes of a grateful anthem, to the sight and scent of his beautiful flowers on the altar, and to the harmony of colour and conventional design on the walls of his little church. He spent his life and his substance upon it, doing what he could to beautify it himself, in the name of the Lord, and finding in the act of worship a refinement of pleasure difficult of attainment, but possible and precious. And while all that sufficed for him, he honestly entertained the idea of celebacy as a condition necessary for the perfect purification of his own soul, and desirable as giving him a place apart which would help to

maintain and strengthen his influence with his people. A layman may remain a bachelor without attracting attention, but a priest who abjures matrimony insists that he makes a sacrifice, and deserves credit for the same. He says that the laws of nature are the laws of God, yet arranges his own life in direct opposition to the greatest of them. He can give no unanswerable reason for maintaining that the legitimate exercise of one set of natural functions is less holy than the exercise of the others, but that is what he believes, and, curiously inconsistent as the conclusion is, the Rev. Henry Borthwick had adopted this view emphatically at the outset of his clerical career, and had announced his intention of adhering to it for the rest of his life. But, just as the snow under the cool and quiet stars at dusk, might feel full force in itself to vow to the rising moon that it will not melt, and find nevertheless of necessity when the sun appears that it cannot keep its vow, so did the idea of celibacy pass from the mind of the Rev. Henry Borthwick when Evadne began to attend his morning services. Insensibly his first view of the subject vanished altogether, and was immediately replaced, first by an uplifting vision of the advantages of having a wife's help in the parish, then by a glimpse of the tender pleasure of a wife's presence in the house; and—extraordinary as it may seem, this final thought occurred to him while the Psalms were being sung in church one morning, so uncertain is the direction of man's mind at any time—he even had a vision of the joy of a wife's kiss when the sweet red lips that gave it were curved like those of the girl before him. He felt a great outpouring of spiritual grace during that service; his powers of devotion were intensified. But the moment it was over, he hurried to the vestry, tore off his surplice and threw it on the floor, met Evadne as she left the church, and lingered long on the cliffs with her in earnest conversation.

She was late for breakfast that morning, and her mother asked her what had detained her.

"Mr. Borthwick was talking to me about the sacraments of the Church, mother," she answered, her calm true eyes meeting her mother's without confusion; "and about the necessity for, and the advantage of, frequent Communions."

"And what do you think about it, dear?"

"I think I should like it."

Her mother said no more. Young Borthwick was a cadet of good family with expectations in the way of money, influence enough to procure him a Deanery at least, and with a reputation for ability which, with his other advantages, gave him as fair a prospect as anybody she knew, of a Bishopric eventually—just the thing for Evadne, she reflected, so she did not interfere.

This was really a happy time for Evadne. The young priest frequently met her after the early service, and she liked his devotion. She liked his clean-featured, close-shaven face too, and his musical voice. He was her perfection of a priest, and when he did not meet her she missed him. She did not care for him so much when he called at the house, however. She associated him somehow with her morning moods, with religious discourses, and the Church Service; but when he ventured beyond these limits, they lost touch, and so she held him down to them rigorously. He tried to resist. He even conceived a distaste for ecclesiastical subjects, and endeavoured to float her attention from these on little boats of fancy phrases made out of the first freshness of new days, the beauty of the sun on the sea, the jade-green of grass on the cliffs, the pleasure he took in the songs of birds, and other more mundane matters; but he lost her sympathetic interest when he did so, receiving her polite attention instead, which was cold in comparison, and therefore did not satisfy him, so he determined to try and come to a perfect understanding, and during one of their morning walks, he startled her by making her a solemn and abrupt offer of marriage.

She considered the proposition in silence for some time. Then

she looked at him as if she had never seen him before. Then she said, not knowing she was cruel, and only desiring to be frank: "I have never thought of you as a man, you know—only as a priest; and in that character I think you perfect. I respect and reverence you. I even love you, but—"

"But what?" he asked eagerly, his delicate face flushing, his whole being held in suspense.

"But I could not marry a priest. It would seem to be a sort of sacrilege."

She was very pale when she went in that morning, and her mother noticed it, and questioned her.

"Mr. Borthwick asked me to marry him, mother," she answered straight to the point, as was her wont. "He surprised me."

"*I* am not surprised, dear," her mother rejoined, smiling.

"Did you suppose he would, mother?"

"Yes. I was sure of it."

"Oh, I wish you had warned me!"

"Then you haven't accepted him, Evadne?"

"No. I have always understood that it is not right for a priest to marry, and the idea of marrying one repels me. He has lowered himself in my estimation by thinking of such a thing. I could not think of him as I do of other men. I cannot dissociate him from his office. I expect him somehow to be always about his reading-desk and pulpit."

Mrs. Frayling's face had fallen, but she only said: "I wish you could have felt otherwise, dear."

Evadne went up to her own room, and stood leaning against the frame of the open window, looking out over the level landscape. The poor priest had shown deep feeling, and it was the first she had seen of such suffering. It pained her terribly.

She got up early next morning, and went out as usual; but the scent of the gorse was obtrusive, the bird-voices had lost their

charm, the far-off sound of the sea had a new and melancholy note in it, and the little church on the cliff looked lonely against the sky. She could not go there again to be reminded of what she would fain have forgotten. No; that phase was over. The revulsion of feeling was complete, and to banish all recollection of it she tried with a will to revive the suspended animation of her interest in her books.

CHAPTER XI.

"ALL excitements run to love in women of a certain—let us not say age, but youth," says the Professor. "An electrical current passing through a coil of wire makes a magnet of a bar of iron lying within it, but not touching it. So a woman is turned into a love-magnet by a tingling current of life running round her. I should like to see one of them balanced on a pivot properly adjusted, and watch if she did not turn so as to point north and south, as she would, if the love-currents are like those of the earth, our mother."

This passage indicates exactly the point at which Evadne had now arrived, and where she was pausing.

The attempt to return to her books had been far from successful. Her eye would traverse page after page without transferring a single record to her brain, and she would sit with one open in her lap by the hour together, not absorbed in thought but lost in feeling. She was both glad and sad at the same time, glad in her youth and strength, and sad in the sense of something wanting; what was it?

> "If she had—Well! She longed, and knew not wherefore.
> Had the world nothing she might live to care for?
> No second self to say her evening prayer for?"

The poor little bird loved the old nest, but she had unconsciously outgrown it, and was perplexed to find no ease or comfort in it any more.

She certainly entertained the idea of marriage at this time. She had acquired a sort of notion from her friends that it was good to marry, and her own inclinations seconded the suggestion. She

meant to marry when she should find the right man, but the difficulty of choice disturbed her. She had still much of the spirit which made her at twelve see nothing but nonsense in the "Turn, gentle Hermit of the dale" drivel, and she was quite prepared to decide with her mind. She never took her heart into consideration, or the possibility of being overcome by a feeling which is stronger than reason.

She made her future husband a subject of prayer, however. She prayed that he might be an upright man, that he might come to her soon; she even asked for some sign by which she should know him. This was during the morning service in church one Sunday—not the little one on the cliff, which was only a chapel-of-ease; but the Parish Church to which the whole family went regularly. Her thoughts had wandered away from the lesson that was being read to this subject of private devotion, and as she formulated the desire for a sign, for some certainty by which she might know the man whom the dear Lord intended to be her husband, she looked up, and from the other side of the aisle she met a glance that abashed her. She looked away, but her eyes were drawn back inevitably, and this time the glance of those other eyes enlightened her. Her heart bounded—her face flushed. This was the sign, she was sure of it. She had felt nothing like it before, and although she never raised her eyes again, she thrilled through the rest of the service to the consciousness that there, not many yards away, her future husband sat and sighed for her.

After the service, the subject of her thoughts claimed her father's acquaintance, and was introduced by him to her as Major Colquhoun. He looked about thirty-eight, and was a big blond man, with a heavy moustache, and a delicate skin that flushed easily. His hair was thin on the forehead; in a few more years he would be bald there.

Mr. Frayling asked him to lunch, and Evadne sat beside him. She scarcely spoke a word the whole time, or looked at him; but

she knew that he looked at her; and she glowed and was glad. The little church on the cliff seemed a long way off, and out in the cold now. She was sorry for Mr. Borthwick. She had full faith in the sign. Was not the fact that Major Colquhoun, whom she had never even heard of in her life before, was sitting beside her at that moment, confirmation strong, if any were wanting? But she asked no more.

After lunch, her father carried his guest off to smoke, and she went up to her own room to be alone, and sat in the sun by the open window, with her head resting on the back of her chair, looking up at the sky; and sighed, and smiled, and clasped her hands to her breast, and revelled in sensations.

Major Colquhoun had been staying with a neighbouring county gentleman, but she found when she met him again at afternoon tea that her father had persuaded him to come to Fraylingay for some shooting. He was to go back that night, and return to them the following Tuesday. Evadne heard of the arrangement in silence, and unsurprised. Had he gone and *not* returned, she would have wondered; but this sudden admission of a stranger to the family circle, although unusual, was not unprecedented at Fraylingay, where, after it was certain that you knew the right people, pleasant manners were the only passport necessary to secure a footing of easy intimacy; and, besides, it was inevitable—that the sign might be fulfilled. So Evadne folded her hands as it were, and calmly awaited the course of events, not doubting for a moment that she knew exactly what that course was to be.

She did not actually *see* much of Major Colquhoun in the days that followed, although, when he was not out shooting, he was always beside her; but such timid glances as she stole satisfied her. And she heard her mother say what a fine-looking man he was, and her father emphatically pronounced him to be "a very good fellow," He was Irish by his mother's side, Scotch by his father's, but much more Irish than Scotch by predilection, and it was his mother

tongue he spoke, exaggerating the accent slightly to heighten the effect of a tender speech or a good story. With the latter he kept Mr. Frayling well entertained, and Evadne he plied with the former on every possible occasion.

His visit was to have been for a few days only, but it extended itself to some weeks, at the end of which time Evadne had accepted him, the engagement had been announced in the proper papers, Mrs. Frayling was radiant, congratulations poured in, and everybody concerned was in a state of pleasurable excitement from morning till night.

Mrs. Frayling was an affectionate woman, and it was touching to see her writing fluent letters of announcement to her many friends, the smiles on her lips broken by ominous quiverings now and then, and a handkerchief held crumpled in her left hand, and growing gradually damper as she proceeded, with the happy tears that threatened her neat epistle with blots and blisters.

"It has been the prettiest idyl to us onlookers," she wrote to Lady Adeline. "Love at first sight with both of them, and their first glimpse of each other was in church, which we all take to be the happiest omen that God's blessing is upon them, and will sanctify their union. Evadne says little, but there is such a delicate tinge of colour in her cheeks always, and such a happy light in her eyes, that I cannot help looking at her. George is senior Major, and will command the regiment in a very short time, and his means are quite ample enough for them to begin upon. There is twenty years difference in their ages which sounds too much theoretically, but practically, when you see them together, you never think of it. He is very handsome, every inch a soldier, and an Irishman, with all an Irishman's brightness and wit, and altogether the most taking manners. I tell Evadne I am quite in love with him myself! He is a thoroughly good Churchman too, which is a great blessing—never misses a service, and it is a beautiful sight to see him kneeling beside Evadne as rapt and intent as she is. He was rather wild as a young man, I am sorry to say, but he has been quite frank about all that to Mr. Frayling, and there is nothing now that we can object to. In fact, we think he is exactly suited to Evadne, and we are thoroughly satisfied in every way. You can imagine that I find it hard to part with her, but I always knew that it would be the case as soon as she came out, and so was prepared in a way; still, that will not lessen the wrench when it comes. But of course, I must not consider my own feelings when the dear child's happiness is in question, and I think that long engage-

ments are a mistake, and as there is really no reason why they should wait, they are to be married at the end of next month, which gives us only six weeks to get the trousseau. We are going to town at once to see about it, and I think that probably the ceremony will take place there too. It would be such a business at Fraylingay with all the tenants and everything, and altogether one has to consider expense. But do write at once and promise me that we may expect you, and Mr. Hamilton-Wells, and the *dear* twins, wherever it is. In fact I believe Evadne is writing to Theodore at this moment to ask him to be her page, and Angelica will, of course, be a bridesmaid."

During the first days of her absorbing passion, Evadne's devotion to God was intensified. "Sing to the Lord a new song" was for ever upon her lips.

When the question of her engagement came to be mooted, she had had a long talk with her father, following upon a still longer talk which he had with Major Colquhoun.

"And you are satisfied with my choice, father?" she said. "You consider George in every respect a suitable husband for me?"

"In all respects, my dear," he answered heartily. "He is a very fine manly fellow."

"There was nothing in his past life to which I should object?" she ventured timidly.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," he assured her. "He has been perfectly straightforward about himself, and I am satisfied that he will make you an excellent husband."

It was all the assurance she required, and after she had received it, she gave herself up to her happiness without a doubt, and unreservedly.

The time flew. Major Colquhoun's leave expired, and he was obliged to return to his regiment at Shorncliffe; but they wrote to each other every day, and this constant communion was a new source of delight to Evadne. Just before they left Fraylingay, she went to see her aunt, Mrs. Orton Beg. The latter had sprained her ankle severely, and would therefore not be able to go to Evadne's wedding. She lived in Morningquest, and had a little house in the Close there. Morningquest was only twenty miles from Fraylingay,

but the trains were tiresomely slow, and did not run in connection, so that it took as long to get there as it did to go to London, and people might live their lives in Fraylingay, and know nothing of Morningquest.

Mrs. Orton Beg's husband was buried in the old cathedral city, and she lived there to be near his grave. She could never tear herself away from it for long together. The light of her life had gone out when he died, and was buried with him; but the light of her love, fed upon the blessed hope of immortality, burnt brighter every day.

Her existence in the quiet Close was a very peaceful dreamy one, soothed by the chime, uplifted by the sight of the beautiful old cathedral, and regulated by its services.

Evadne found her lying on a couch beside an open window in the drawing-room, which was a long, low room, running the full width of the house, and with a window at either end, one looking up the Close to the north, the other to the south, into a high-walled, old-fashioned flower-garden; and this was the one near which Mrs. Orton Beg was lying.

"I think I should turn to the Cathedral, Aunt Olive," Evadne said.

"I do," her aunt answered; "but not at this time of day. I travel round with the sun."

"It would fill my mind with beautiful thoughts to live here," Evadne said, looking up at the lonely spire reverently.

"I have no doubt that your mind is always full of beautiful thoughts," her aunt rejoined, smiling. "But I know what you mean. There are thoughts carved on those dumb grey stones which can only come to us from such a source of inspiration. The sincerity of the old workmen, their love and their reverence, were wrought into all they produced, and if only we hold our minds in the right attitude, we receive something of their grace. Do you remember that passage of Longfellow's?—

"Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,
What exultations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This mediæval miracle. . . . . !"

Sitting here alone, sometimes I seem to feel it all—all the capacity for loving sacrifice, and all the energy of human passion which wrought itself into that beautiful offering of its devotion, and made it acceptable. But, tell me, Evadne, are you very happy?"

"I am *too* happy, I think, auntie. But I can't talk about it. I must keep the consciousness of it close in my own heart, and guard it jealously, lest I dissipate any atom of it by attempting to describe it."

"Do you think then, that love is such a delicate thing that the slightest exposure will destroy it?"

"I don't know what I think. But the feeling is so fresh now, auntie, I am afraid to run the risk of uttering a word, or hearing one, that might tarnish it."

She strolled out into the garden during the afternoon, and sat on a high-backed chair in the shade of the old brick wall, with eyes half closed and a smile hovering about her lips. The wall was curtained with canaryensis, virginia creeper rich in autumn tints, ivy, and giant nasturtiums. Great sunflowers grew up against it, and a row of single dahlias of every possible hue crowded up close to the sunflowers. They made a background to the girl's slender figure.

She sat there a long time, happily absorbed, and Mrs. Orton Beg's memory, as she watched her, slipped back inevitably to her own love days, till tears came of the inward supplication that Evadne's future might never know the terrible blight which had fallen upon her own life.

Evadne walked through the village on her way back to Fraylingay. A young woman with her baby in her arms was

standing at the door of her cottage looking out as she passed, and she stopped to speak to her. The child held out his little arms, and kicked and crowed to be taken, and when its mother had entrusted him to Evadne, he clasped her tight round the neck, and nibbled her cheek with his warm moist mouth, sending a delicious thrill through every fibre of her body, a first foretaste of maternity.

She hurried on to hide her emotion.

But all the way home there was a singing at her heart, a certainty of joys undreamt of hitherto, the tenderest, sweetest, most womanly joys—her own house, her own husband, her own children —perhaps; it all lay in that, her *own!*

CHAPTER XII.

THE next few weeks were decked with the richness of autumn tints, the glory of autumn skies; but Evadne was unaware of either. She had no consciousness of distinct days and nights, and indeed they were pretty well mingled after she went to town, for she often danced till daylight, and slept till dusk. And it was all a golden haze, this time, with impressions of endless shops; of silks, satins, and lovely laces; of costly trinkets; of little notes flying between London and Shorncliffe; and of everybody so happy that it was impossible to help sitting down and having a good cry occasionally.

The whirl in which she lived during this period was entered upon without thought, her own inclinations agreeing at the time to every usage sanctioned by custom; but in after years she said that those days of dissipation and excitement appeared to her to be a curious preparation for the solemn duties she was about to enter upon.

Evadne felt the time fly, and she felt also that the days were never ending. It was six weeks at first; and then all at once as it seemed, there was only one week; and then it was "to-morrow!" All that last day there was a terrible racket in the house, and she was hardly left alone a single moment, and was therefore thankful when finally, late at night, she managed to escape to her own room —not that she was left long in peace even then, however, for two of her bridesmaids were staying in the house, and they and her sisters stormed her chamber in their dressing-gowns, and had a pillow-fight to begin with, and then sat down and cackled for an hour, speculating as to whether they should like to be married or not. They decided that they should, because of the presents, you know, and the position, and the delight of having such a lot of new

gowns, and being your own mistress, with your own house and servants; they thought of everything, in fact, but the inevitable husband, the possession of whom certainly constituted no part of the advantages which they expected to secure by marriage. Evadne sat silent, and smiled at their chatter with the air of one who has solved the problem and knows. But she was glad to be rid of them, and when they had gone, she got her sacred *Commonplace Book*, and glanced through it dreamily. Then, rousing herself a little, she went to her writing table, and sat down and wrote: "This is the close of the happiest girlhood that girl ever had. I cannot recall a single thing that I would have had otherwise."

When she had locked the book away, with some other possessions in a box that was to be sent to await her arrival at her new home, she took up a photograph of her lover and gazed at it rapturously for a moment, then pressed it to her lips and breast, and placed it where her eyes might light on it as soon as she awoke.

She was aroused by a kiss on her lips and a warm tear on her cheek next morning. "Wake, darling," her mother said. "This is your wedding day."

"O mother," she cried, flinging her arms round her neck; "how good of you to come yourself! I *am* so happy!"

Mr. Hamilton-Wells, Lady Adeline, and the Heavenly Twins had been at the Fraylings since breakfast, and nothing had happened.

Lady Adeline, having seen the children safely and beautifully dressed for the ceremony, Angelica as a bridesmaid, Diavolo as page, left them sitting, with a picture book between them, like model twins.

"Really," she said to Mr. Hamilton-Wells, "I think the occasion is too interesting for them to have anything else in their heads."

But the moment she left them alone, those same heads went up, and set themselves in a listening attitude.

"*Now*, Diavolo; *quick!*" said Angelica, as soon as the sound of her mother's departing footsteps had died away.

Diavolo dashed the picture book to the opposite side of the room sprang up, and followed Angelica swiftly but stealthily, to the very top of the house.

When the wedding party assembled in the drawing-room the twins were nowhere to be found. Mr. Hamilton-Wells went peering through his eye-glass into every corner, removed the glass and looked without it, then dusted it, and looked once more to make sure, while Lady Adeline grew rigid with nervous anxiety.

The search had to be abandoned, however; but when the party went down to the carriages, it was discovered, to everybody's great relief, that the children had already modestly taken their seats in one of them with their backs to the horses. Each was carefully covered with an elegant wrap, and sitting bolt upright, the picture of primness. The wraps were superfluous, and Mr. Hamilton-Wells was about to remonstrate, but Lady Adeline exclaimed: "For heaven's sake, *don't* interfere! It is such a *trifle*. If you irritate them, goodness knows *what* will happen."

But, man-like, he could not let things be.

"Where have you been, you naughty children?" he demanded, in his precisest way. "You have really given a great deal of trouble."

"Well, papa," Angelica retorted, hotly, at the top of her voice through the carriage window for the edification of the crowd; "you said we were to be good children, and not get into everybody's way, and here we have been sitting an hour as good as possible, and quite out of the way, and you aren't satisfied! It's quite unreasonable, isn't it, Diavolo? Papa can't get on, I believe, *without* finding fault with us. It's just a bad habit he's got, and when we give him no excuse, he invents one."

Mr. Hamilton-Wells beat a hasty retreat, and the party arrived at the church without mishap, but when the procession was formed, there was a momentary delay. They were waiting for the bride's page who descended with the youngest bridesmaid from the

last carriage, and the two came into the church demurely hand in hand. "What darlings." "Aren't they pretty?" "What a sweet little boy, with his lovely dark curls!" was heard from all sides; but there was also an audible titter. Lady Adeline turned pale, Mrs. Frayling's fan dropped. Evadne lost her countenance. The twins had changed clothes.

There was nothing to be done then, however, so Angelica obtained the coveted pleasure of acting as page to Evadne, and Diavolo escaped the trouble of having to hold up her train, and managed besides to have some fun with a small but amorous boy who was to have been Angelica's pair, and who, knowing nothing of the fraud which had been perpetrated, insisted on kissing the fair Diavolo to that young gentleman's lasting delight.

It was a misty morning, with only fitful glimpses of sunshine.

Mrs. Frayling was not a bit superstitious (nobody is), but she had been watching the omens (most people do), and she would have been better satisfied had the day been bright; but still she felt no shadow of a foreboding until the twins appeared. Then, however, there arose in her heart a horrified exclamation: "It is unnatural! It will bring bad luck."

There was no fun for the Heavenly Twins apart, so they decided to sit together at the wedding breakfast, and nobody dared to separate them, lest worse should come of it.

Diavolo bet he would drink as much champagne as Major Colquhoun, and having secured a seat opposite to an uncorked bottle, he proceeded conscientiously to do his best to win the wager. Towards the end of breakfast, however, he lost count, and then he lost his head, and showed signs of falling off his chair.

"You must go to sleep under the table now," said Angelica. "It's the proper thing to do when you're drunk. *I'm* going to. But I'm not far enough gone yet. My legs are queer, but my head is steady. Get under, will you? I'll be down directly—" and she cautiously but rapidly dislodged him, and landed him at her feet,

everybody's attention being occupied at the moment by the gentleman who was gracefully returning thanks for the ladies. When the speech was over, Lady Adeline remembered the twins with a start, and at once missed Diavolo.

"Where is he?" she asked anxiously.

"He is just doing something for me, Mamma," Angelica answered.

He was acting at that moment as her footstool under the table. She did not join him there as she had promised, however, because when the wine made her begin to feel giddy she took no more. She said afterwards she saw no fun in feeling nasty, and she thought a person must be a fool to think there was, and Diavolo, who was suffering badly at the moment from headache and nausea, the effect of his potations, agreed. That was on the evening of the eventful day at their own town house, their father and mother having hurried them off there as soon after Diavolo was discovered in a helpless condition as they could conveniently make their escape. The twins had been promptly put to bed in their respective rooms, and told to stay there, but, of course, it did not in the least follow that they would obey, and locking them up had not been found to answer. Angelica did remain quiet, however, an hour or so, resting after all the excitement of the morning; but she got up eventually, put on her dressing-gown, and went to Diavolo; and it was then they discussed the drink question. Discussion, however, was never enough for the twins; they always wanted to *do* something; so now they went down to the library together, erected an altar of valuable books, and arrayed themselves in white sheets, which they tore from the parental couch for the purpose, considerably disarranging the same; and the sheets they covered with crimson curtains, taken down at imminent risk of injuring themselves, from one of the dining-room windows, with the help of a ladder, abstracted from the area by way of the front door, although they *were* in their dressing-gowns, the time chosen for this revel being when their

parents were in the drawing-room after dinner, and all the servants were having their supper and safe out of the way. The ladder was used to go down to the coal cellar, and never of course replaced, the consequence being that the next person who went for coal, fell in in the dark, and broke her leg, an accident which cost Mr. Hamilton-Wells from first to last a considerable sum, he being a generous man, and unwilling to let anyone suffer in pocket in his service; he thought the risks to life and limb were sufficient without that.

Having completed these solemn preparations, the twins swore a ghastly oath on the altar never to touch drink again, and might they be found out in everything they did on earth if they broke it, and never see heaven when they died!

The wedding breakfast went off merrily enough, and when the bride and bridesmaids left the table, and the dining-room door was safely shut, there was much girlish laughter in the hall, and an undignified scamper up the stairs, also a tussle as to who should take the first pin from the bride's veil and be married next, and much amusement when Mrs. Frayling's elderly maid unconsciously appropriated it herself in the way of business.

Evadne hugged her, exclaiming: "You dear old Jenny! You *shall* be married next, and I'll be your bridesmaid!"

"Oh, no you won't!" cried one of the girls. "You'll never be a bridesmaid again."

Then suddenly there was silence. "Never again" is chilling in effect; it is such a very long time.

As Evadne was leaving the room in her travelling dress, she noticed some letters lying on her dressing table, which she had forgotten, and turned back to get them. They had come by the morning's post, but she had not opened any of them, and now she began to put them into her pocket one by one to read at her leisure, glancing at the superscriptions as she did so. One was from Aunt Olive: dear Aunt Olive, how kind of her! Two were

letters of congratulation from friends of the family. A fourth was from the old housekeeper at Fraylingay; she kissed that. The fifth was in a strange and peculiar hand which she did not recognize, and she opened it first to see who her correspondent might be. The letter was from the North, and had been addressed to Fraylingay, and she should have received it some days before. As she drew it from its envelope she glanced at the signature and at the last few words, which were uppermost, and seemed surprised. She knew the writer by name and reputation very well, although they had never met, and, feeling sure that the communication must be something of importance, she unfolded the letter, and read it at once deliberately from beginning to end.

When she appeared among the guests again she was pale, her lips were set, and she held her head high. Her mother said the dear child was quite overwrought, but she saw only what she expected to see through her own tear-bedimmed eyes, and other people were differently impressed. They thought Evadne was cold and preoccupied when it came to the parting, and did not seem to feel leaving her friends at all. She went out dry-eyed after kissing her mother, took her seat in the carriage, bowed polite but unsmiling acknowledgments to her friends, and drove off with Major Colquhoun with as little show of emotion, and much the same air as if she had merely been going somewhere on business, and expected to return directly.

"Thank goodness, all that is over!" Major Colquhoun exclaimed. She looked at him coolly and critically.

He was sitting with his hat in his hand, and she noticed that his hair was thin on his forehead, and there was nothing of youth in his eyes.

"I expect you are tired," he further observed.

"No, I am not tired, thank you," Evadne answered.

Then she set her lips once more, leant back, and looked out of the carriage window at the streets all sloppy with mud, and the

poor people seeming so miserable in the rain which had been falling steadily for the last hour.

"Poor weary creatures!" she thought. "We have so much, and they so little!" But she did not speak again till the carriage pulled up at the station, when she leant forward with anxious eyes, and said something confusedly about the crowd.

Major Colquhoun thought she was afraid of being stared at. He took out his watch.

"You will only have to cross the platform to the carriage," he said, "and the train ought to be up by this time. But if you don't mind being left alone a moment, I'll just go myself and see if it is, and where they are going to put us, and then I can take you there straight, and you won't feel the crowd at all."

He was not gone many minutes, but when he returned the carriage was empty.

"Where is Mrs. Colquhoun?" he said.

"She followed you, sir," the coachman answered, touching his hat.

"Confound——" he pulled himself up. "She'll be back in a moment, I suppose," he muttered.

"Dover express! Take your seats!" bawled a porter. "Are you for the Dover express?"

"Yes," said Major Colquhoun.

"Engaged carriage, sir?"

"Yes—oh, by-the-way, perhaps she's gone to the carriage," and he started to see, the porter following him. "Did you notice a young lady in a gray dress pass this way?" he asked the man as they went.

"With a pink feather in 'er 'at, sir?"

"Yes."

"Not pass up this way, sir," the man rejoined. "She got into a 'ansom over there, and drove off—if it was the same young lady." Major Colquhoun stopped short. The compartment reserved for them was empty also.

"Dover express! Dover express!" the guard shouted as he came along banging the carriage doors to.

"For Dover, sir?" he said in his ordinary voice to Major Colquhoun.

"No. It seems not," that gentleman answered deliberately.

The guard went on: "Dover express! Dover express! All right, Bill!" This was to someone in front as he popped into his own van, and shut the door.

Then the whistle shrieked derisively, the crank turned, and the next moment the train slid out serpent-like into the mist. Major Colquhoun had watched it off like any ordinary spectator, and when it had gone he looked at the porter, and the porter looked at him.

"Was your luggage in the train, sir?" the man asked him.

"Yes, but only booked to Dover," Major Colquhoun answered carelessly, taking out a cigarette case and choosing a cigarette with exaggerated precision. When he had lighted it, he tipped the porter, and strolled back to the entrance, on the chance of finding the carriage still there, but it had gone, and he called a hansom, paused a moment with his foot on the step, then finally directed the man to drive to the Frayling's.

"Swell's bin sold some'ow," commented the porter. "And if I was a swell, I wouldn't take on neither."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE Fraylings had decided to postpone all further festivities till the bride and bridegroom's return, so that the wedding guests had gone, and the house looked as drearily commonplace as any other in the street when the hansom pulled up a little short of the door for Major Colquhoun to alight.

The servant who answered his ring made no pretence of concealing his astonishment when he saw who it was, but Major Colquhoun's manner effectually checked any expression of it. He was not the kind of man whom a servant would ever have dared to express any sympathy with, however obviously things might have gone wrong. But there was nothing in Major Colquhoun's appearance at that moment to show that anything had gone wrong, except his return when he should have been off on his wedding journey. There was probably a certain amount of assumption in his apparent indifference. He had always cultivated an inscrutable bearing, as being "the thing" in his set, so that it was easy for him now to appear to be cooler and more collected than he was. His attitude, however, was largely due to a want of proper healthy feeling, for he was a vice-worn man, with small capacity left for any great emotion.

He walked into the hall and hung up his hat.

"Is Mr. Frayling alone?" he said.

"Yes, sir—with Mrs. Frayling—and the family—upstairs in the drawing-room," the man stammered.

"Ask him to see me down here, please. Say a gentleman." He stepped to a mirror as he spoke, and carefully twisted the ends of his blond moustache.

"Very good, sir," said the servant.

Major Colquhoun walked into the library in the same deliberate way, and turned up the gas. Mr. Frayling came hurrying down, fat and fussy, and puffing a little, but cheerfully rubicund upon the success of the day's proceedings, and apprehending nothing untoward. When he saw his son-in-law, he opened his eyes, stopped short, turned pale, and gasped.

"Is Evadne here?" Major Colquhoun asked quietly.

"Here? No! What should she be doing here? What has happened?" Mr. Frayling exclaimed aghast.

"That is just what I don't rightly know myself if she is not here," Major Colquhoun replied, the quiet demeanour he had assumed contrasting favourably with his father-in-law's fuss and fume.

"Why have you left her? What are you doing here? Explain," Mr. Frayling demanded almost angrily.

Major Colquhoun related the little he knew, and Mr. Frayling plumped down into a chair to listen, and bounced up again, when all was said, to speak.

"Let me send for her mother," he began, showing at once where, in an emergency, he felt that his strength lay. "No, though, I'd better go myself, and prepare her," he added on second thought. "We mustn't make a fuss—with all the servants about too. They would talk;" and then he fussed off himself, with agitation evident in every step.

Something like a smile disturbed Major Colquhoun's calm countenance for a moment, and then he stood, twisting the ends of his fair moustache slowly with his left hand, and gazing into the fire which shone reflected in his steely-blue eyes, making them glitter like pale sapphires, coldly, while he waited.

Mr. Frayling returned with his wife almost immediately. The latter had had her handkerchief in her hand all day, but she put it in her pocket now.

Major Colquhoun had to repeat his story.

"Did you look for her in the waiting-rooms?" Mrs. Frayling asked.

"No."

"She may be there waiting for you at this very moment."

It was a practical suggestion.

"But the porter said he saw her get into a hansom," Major Colquhoun objected.

"He said he saw a young lady in gray get into a hansom, I understood you to say," Mrs. Frayling corrected him. "A young lady in gray is not necessarily Evadne. There might be a dozen young ladies in gray in such a crowd."

"There might, yes," Mr. Frayling agreed.

"And the proof that it was not Evadne is that she is not here," her mother proceeded. "If she had been seen getting into a hansom, it could only have been to come here."

"A hansom might break down on the way," said Major Colquhoun, entertaining the idea for a moment.

"That is not impossible," Mr. Frayling decided.

"But why should she come here?" Major Colquhoun slowly pursued, looking hard at his parents-in-law. "Had she any objection to marrying me? Was she over-persuaded into it?"

"Oh, *no!*" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed emphatically. "How *can* you suppose such a thing? We should never have *dreamed* of influencing the dear child in such a matter. If there were ever a case of love at first sight, it was one. Why, her first words on awaking this morning, were: 'O mother! I *am* so happy!' and that doesn't sound like being over-persuaded!"

"Then what, in God's name, is the explanation of all this?" Major Colquhoun exclaimed, showing some natural emotion for the first time.

"That is it," said Mr. Frayling energetically. "There must be some explanation."

"Heaven grant that the dear child has not been entrapped in

some way, and carried off, and robbed, and murdered, or something *dreadful*," Mrs. Frayling cried, giving way to the strain all at once, and wringing her hands.

Then they looked at each other, and the period of speculation was followed by a momentary interregnum of silence, which would in due course be succeeded by a desire to act, to do something, if nothing happened in the meantime. Something did happen, however. The door bell rang violently. They looked up and listened. The hall door was opened. Footsteps approached, paused outside the library, and then the butler entered, and handed Mr. Frayling a telegram on a silver salver.

"Is there any answer, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Frayling opened it with trembling hands, and read it. "No; no answer," he said.

The butler looked at them all as if they interested him, and withdrew.

"Well," cried Mrs. Frayling, her patience exhausted. "Is it from her?"

"Yes," Mr. Frayling replied. "It was handed in at the General Post-office at——"

"The General Post-office!" Major Colquhoun ejaculated. "What on earth took her there?"

"The hansom, you know," said Mrs. Frayling. "Oh, dear"—to her husband, "*do* read it."

"Well, I'm going to, if you'll let me," he answered irritably, but delaying nevertheless, to mutter something irrelevant about women's tongues. Then he read: '*Don't be anxious about me. Have received information about Major C.'s character and past life which does not satisfy me at all, and am going now to make further inquiries. Will write.*'"

"Information about my character and past life!" exclaimed Major Colquhoun. "Why, what is wrong with my character? What have I done?"

"Oh, the child is mad! she must be mad!" Mrs. Frayling ejaculated.

Mr. Frayling fumed up and down the room in evident perturbation. He had not a single phrase ready for such an occasion, nor the power to form one, and was consequently compelled to employ quite simple language.

"You had better make inquiries at the post-office," he said to Major Colquhoun, "and try and trace her. You must follow her, and bring her back at once, if possible."

"Not I, indeed," was Major Colquhoun's most unexpected rejoinder. "I shall not give myself any trouble on her account; she may go."

"Oh, for heaven's sake don't say that, George!" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed. "You *do* love her, and she loves *you*; I *know* she does. Some *dreadful* mischief-making person has come between you. But wait, *do* wait, until we know more. It will all come right in the end. I am *sure* it will."

Major Colquhoun compressed his lips, and looked sullenly into the fire.

CHAPTER XIV.

On the third day after Evadne's wedding, in the afternoon, Mrs. Orton Beg was sitting alone in her long low drawing-room by the window which looked out into the high-walled garden. She had found it difficult to occupy herself with books and work that day. Her sprained ankle had been troublesome during the night, and she had risen late, and when her maid had helped her to dress, and she had limped downstairs on her crutches, and settled herself in her long chair, she found herself disinclined for any further exertion, and just sat, reclining upon pale pink satin cushions, her slender hands folded upon her lap, her large dark luminous eyes and delicate refined features all set in a wistful sadness.

There was a singular likeness between herself and Evadne in some things, a vague haunting family likeness which continually obtruded itself but could not be defined. It had been more distinct when Evadne was a child, and would doubtless have grown greater had she lived with her aunt, but the very different mental attitude which she gradually acquired had melted the resemblance as it were, so that at nineteen, although her slender figure, and air, and carriage continually recalled Mrs. Orton Beg, who was then in her thirty-fifth year, the expression of her face was so different that they were really less alike than they had been when Evadne was four years younger. Evadne's disposition, it must be remembered, was essentially swift to act. She would, as a human being, have her periods of strong feeling, but that was merely a physical condition in no way affecting her character; and the only healthy minded happy state for her was the one in which thought instantly translated itself into action.

Evadne - need for action

religion action

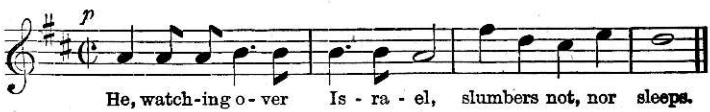
With Mrs. Orton Beg it was different. Her spiritual nature predominated, her habits of mind were dreamy. She lived for the life to come entirely, and held herself in constant communion with another world. She felt it near her, she said. She believed that its inhabitants visit the earth, and take cognizance of all we do and suffer; and she cherished the certainty of one day assuming a wondrous form, and entering upon a new life, as vivid and varied and as real as this, but far more perfect. Her friends were chiefly of her own way of thinking; but her faith was so profound, and the charm of her conversation so entrancing, that the hardest-headed materialists were apt to feel strange delicious thrills in her presence, forebodings of possibilities beyond the test of reason and knowledge; and they would return time after time to dispute her conclusions and argue themselves out of the impression she had produced, but only to relapse into their former state of blissful sensation so soon as they once more found themselves within range of her influence. Opinions are germs in the moral atmosphere which fasten themselves upon us if we are predisposed to entertain them; but some states of feeling are a perfume which every sentient being must perceive with emotions that vary from extreme repugnance to positive pleasure through diverse intermediate strata of lively interest or mere passive perception; and the feeling which emanated from Mrs. Orton Beg is one that is especially contagious. For, in the first place, the beauty of goodness appeals pleasurably to the most depraved; to be elevated above themselves for a moment is a rare delight to them; and, in the second, there is a deeply-implanted leaning in the heart of man towards the something beyond everything, the impalpable, impossible, imperceptible, which he cannot know and will not credit, but is nevertheless compelled to feel in some of his moods, or in certain presences, and having once felt, finds himself fascinated by it, and so returns to the subject for the sake of the sensation. In that long, low drawing-room of Mrs. Orton Beg's, with the window at either end, in view of the grey old

Cathedral towering above the gnarled elms of the Lower Close, itself the scene of every form of human endeavour, every expression of human passion; in surroundings so heavy with memories of the past, and listening to the quiet tone of conviction in which Mrs. Orton Beg spoke, with the double charm of extreme polish and simplicity combined—in that same room even the worldliest had found themselves rise into the ecstasy of the higher life, spiritually freed for the moment, and with the desire to go forth and do great deeds of love.

Mrs. Orton Beg had sat idle an hour looking out of the window, her mind in the mood for music, but bare of thought.

A gale was blowing without. The old elms in the Close were tossing their stiff bare arms about, the ground was strewed with branches and leaves from the limes; and a watery wintry sun made the misery of the muddy ground apparent, and accentuated the blight of the flowers and torn untidiness of the creepers, and all the items which make autumn gardens so desolate. The equinoctial gales had set in early that year. They began on Evadne's wedding day with a fearful storm which raged all over the country, and burst with especial violence upon Morningquest, and the wind continued high, and showed no sign of abating. It was depressing weather, and Mrs. Orton Beg sighed more than once unconsciously.

But presently the Cathedral clock began to strike, and she raised her head to listen. One, two, three, four, the round notes fell; then there was a pause; and then the chime rolled out over the storm-stained city:



Mechanically, Mrs. Orton Beg repeated the phrase with each note

as it floated forth, filling the silent spaces; and then she awoke with a start to thought once more, and knew that she had been a long, long time alone.

She was going to ring, but at that moment a servant entered and announced: "Mrs. and Miss Beale."

They were the wife and daughter of the Bishop of Morningquest, the one a very pleasant attractive elderly lady, the other a girl of seventeen, like her mother, but with more character in her face.

"Ah, how glad I am to see you!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed, trying to rise, "and what a delicious breath of fresh air you have brought in with you!"

"My dear Olive, don't move," Mrs. Beale rejoined, preventing her. "We have been nearly blown away walking this short distance. Just look at Edith's hair."

"I feel quite tempest tossed," said Edith, getting up and going to a glass before which she removed her hat, and let down her hair, which was the colour of burnished brass, and fell to her knees in one straight heavy coil without a wave.

"You remind me of some Saxon Edith I have seen in a picture," said Mrs. Orton Beg, looking at her admiringly.

"But, dear child," her mother deprecated, "should you make a dressing-room of the drawing-room?"

"I know Mrs. Orton Beg will pardon me," said Edith, rolling her hair up deftly and neatly as she spoke, with the air of a privileged person quite at home.

Mrs. Orton Beg smiled at her affectionately; but before she could speak the door opened once more, and the servant announced: "Lord Dawne."

And there entered a grave distinguished-looking man between thirty and forty years of age, apparently, with black hair, and deep blue eyes at once penetrating and winning in expression.

Mrs. Orton Beg greeted him with pleasure, Mrs. Beale with pleasure also, but with more ceremony, Edith quite simply and

naturally, and then he sat down. He was in riding dress, with his whip and hat in his hand.

"This is an unexpected pleasure. I did not know you were at Morne," said Mrs. Orton Beg. "Is Claudia with you?"

"No, I have only come for a few days," Lord Dawne replied. "I came to see Adeline specially, but they don't return from town till to-morrow. They have all been assisting at the marriage of a niece of yours, I hear, and the Heavenly Twins have been prolonging the festivities on their own account. Adeline wrote to me in despair, and I have come to see if I can be of any use. My sister," he added, turning to Mrs. Beale with his bright, almost boyish smile, which was like his nephew, Diavolo's, and made them both irresistible: "My sister flatters herself that I have some influence with the children, and as it is quite certain that nobody else has, I am careful not to dispel the illusion. It is a comfort to her. But the twins will not allow me to deceive myself upon that head. They put me in my place every time I see them. The last time we had a serious talk together, I noticed that Diavolo was thinking deeply, and hoped for a moment that it was about what I was saying; but that, apparently, had not interested him at all, for I had the curiosity to ask, just to see if I had, perchance, made any impression, and discovered that he had had something else in his mind the whole time. 'I was just wondering,' he answered, 'if you care much about being Duke of Morningquest.' 'No, not very much,' I assured him.—'Why?' 'Well, I was pretty certain you didn't,' he replied; 'and, you see, *I* do; so I was just thinking, couldn't you remain as you are when grandpapa dies, and let me walk into the title? Then I'd give Angelica the Hamilton House property, and it would be very jolly for all of us.' 'But, look here,' Angelica broke in, in her energetic way, 'If you're going to be a duke, I won't be left plain Miss Hamilton-Wells.' 'You couldn't be "plain" Miss anything,' Diavolo gallantly assured her, bowing in the most courtly way. But Angelica said, with more force than refine-

ment, that that was all rot, and then Diavolo lost his temper and pulled her hair, and she got hold of his and dragged him out of the room by his—my presence of course counted for nothing. And the next I saw of them, they were on their ponies in a secluded grassy glade of the forest, tilting at each other with long poles for the dukedom. Angelica says she means to beat Demosthenes hollow —I use her own phraseology to give character to the quotation —that delivering orations with a natural inclination to stammering was nothing to get over compared to the disabilities which being a girl imposes upon her; but she means to get over them all by hook, which she explains as being the proper development of her muscles and physique generally; and by crook, which she defines as circumventing the slave drivers of her sex, a task which she seems to think can easily be accomplished by finessing."

"And what was the last thing?" Mrs. Orton Beg inquired, smiling indulgently.

"Oh, that was very simple," Lord Dawne rejoined. "Diavolo, dressed in velvet, was caught and taken up by a policeman for recklessly driving a hansom in Oxford-street, Angelica being inside the same disguised in something of her mother's."

"I wonder it was Angelica who went inside!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed.

"Well, that was what her mother said," Lord Dawne replied; "and both her parents seem to think the matter was not nearly so bad as it might have been in consequence. Mr. Hamilton-Wells had to pay a fine for the furious driving, and use all his influence with the Press to keep the thing out of the papers."

"But where did the children get the hansom?" Mrs. Beale begged to be informed.

"I regret to say that they hailed it through the dining-room window, and plied the driver with raw brandy until his venal nature gave in to their earnestly persuasive eloquence and the contents of their purses, and he consented to let Diavolo 'just try what it was

like to sit up on that high box,' Angelica having previously got inside, and, of course, the moment the young scamp had the reins in his hands, he drove off full tilt."

"Oh, dear, *poor* Lady Adeline!" Mrs. Beale exclaimed.

Lord Dawne smiled again, and changed the subject. "Did you feel the storm much here?" he asked. "My trees have suffered a good deal, I am sorry to say."

"Ah, that reminds me," Mrs. Beale began. "A very strange and solemn thing happened on the day of the storm: have you heard of it, Olive?"

"No," Mrs. Orton Beg answered with interest. "What was it?"

"Well, you know the Dean's brother has a large family of daughters," Mrs. Beale replied, "and they had a very charming governess, Miss Winstanley, a lady by birth, and an accomplished person, and extremely *spirituelle*. Well, on the morning of the storm, she was sitting at work with one of her pupils in the school-room, when another came in from the garden, and uttered an exclamation of surprise, when she saw Miss Winstanley. 'How did you get in, and take your things off so quickly?' she said. 'I have not been out,' Miss Winstanley answered. 'Why, I saw you—I ran past you, over by the duck-pond!' 'Dear child, you must be mistaken. I haven't been out to-day,' the governess answered smiling. Well, that child got out her work and sat down, but she had hardly done so when another came in, and also exclaimed: 'O, Miss Winstanley! How *did* you get here? I saw you standing looking out of the window at the bottom of the picture gallery as I ran past this minute.' 'I must have a double,' said Miss Winstanley lightly. 'But it *was* you,' the child insisted; 'I saw you quite well, flowers and all.' The governess was wearing some scarlet geranium. 'You know what they say if people are seen like that, where they have never been in the body?' she said jokingly: 'They say it is a sign that that person is going to die.' In the afternoon," Mrs.

Beale continued, lowering her voice and glancing round involuntarily—and in the momentary pause the rush of the gale without sounded obtrusively—"in the afternoon of that same day, she went out alone, for a walk, and did not return, and they became alarmed at last, and sent some men to search for her when the storm was at its height, and they found her lying across a stile. She had been killed by the branch of a tree falling on her."

"How do you explain that?" Mrs. Orton Beg said softly to Lord Dawne.

"I should not attempt to explain it," he answered, rising.

"Must you go?"

"Yes, I am sorry to say. Claudia and Ideala charged me with many messages for you."

"They are together as usual, and well, I trust?"

"Yes," he answered, "and most anxious to hear a better account of your foot."

"Ah, I hope to be able to walk soon," she said, holding out her hand to him.

"What a charming man he is," Mrs. Beale remarked, when he had gone. "There is no hope of his marrying, I suppose," she added, trying not to look at her daughter.

"Oh, no!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed in an almost horrified tone.

Lord Dawne's friends made no secret of his grand and chivalrous devotion to the distinguished woman known to them all as Ideala. Everyone of them was aware, although he had never let fall a word on the subject, that he had remained single on her account—everyone but Ideala herself. She never suspected it, or thought of love at all in connection with Lord Dawne—and, besides, she was married.

When her friends had gone that day, Mrs. Orton Beg sat long in the gathering dusk, watching the newly-lighted fire burn up, and thinking. She was thinking of Evadne chiefly, wondering why

she had had no news of her, why her sister Elizabeth did not write, and tell her all about the wedding; and she was just on the verge of anxiety; in that state when various possibilities of trouble that might have occurred to account for delays begin to present themselves to the mind; when all at once, without hearing anything, she became conscious of a presence near her, and looking up she was startled to see Evadne herself.

"My dear child!" she gasped, "what has happened? Why are you here?"

"Nothing has happened, auntie, don't be alarmed," Evadne answered, "I am here because I have been a fool."

She spoke quietly but with concentrated bitterness, then sat down, and began to take off her gloves with that exaggerated show of composure which is a sign in some people of suppressed emotion.

Her face was pale, but her eyes were bright, and the pupils were dilated.

"I have come to claim your hospitality, auntie," she pursued, "to ask you for shelter from the world for a few days, *because* I have been a fool. May I stay?"

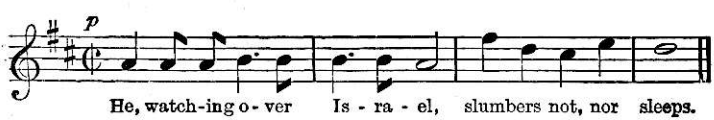
"Surely, dear child," Mrs. Orton Beg replied, and then she waited, mastering the nervous tremor into which the shock of Evadne's sudden appearance had thrown her, with admirable self-control. And here again, the family likeness between aunt and niece was curiously apparent. Both masked their agitation because both by temperament were shy, and ashamed to show strong feeling.

Evadne looked into the fire for a little, trying to collect herself. "I knew what was right," she began at last in a low voice, "I knew we should take nothing for granted, we should never be content merely to feel and suppose and hope for the best in matters about which we should know exactly. And yet I took no trouble to ascertain. I fell in love, and liked the sensation, and gave

myself up to it unreservedly. Certainly, I was a fool—there is no other word for it."

"But are you married, Evadne?' Mrs. Orton Beg asked in a voice rendered unnatural by the rapid beating of her heart.

"Let me tell you, auntie, all about it," Evadne answered hoarsely. She drew her chair a little closer to the fire, and spread her hands out to the blaze. There was no other light in the room by this time. The wind without howled dismally still, but at intervals, as if with an effort. During one of its noisiest bursts, the cathedral clock began to strike, and hushed it, as it were, suddenly. It seemed to be listening, to be waiting, and Evadne waited and listened too, raising her head. There was a perceptible, momentary pause, then came the chime, full, round, mournful, melodious, yet glad too, in the strength of its solemn assurance, filling the desolate regions of sorrow and silence with something of hope whereon the weary mind might repose :—



When the last reverberation of the last note had melted out of hearing, Evadne sighed; then she straightened herself, as if collecting her energy, and began to speak.

"Yes, I am married," she said, "but when I went to change my dress after the ceremony, I found this letter. It was intended, you see, to reach me some days before it did, but unfortunately it was addressed to Fraylingay, and time was lost in forwarding it." She handed it to her aunt, who raised her eyebrows when she saw the writing, as if she recognized it, hastily drew the letter from its envelope, and held it so that the blaze fell upon it while she read. Evadne knelt on the hearthrug, and stirred the fire, making it burn up brightly.

Mrs. Orton Beg returned the letter to the envelope when she had read it. "What did you do?" she said.

"I read it before I went downstairs, and at first I could not think what to do, so we drove off together, but on the way to the station, it suddenly flashed upon me that the proper thing to do would be to go at once and hear all that there was to tell, and fortunately, Major Colquhoun gave me an opportunity of getting away without any dispute. He went to see about something, leaving me in the carriage, and I just got out, walked round the station, took a hansom, and drove off to the General Post Office, to telegraph to my people."

"But why didn't you go home?"

"For several reasons," Evadne answered, "the best being that I never thought of going home. I wanted to be alone and think. I fancied that at home they either could not or would not tell me anything of Major Colquhoun's past life, and I was determined to know the truth exactly. And I can't tell you how many sayings of my father's recurred to me all at once with a new significance, and made me fear that there was some difference between his point of view and mine on the subject of a suitable husband. He told me himself that Major Colquhoun had been quite frank about his past career, and then, when I came to think, it appeared to me clearly that it was the frankness which had satisfied my father; the career itself was nothing. You heard how pleased they were about my engagement?"

"Yes," Mrs. Orton Beg answered, slowly, "and I confess I was a little surprised when I heard from your mother that your *fiancé* had been 'wild' in his youth, for I remembered some remarks you made last year about the kind of man you would object to marry, and it seemed to me from the description that Major Colquhoun was very much that kind of man."

"Then why didn't you warn me?" Evadne exclaimed.

"I don't know whether I quite thought it was a subject for

warning," Mrs. Orton Beg answered, "and at any rate, girls *do* talk in that way sometimes, not really meaning it. I thought it was mere *youngness* on your part, and theory; and I don't know now whether I quite approve of your having been told—of this new departure," she added, indicating the letter.

"*I* do," said Evadne, decidedly. "I would stop the imposition, approved of custom, connived at by parents, made possible by the state of ignorance in which we are carefully kept—the imposition upon a young girl's innocence and inexperience of a disreputable man for a husband."

Mrs. Orton Beg was startled by this bold assertion, which was so unprecedented in her experience that for a moment she could not utter a word, and when she did speak she avoided a direct reply, because she thought any discussion on the subject of marriage, except from the sentimental point of view, was indelicate.

"But tell me your position exactly," she begged—"what you did next: why you are here!"

"I went by the night mail North," Evadne answered, "and saw them. They were very kind. They told me everything. I can't repeat the details; they disgust me."

"No, pray don't!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed hastily. She had no mind for anything unsavory.

"They had been abroad, you know," Evadne pursued; "Otherwise I should have heard from them as soon as the engagement was announced. They hoped to be in time, however. They had no idea the marriage would take place so soon."

Mrs. Orton Beg reflected for a little, and then she asked in evident trepidation, for she had more than a suspicion of what the reply would be: "And what are you going to do?"

"Decline to live with him," Evadne answered.

This was what Mrs. Orton Beg had begun to suspect, but there is often an element of surprise in the confirmation of our shrewdest

suspicions, and now she sat upright, leant forward, and looked at her niece aghast. "*What?*" she demanded.

"I shall decline to live with him," Evadne repeated with emphasis.

Mrs. Orton Beg slowly resumed her reclining position, acting as one does who has heard the worst, and realizes that there is nothing to be done but to recover from the shock.

"I thought you loved him," she ventured, after a prolonged pause.

"Yes, so did I," Evadne answered, frowning—"but I was mistaken. It was a mere affair of the senses, to be put off by the first circumstance calculated to cause a revulsion of feeling by lowering him in my estimation—a thing so slight that, after reading the letter, as we drove to the station—even so soon! I could see him as he is. I noticed at once—but it was for the first time—I noticed that, although his face is handsome, the expression of it is not noble at all." She shuddered as at the sight of something repulsive. "You see," she explained, "my taste is cultivated to so fine an extent, I require something extremely well-flavoured for the dish which is to be the *pièce de resistance* of my life-feast. My appetite is delicate, it requires to be tempted, and a husband of that kind, a moral leper"—she broke off with a gesture, spreading her hands, palms outwards, as if she would fain put some horrid idea far from her. "Besides, marrying a man like that, allowing him an assured position in society, is countenancing vice, and"— she glanced round apprehensively, then added in a fearful whisper—"*helping to spread it.*"

Mrs. Orton Beg knew in her head that reason and right were on Evadne's side, but she felt in her heart the full force of the custom and prejudice that would be against her, and shrank appalled by the thought of what the cruel struggle to come must be if Evadne persisted in her determination. In view of this, she sat up in her chair once more energetically, prepared to do her best to dissuade

her, but then again she relapsed, giving in to a doubt of her own capacity to advise in such an emergency, accompanied by a sudden and involuntary feeling of respect for Evadne's principles, however peculiar and unprecedented they might be, and for the strength of character which had enabled her so far to act upon them. "You must obey your own conscience, Evadne," was what she found herself saying at last. "I will help you to do that. I would rather not influence you. You may be right. I cannot be sure—and yet —I don't agree with you. For I know if I could have my husband back with me, I would welcome him, even if he were—a leper." Evadne compressed her lips in steady disapproval. "I should think only of his future. I should forgive the past."

"That is the mistake you good women all make," said Evadne. "You set a detestably bad example. So long as women like you will forgive anything, men will do anything. You have it in your power to set up a high standard of excellence for men to reach in order to have the privilege of associating with you. There is this quality in men, that they will have the best of everything; and if the best wives are only to be obtained by being worthy of them, they will strive to become so. As it is, however, why should they? Instead of punishing them for their depravity, you encourage them in it by overlooking it; and besides," she added, "you must know that there is no past in the matter of vice. The consequences become hereditary, and continue from generation to generation."

Again Mrs. Orton Beg felt herself checked.

"Where did you hear all this, Evadne?" she asked.

"I never heard it. I read—and I thought," she answered. "But I am only now beginning to understand," she added. "I suppose moral axioms are always the outcome of pained reflection. Knowledge cries to us in vain as a rule before experience has taken the sharp edge off our egotism—by experience, I mean the addition of some personal feeling to our knowledge."

"I don't understand you in the least, Evadne," Mrs. Orton Beg replied.

"Your husband was a good man," Evadne answered indirectly. "You have never thought about what a woman ought to do who has married a bad one—in an emergency like mine, that is. You think I should act as women have been always advised to act in such cases, that I should sacrifice myself to save that one man's soul. I take a different view of it. I see that the world is not a bit the better for centuries of self-sacrifice on the woman's part, and therefore I think it is time we tried a more effectual plan. And I propose now to sacrifice the man instead of the woman."

Mrs. Orton Beg was silent.

"Have you nothing to say to me, auntie?" Evadne asked at last, caressingly.

"I do not like to hear you talk so, Evadne. Every word you say seems to banish something—something from this room—something from my life to which I cling. I think it is my faith in love—and loving. You may be right, but yet—the consequences! the struggle, if we must resist! No! It is best to submit. It is better not to know."

"It is easier to submit—yes; it is disagreeable to know," Evadne translated.

There was another pause, then Mrs. Orton Beg broke out: "Don't make me think about it. Surely I have suffered enough? Disagreeable to know! It is torture. If I ever let myself dwell on the horrible depravity that goes on unchecked, the depravity which you say we women license by ignoring it when we should face and unmask it, I should go out of my mind. I do know—we all know; how can we live and not know? But we don't think about it—we can't—we daren't. See! I try always to keep my own mind in one attitude, to keep it filled for ever with holy and beautiful thoughts. When I am alone, I listen for the chime, and when I have repeated it to myself slowly—

'He, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps'—

my heart swells. I leave all that is inexplicable to Him, and thank Him for the love and the hope with which He feeds my heart and keeps it from hardening. I thank Him too," she went on hoarsely, "for the terrible moments when I feel my loss afresh, those early morning moments, when the bright sunshine and the beauty of all things only make my own barren life look all the more bare in its loneliness; when my soul struggles to free itself from the shackles of the flesh that it may spread its wings to meet that other soul which made earth heaven for me here, and will, I know, make all eternity ecstatic as a dream for me hereafter. It is good to suffer, yes; but surely I suffer enough? My husband—if I cry to him, he will not hear me; if I go down on my knees beside his grave, and dig my arms in deep, deep, I shall not reach him. I cannot raise him up again to caress him, or move the cruel weight of earth from off his breast. The voice that was always kind will gladden me no more; the arms that were so willing to protect—the world—just think how big it is! and if I traverse it every yard, I shall not find him. He is not anywhere in all this huge expanse. Ah, God! the agony of yearning, the ache, the ache; why must I live?"

"Auntie!" Evadne cried, "I am selfish." She knelt down beside her, and held her hand. "I have made you think of your own irreparable loss, compared with which I know my trouble is so small. Forgive me."

Mrs. Orton Beg put her arms round the girl's neck and kissed her: "Forgive *me*," she said. "I am so weak, Evadne, and you—ah! you are strong."

CHAPTER XV.

The Fraylings had sent their children and the majority of their servants back to Fraylingay the day after the wedding, but had decided to stay in London themselves with Major Colquhoun until Evadne wrote to relieve their anxiety, which was extreme, and gave them some information about her movements and intentions.

Mr. Frayling spent most of the interval in prancing up and down. He recollected all his past grievances, real and imaginary, and recounted them, and also speculated about those that were to come, and mentioned the number of things he was always doing for everybody, the position he had to keep up and consider for the sake of his family, the scandal there would be if this story got about; and described in one breath both his determination to hush it up, and his conviction that it would be utterly impossible to do so. Whenever the postman knocked he went to the door to look for a letter, and coming back empty-handed each time, he invariably remarked that it was disgraceful, simply disgraceful, and he had never heard of such a thing in all his life. There was blame and severity in his attitude towards poor Mrs. Frayling; he seemed to insinuate that she might and should have done something to prevent all this; while there was a mixture of sympathy, deprecation and apology in his manner to his son-in-law, combined with a certain air of absolving himself from all responsibility in the matter.

Major Colquhoun's own attitude was wholly enigmatical. He smoked cigars, read novels, and said nothing except in answer to such remarks as were specially addressed to him, and then he confined himself to the shortest and simplest form of rejoinder possible.

"The dear fellow's patience is exemplary," Mrs. Frayling remarked to her husband as they went to bed one night. "He conceals his own feelings *quite*, and never utters a complaint."

"Humph!" grunted Mr. Frayling, who scented some reproach in this remark; "if the dear fellow does not suffer from impatience, and has no feelings to conceal, it is not much marvel if he utters no complaint. I believe he doesn't care a rap, and is only thinking of how to get out of the whole business."

"Oh, my dear, how *dreadful!*" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed. "I am sure you are quite mistaken. You don't understand him at all."

Mr. Frayling shrugged his shoulders and snorted. He despised feminine conclusions too much to reply to them, but not nearly enough to be wholly unmoved by them.

Mrs. Frayling spent the three days in sitting still, embroidering silk flowers on a satin ground, and watering them well with her tears. But on the morning of the fourth day, by the first post, letters arrived which put an end to their suspense. One was from Mrs. Orton Beg and the other from Evadne herself. Mrs. Frayling read them aloud at the breakfast table, and the three sat for an hour in solemn conclave, considering them.

Mrs. Orton Beg had had time to recover herself and reflect before she wrote, and the consequence was some modification of her first impression.

"My dear Elizabeth,

"Evadne is here; she arrived this afternoon. On her wedding day she received a letter from a lady, whose name I am not allowed to mention here, but written under the impression that Evadne was being kept in ignorance of Major Colquhoun's past life, and offering to give her any information that had been withheld so that she might not be blindly entrapped into marrying him under the delusion that he was a worthy man. The letter arrived too late, but Evadne went off nevertheless on the spur of the moment to make further inquiries, the result of which is great indignation on her part for having been allowed to marry a man of such antecedents, and a determination not to live with him. She wishes to stay

here with me for the present, and I am very glad to have her. I give her an asylum, but I shall not speak a word to influence her decision in any way if I can help it. It is a matter of conscience with her, and I perceive that her moral consciousness and mine are not quite the same; but in the present state of my ignorance, I feel that it would be presumption on my part to set my own up as superior, and therefore I think it better not to interfere in any way.

"You need not be in the least anxious about Evadne. She is quite well, has an excellent appetite, and is not at all inclined to pose as a martyr. I confess I should have thought myself she would have suffered more in the first days of her disillusion, for she was certainly very much in love with Major Colquhoun; but her principles are older than her acquaintance with him, and ingrained principle is a force superior to passion, it seems—which is as it should be.

"I am sorry for you all, and for you especially, dear, in this dilemma, for I know how you will feel it; and I am all the more sorry because I cannot say a single word which would relieve the state of perplexity you must be in, or be in any way a comfort to you.

"Your loving sister,

"Olive Orton Beg."

Evadne's letter ran thus:—

"The Close, Morningquest,

"4th October.

"My dear Father and Mother,—

"Aunt Olive has kindly written to tell you exactly why I am here, so that my letter need only be a supplement to hers. For whatever trouble and anxiety I may have caused you, forgive me. The thought of it will be a pang to me as long as I live.

"Since I left you I have been fully informed of circumstances in Major Colquhoun's past career which make it impossible for me to live with him as his wife. I find that I consented to marry him under a grave misapprehension of his true character—that he is not at all a proper person for a young girl to associate with, and that in point of fact, his mode of life has very much resembled that of one of those old-fashioned heroes, Roderick Random or Tom Jones, specimens of humanity whom I hold in peculiar and especial detestation.

"I consider I should be wanting in all right feeling if I held myself bound to him by vows which I took in my ignorance of his history. But I am afraid there will be some difficulty about the legal business. Kindly find out for me what will be the best arrangement to make for our separation, and tell me also if I ought to write to Major Colquhoun myself. I should like it better if my father would relieve me of the dreadful necessity.

"Until we have arranged matters, I should prefer to stay here with Aunt Olive. I am very well, and happier too, than I should have expected to be

after the shock of such a disappointment, though perhaps less so than I ought in gratitude to be, considering the merciful deliverance I have had from what would have been the shipwreck of my life.

"Your affectionate Daughter,

"EVADNE."

"Good heavens! good heavens!" Mr. Frayling ejaculated several times.

Major Colquhoun had curled his moustache during the reading of the letter, with the peculiar set expression of countenance he was in the habit of assuming to mask his emotions.

"What language! what ideas!" Mr. Frayling proceeded. "I have been much deceived in that unhappy child," and he shook his head at his wife severely, as if it were her fault.

Major Colquhoun muttered something about having been taken in himself.

After the reading of the letter, Mrs. Frayling's comely plump face looked drawn and haggard. She could not utter a word at first, and had even exhausted her stock of tears. All at once, however, she recovered her voice, and gave sudden utterance to a determination.

"I must go to that child!" she exclaimed. "I must—I must go at once."

"You shall do no such thing," her husband thundered. He had no reason in the world for opposing the motherly impulse, but it relieves the male of certain species to roar when he is irritated, and the relief is all the greater when he finds some sentient creature to roar at, that will shrink from the noise, and be awed by it.

Mrs. Frayling looked up at him pathetically, then riveted her eyes upon the tablecloth, and rocked herself to and fro, but answered never a word.

Major Colquhoun, with the surface sympathy of sensual men, who resent anything that produces a feeling of discomfort in themselves,

felt sorry for her, and relieved the tension by asking what was to be said in reply to Evadne's letter.

This led to a discussion of the subject, which was summarily ended by Mr. Frayling, who deputed to his wife the task of answering the letter, without allowing her any choice in the matter. It was never his way to do anything disagreeable if he could insist upon her doing it for him.

But Mrs. Frayling was nothing loth upon this occasion.

"Well," she began humbly, "I undertake the task since you wish it, but I should have thought a word from you would have gone further than anything I can say. However"—she ventured to lift a hopeful head—"I have certainly always been able to manage Evadne"—she turned to Major Colquhoun—"I can assure you, George, that child has never given me a moment's anxiety in her life; and"—she added in a broken voice—"I never, never thought that she would live to quote books to her parents."

Mr. Frayling found in his own inclinations a reason for everything. He was very tired of being shut up in London, and he therefore decided that they should go back to Fraylingay at once, and suggested that Major Colquhoun should follow them in a few days if Evadne had not in the meantime come to her senses. Major Colquhoun agreed to this. He would have hidden himself anywhere, done anything to keep his world in ignorance of what had befallen him. Even a man's independence is injured by excesses. As the tissues waste, the esteem of men is fawned for instead of being honestly earned, criticism is deprecated, importance is attached to the babbling of blockheads, and even to the opinion of fools. What should have been self-respect in Major Colquhoun had degenerated into a devouring vanity, which rendered him thin-skinned to the slightest aspersion. He had married Evadne in order to win the credit of having secured an exceptionally young and attractive wife, and now all he thought of was "what fellows would say" if they knew of the slight she had

put upon him. To conceal this was the one object of his life at present, the thought that forever absorbed him.

Mr. Frayling felt that it would be a relief to get away from his son-in-law: "If the fellow would only speak!" he exclaimed when he was alone with his wife. "What the deuce he's always thinking about, I can't imagine."

"He is in great grief," Mrs. Frayling maintained.

As soon as she was settled at Fraylingay, she wrote to Evadne:

"My poor misguided Child,

"Your whole action since your marriage and your extraordinary resolution have occasioned your dear father, your poor husband, and myself the very greatest anxiety and pain. We have grave fears for your sanity. I have never in my life heard of a young lady acting in such a way. Your poor husband has been very sweet and good all through this dreadful trial. He very much fears the ridicule which of course would attach to him if his brother officers hear what has happened; but, so far, I am thankful to say, no inkling of the true state of the case has leaked out. The servants talk, of course, but they *know* nothing. What they suspect however, is, I believe, that you have gone out of your mind, and I even ventured to suggest something of the kind to Jenny, who, after all these years, is naturally concerned at the sight of my deep distress. I assure you, I have taken nothing since your letter arrived but a little tea. So do, dear child, end this distressing state of things by returning to your right mind *at once*. You are a legally married woman, and you must obey the law of the land; but of course your husband would rather not invoke the law and make a public scandal if he can help it. He does not wish to force your inclinations in any way, and he therefore generously gives you more time to consider. In fact he says: 'She must come back of her own free will.'* And he is as ready, I am sure, as your father and myself are, to forgive you freely for all the trouble and anxiety you have caused him, and is waiting to welcome you to his heart and home with open arms.

"And, Evadne, remember: a woman has it in her power to change even a reprobate into a worthy man—and I know from the way George talks that he is far from being a reprobate now. And just think what a work that is! The angels in heaven rejoice over the sinner that repents, and you have before you a sphere of action which should gladden your heart to contemplate. I

* What he did say exactly was: "She went of her own accord, and she must come back of her own accord, or not at all. Just as she likes, *I* shall not trouble about her."

don't deny that there *were* things in George's past life which it is very sad to think of, but women have always much to bear. It is our *cross*, and you must take up yours patiently and be sure that you will have your reward. *Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.* I wish now that I had talked to you on the subject before you were married, and prepared you to meet some forms of wickedness in a proper spirit; you would not then have been at the mercy of the wicked woman who has caused all this mischief. She is some clever designing adventuress, I suppose, and she must have told you dreadful things which you should never have heard of at your age, and I suspect that jealousy is at the bottom of it all. She may herself have been cast off in her wickedness for my own sweet innocent child's sake. When I think of all the happiness she has destroyed, of these dark days following such bright propects, I could see her *whipped*, Evadne, I could indeed. Everything had arranged itself so beautifully. He is an excellent match. The Irish property, which he *must* have, is one of the best in the country, and as there is only one fragile child between him and the Scotch estates, you might almost venture to calculate upon becoming mistress of them also. And then, he certainly is a handsome and attractive man of most charming manners, so what more do you want? He is a good Churchman too. You know how regularly he accompanied you to every service. And, *really* if you will just think for a *moment*, I am sure you will see yourself that you have made a terrible mistake, and repent while it is called to-day. But we do not blame you entirely, dear. You have surprised and distressed us, but we all freely forgive you, and if you will come back at once, you need fear *no* reproaches, for not another word will *ever* be said on the subject.—I am, dear child,

"Ever your loving Mother,

"ELIZABETH FRAYLING.

"P.S.—Your father is so horrified at your conduct that he declares he will neither write to you nor speak to you until you return to your duty."

Evadne took a day and a half to consider her mother's letter, and then she wrote the following reply:—

"The Close, Morningquest,
"9th October.

"My dear Mother,—

"I answer your postscript first, because I am cut to the quick by my father's attitude. I was sure that, large-minded and just as I have always thought him, he would allow that a woman is entitled to her own point of view in a matter which, to begin with, concerns her own happiness more than anybody else's, and that if she accepts a fallen angel for a husband, knowing him to be such, she shows a poor appreciation of her own worth. I am quite ready to rejoice over any sinner that repents, if I may rejoice as the

angels themselves do, that is to say at a safe distance. I would not be a stumbling block in the way of any man's reformation. I only maintain that I am not the right person to undertake such a task, and that if women are to do it at all, they should be mothers or other experienced persons, and not young wives.

"I am pained that you should make such a cruel insinuation against the character and motives of the lady whom I have to bless for my escape from a detestable position. But even if she had been the kind of character you describe, do I understand you to mean that it would have been a triumph for me to have obtained the reversion of her equally culpable associate? that I ought, in fact, to have gratefully accepted a secondhand sort of man! You would not counsel a son of yours to marry a society woman of the same character as Major Colquhoun, and neither more nor less degraded, for the purpose of reforming her, would you, mother? I know you would not. And as a woman's soul is every bit as precious as a man's, one sees what cant this talk of reformation is. It seems to me that such cases as Major Colquhoun's are for the clergy, who have both experience and authority, and not for young wives to tackle. And, at any rate, although reforming reprobates may be a very noble calling, I do not, at nineteen, feel that I have any vocation for it; and I would respectfully suggest that you, mother, with your experience, your known piety, and your sweet disposition, would be a much more suitable person to reform Major Colquhoun than I should be. His past life seems to inspire you with no horror; the knowledge of it makes *me* shrink from him. My husband must be a Christ-like man. I have very strong convictions, you see, on the subject of the sanctity and responsibilities of marriage. There are certain conditions which I hold to be essential on both sides. I hold also that human beings are sacred and capable of deep desecration, and that marriage, their closest bond, is sacred too, the holiest relationship in life, and one which should only be entered upon with the greatest care, and in the most reverent spirit. I see no reason why marriage should be a lottery. But evidently, Major Colquhoun's views upon the subject differ widely from mine, and it seems to me utterly impossible that we should ever be able to accommodate ourselves to each other's principles. Had I known soon enough that he did not answer to my requirements, I should have dismissed him at once, and thought no more about him, and all this misery would never have occurred; but having been kept in ignorance, I consider that I was inveigled into consenting, that the vow I made was taken under a grave misapprehension, that therefore there is nothing either holy or binding in it, and that every law of morality absolves me from fulfilling my share of the contract. This, of course, is merely considering marriage from the higher and most moral point of view; but even when I think of it in the lower and more ordinary way, I find the same conclusion forces itself upon me. For there certainly is no romance in marrying a man old already in every emotion, between whom and me the recollection of some other woman would be for ever intruding. My whole soul sickens at the possibility, and I

think that it must have been women old in emotion themselves who first tolerated the staleness of such lovers.

"I feel that my letter is very inadequate, mother. The thought that I am forced to pain and oppose you distracts me. But I have tried conscientiously to show you exactly what my conviction and principles are, and I do think I have a right to beg that you will at least be tolerant, however much you may disagree with me.

"Your affectionate Daughter,

"EVADNE."

Mrs. Frayling's reply to this letter arrived by return of post, red-hot. Evadne, glancing at the envelope, frowned to find herself addressed as "Mrs. Colquhoun." The name had not struck her on her mother's first communication, which was also the first occasion upon which she had been so addressed, and it had not occurred to her until now that she would have to be "Mrs. Colquhoun" from thenceforth, whether she liked it or not. She felt it to be unjust, distinctly; a gross infringement of the liberty of the subject, and she opened her mother's letter with rage and rebellion at her heart, and found the contents anything but soothing to such a state of mind. It ran as follows:—

"You most unnatural Child,

"We shall all be disgraced if this story gets about. So far, the world knows nothing, and there is time for you to save yourself. I warn you that your father's anger is extreme. He says he shall be obliged to put you in a lunatic asylum if you do not give in at once, and consent to live with your husband. And there is the law too which your husband can invoke. And think of your five sisters. Will anybody marry them after such a business with you? Their prospects will be simply ruined by your heartless selfishness. No girl in my young days would have acted so outrageously. It is not decent. It is positively immodest. I repeat that your father *is* the proper person to judge for you. You know nothing of the world, and even if you did, you are not old enough to think for yourself. You do not imagine yourself to be a sort of seer, I hope, better informed by intuition than your parents are by wisdom and knowledge, for that would be a certain sign of insanity. Your father thinks your opposition is mere conceit, and certainly no good can come of it. All right-minded women have submitted and suffered patiently, and have had their reward. Think of the mother of St. Augustin! Her husband returned to her penitent after

years of depravity. '*Every wise woman buildeth her house; but the foolish pluck it down,*' and that is what you are doing. '*A continual dropping on a rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.*' For heaven's sake, my child, do not become a contentious woman. See also Prov. viii. If only you had read your Bible regularly every day, prayed humbly for a contrite heart, and *obeyed your parents*, as you have always been taught to do, we should never have had all this dreadful trouble with you; but you show yourself wanting in respect in every way and in all right and proper feeling, and really I don't know what to do. I don't indeed. O do remember that forgiveness is still offered to you, and repent while it is called to-day. I assure you that your poor husband is even more ready than your father and myself to forgive and forget.

"I pray for you continually, Evadne, I do indeed. If you have any natural feeling at all, write and relieve my anxiety at once.

"Your affectionate Mother,

"ELIZABETH FRAYLING."

Evadne read this letter in the drawing-room, and stood for a little, leaning against the window-frame looking up at the Close, at the old trees dishevelled by the recent gale, and at the weatherbeaten wall of the south transept of the Cathedral, from which the beautiful spire sprang upwards; but she rendered no account to herself of these marvels of nature and art.

Something in her attitude as she stood there with one hand resting flat upon the window-frame high above her head, and the other hanging down beside her loosely holding her mother's letter, attracted Mrs. Orton Beg's attention, and made her wonder what thought her niece was so intent upon. Not one of the thoughts of youth, which are "long, long thoughts," apparently, for the expression of her countenance was not far away, and neither was it sad nor angry, but only intent. Presently, she turned from the window, languidly strolled to the writing table, re-read her letter, and began to write without moving a muscle of her face. As she proceeded, however, she compressed her lips and bent her brows portentously, and Mrs. Orton Beg was sure that she heard no note of the mellow chime which sounded once while she was so engaged, and seemed to her aunt to plead with her solemnly to cast her care

on the great Power watching, and continue passively in the old worn grooves, as Mrs. Orton Beg herself had done.

Evadne began abruptly :—

"The Close, Morningquest,
"13th October.

"Dear Mother,

"You say that no girl in your young days would have behaved so outrageously as I am doing. I wish you had said 'so decidedly,' instead of 'outrageously,' for I am sure that any resistance to the old iniquitous state of things is a quite hopeful sign of coming change for the better. We are a long way from the days when it was considered right and becoming for women in our position to sit in their 'parlours,' do Berlin woolwork, and say nothing. We should call that conniving now. But, happily, women are no longer content to be part of the livestock about the place; they have acquired the right of reason and judgment in matters concerning themselves in particular, and the welfare of the world at large. Public opinion now is composed of what *we* think, to a very great extent. You remind me of what other women have done, and how patiently they have submitted. I have found the same thing said over and over again in the course of my reading, but I have not yet found any particular mention made of the great good which would naturally have come of all the submission which has been going on for so many centuries, if submission on our part is truly an effectual means of checking sin. On the contrary. St. Monica doubtless made things pleasanter for her own husband by rewarding him with forgiveness, a happy home, and good nursing, when he returned to her exhausted by vice, but at the same time she set a most pernicious example. So long as men believe that women will forgive anything they will do anything. Do you see what I mean? The mistake from the beginning has been that women have practised self-sacrifice, when they should have been teaching men self-control. You say that I do not know the world, but my father does, and that, therefore, I must let him judge for me. He probably does know the world, but he quite evidently does not know me. Our point of view, you see, is necessarily very different. I have no doubt that Major Colquhoun is agreeable in the temporary good fellowship of the smoking-room, and he is agreeable in the drawing-room also, but society and his own interests require him to be so; it is a trick of manner merely which may conceal the most objectionable mind. Character is what we have most to consider in the choosing of a partner for life, and how are we to consider it except by actions, such as a man's misdeeds, which are specially the outcome of his own individuality, and are calculated in their consequences to do more injury to his family than could be compensated for by the most charming manners in the world.

"Of course, I deprecate my father's anger, but, I must again repeat, I do not consider that I deserve it.

"The lunatic asylum is a nonsensical threat, and the law I am inclined to invoke myself for the purpose of ventilating the question. Do I understand that Major Colquhoun presumes to send *me* messages of forgiveness? What has *he* to forgive, may I ask? Surely *I* am the person who has been imposed upon. Do not, I beg, allow him to repeat such an impertinence.

But, mother, why do you persistently ignore my reason for refusing to live with Major Colquhoun? Summed up it comes to this really, and I give it now vulgarly, baldly, boldly, and once for all. *Major Colquhoun is not good enough, and I won't have him.* That is plain, I am sure, and I must beg you to accept it as my final decision. The tone of our correspondence is becoming undignified on both sides, and the correspondence itself must end here. I shall not write another word on the subject, and I only wish you had not compelled me to write so much. Forgive me, mother, do, for being myself—I don't know how else to put it; but I know that none of the others could do as I have done, and yet I cannot help it. I cannot act otherwise and preserve my honesty and self-respect. It is conscience, and not caprice, that I am obeying; I wish I could make you realize that. But, at all events, don't write me any more hard words, mother. They burn into my memory and obliterate the loving thoughts I have of you. It is terrible to be met with bitterness and reproach, where hitherto one has known nothing but kindness and indulgence, so, I do entreat you, mother, once more to forgive me for being myself, and above everything, to say nothing which will destroy my affection for you.

"Believe me, I always have been, and hope always to be,

"Your most loving Child,

"EVADNE."

The last lines were crowded into the smallest possible space, and there had hardly been room enough for her name at the end. She glanced at the clock as she folded the letter, and finding that there was only just time to catch the post she rang for a servant and told her to take it at once. Then she took her old stand in the window, and watched the girl hurrying up the Close, holding the white letter carelessly, and waving it to and fro on a level with her shoulder as she went.

"I wish I had had time to re-write it," Evadne thought; "shall I call her back? No. Anything will be better for mother than another day's suspense. But I think I might have expressed myself better. I don't know, though." She turned from the window, and met her aunt's kind eyes fixed upon her.

"You are flushed, Evadne," the latter said. "Were you writing home?"

"Yes, auntie," Evadne answered, wearily.

"You are looking more worried than I have seen you yet."

"I *am* worried, auntie, and I lost my temper. I could not help it, and I am dissatisfied. I know I have said too much, and I have said the same thing over and over again, and gone round and round the subject, too, and altogether I am disheartened."

"I cannot imagine you saying too much about anything, Evadne," Mrs. Orton Beg commented, smiling.

"When I am speaking, you mean. But that is different. I am always afraid to speak, but I dare write anything. The subject is closed now, however. I shall write no more." She advanced listlessly, and leant against the mantelpiece close beside the couch on which her aunt was lying.

"Have you ever felt compelled to say something which all the time you hate to say, and afterwards hate yourself for having said? That is what I always seem to be doing now." She looked up at the Cathedral as she spoke. "How I envy you your power to say exactly what you mean," she added.

"Who told you I always say exactly what I mean?" her aunt asked, smiling.

"Well, exactly what you ought to say, then," Evadne answered, responding to the smile.

Mrs. Orton Beg sighed and resumed her knitting. She was making some sort of wrap out of soft white wool, and Evadne noticed the glint of her rings as she worked, and also the delicacy of her slender white hands as she held them up in the somewhat tiring attitude which her position on the couch necessitated.

"How patient you are, auntie," Evadne said, and then she bent down and kissed her forehead and cheeks.

"It is easy to be patient when one's greatest trial is only the waiting for a happy certainty," Mrs. Orton Beg answered. "But

you will be patient too, Evadne, sooner or later. You are at the passionate age now, but the patient one will come all in good time."

"You have always a word of comfort," Evadne said.

"There is one word more I would say, although I do not wish to influence you," Mrs. Orton Beg began hesitatingly.

"You mean *submit*," Evadne answered, and shook her head. "No, that word is of no use to me. Mine is *rebel*. It seems to me that those who dare to rebel in every age are they who make life possible for those whom temperament compels to submit. It is the rebels who extend the boundary of right little by little, narrowing the confines of wrong, and crowding it out of existence."

She stood for a moment looking down on the ground with bent brows, thinking deeply, and then she slowly sauntered from the room, and presently passed the south window with her hat in her hand, took one turn round the garden, and then subsided into the high-backed chair, on which she had sat and fed her fancy with dreams of love a few weeks before her marriage. The day was one of those balmy mild ones which come occasionally in mid-October. The sheltered garden had suffered little in the recent gale. From where Mrs. Orton Beg reclined there was no visible change in the background of single dahlias, sunflowers, and the old brick wall curtained with creepers, nor was there any great difference apparent in the girl herself. The delicate shell-pink of passion had faded to milky white, her eyes were heavy, and her attitude somewhat fatigued, but that was all; a dance the night before would have left her so exactly, and Mrs. Orton Beg, watching her, wondered at the small effect of "blighted affection," as she saw it in Evadne compared with the terrible consequences which popular superstition attributes to "a disappointment." Evadne had certainly suffered, but more because her parents, in whom she had always had perfect confidence, and whom she had known and loved as long as she could remember anything, had failed her, than because she had

been obliged to cast a man out of her life who had merely lighted it for a few months with a flame which she recognized now as lurid at the best, and uncertain, and which she would never have desired to keep burning continually with that feverish glare to the extinguishing of every other interesting object. She would have been happiest when passion ended and love began, as it does in happy marriages.

And she was herself comparing the two states of mind as she sat there. She was conscious of a blank now, dull and dispiriting enough, but no more likely to endure than the absorbing passion it succeeded. She knew it for an interregnum, and was thinking of the books she would send for when she had mastered herself sufficiently to be interested in books again. It was as if her mind had been out of health, but was convalescent now and recovering its strength ; and she was as well aware of the fact as if she had been suffering from some physical ailment which had interrupted her ordinary pursuits, and was making plans for the time when she should be able to resume them.

While so engaged, however, she fell asleep, as convalescents do, and Mrs. Orton Beg smiled at the consummation. It was not romantic, but it was eminently healthy.

At the same time, she heard the hall door opened from without as by one who had a right to enter familiarly, and a man's step in the hall.

"Come in," she said, in answer to a firm tap at the door, and smiled, looking over her shoulder as it opened.

It was Dr. Galbraith on his way back through Morningquest to his own place, Fountain Towers.

"I am so glad to see you," said Mrs. Orton Beg, as he took her hand.

"I am on my way back from the Castle," he rejoined, sitting down beside her ; "and I have just come in for a moment to see how the ankle progresses."

"Quicker now, I am thankful to say," she answered. "I can get about the house comfortably if I rest in between times. But is there anything wrong at the Castle?"

"The same old thing," said Dr. Galbraith, with a twinkle in his bright grey eyes. "The Duke has been seeing visions—determination of blood to the head; and Lady Fulda has been dreaming dreams—fatigue and fasting. Food and rest for her—she will be undisturbed by dreams to-night; and a severe course of dieting for him."

Mrs. Orton Beg smiled. "Really life is becoming too prosaic," she said, "since you dreadfully clever people began to discover a reason for everything. Lady Fulda's beauty and goodness would have been enough to convince any man at one time that she is a saint indeed, and privileged to heal the sick and converse with angels; but you are untouched by either."

"On the contrary," he answered, "I never see her or think of her without acknowledging to myself that she is one of the loveliest and most angelic women in the world. And she has the true magnetic touch of a nurse too. There is healing in it. I have seen it again and again. But that is a natural process. Many quite wicked doctors are endowed in the same way and even more strongly than she is. There can be no doubt about that"— He broke off with a little gesture, and smiled genially.

"But anything *beyond!*" Mrs. Orton Beg supplemented; "anything supernatural, in fact, you ridicule."

"One cannot ridicule *anything* with which Lady Fulda's name is associated," he answered. "But tell me," he exclaimed, catching sight of Evadne placidly sleeping in the high-backed chair, with her hat in her hand held up so as to conceal the lower part of her face; "Are visions about? *Is* that one that I see there before me? If I were Faust, I should love such a Marguerite. I wish she would let her hat drop. I want to see the lower part of her face. The upper part satisfies me. It is fine. The balance of brow and frontal development are perfect."

Mrs. Orton Beg coloured with a momentary annoyance. She had forgotten that Evadne was there, but Dr. Galbraith had entered so abruptly that there would have been no time to warn her away in any case.

"No vision," she began—"or if a vision, one of the nineteenth-century sort, tangible, and of satisfying continuance. She is a niece of mine, and I warn you in case you have a momentary desire to forsake your books and become young in mind again for her sake that she is a very long way after Marguerite, whom I think she would consider to have been a very weak and foolish person. I can imagine her saying about Faust: 'Fancy sacrificing one's self for the transient pleasure of a moonlight meeting or two with a man, and a few jewels however unique, when one can *live!*' in italics and with a note of admiration. 'Why, I can put my elbow here on the arm of my chair and my head on my hand, and in a moment I perceive delights past, present, and to come, of equal intensity, more certain quality, and longer continuance than passion. I perceive the gradual growth of knowledge through all the ages, the clouds of ignorance and superstition slowly parting, breaking up, and rolling away, to let the light of science shine—science being truth. And there is all art, and all natural beauty from the beginning—everything that lasts and *is* life. Why, even to think on such subjects warms my whole being with a glow of enthusiasm which is in itself a more exquisite pleasure than passion, and not alloyed like the latter with uncertainty, that terrible ache. I might take my walk in the garden with my own particular Faust like any other girl, and as I take my glass of champagne at dinner, for its pleasurably stimulating quality, but I hope I should do both in moderation. And as to making Faust my all, or even giving him so large a share of my attention as to limit my capacity for other forms of enjoyment, absurd! We are long past the time when there was only one incident of interest in a woman's life, and that was its love affair! There was no sense of proportion in those days!'"

"Is that how you interpret her ?" he said. "One who holds herself well in hand, bent upon enjoying every moment of her life and all the variety of it, perceiving that it is stupid to narrow it down to the indulgence of one particular set of emotions, and determined not to swamp every faculty by constant cultivation of the animal instincts to which all ages have created altars ! Best for herself, I suppose, but hardly possible at present. The capacity, you know, is only coming. Women have been cramped into a small space so long that they cannot expand all at once when they *are* let out; there must be a great deal of stretching and growing, and when they are not on their guard, they will often find themselves falling into the old attitude, as newborn babes are apt to resume the ante-natal position. She will have the perception, the inclination; but the power—unless she is exceptional, the power will only be for her daughter's daughter."

"Then she must suffer and do no good ?"

"She must suffer, yes; but I don't know about the rest. She may be a seventh wave, you know!"

"What is a seventh wave ?"

"It is a superstition of the fisher-folks. They say that when the tide is coming in it pauses always, and remains stationary between every seventh wave, waiting for the next, and unable to rise any higher till it comes to carry it on; and it has always seemed to me that the tide of human progress is raised at intervals to higher levels at a bound in some such way. The seventh waves of humanity are men and women who, by the impulse of some one action which comes naturally to them but is new to the race, gather strength to come up to the last halting place of the tide, and to carry it on with them ever so far beyond." He stopped abruptly, and brushed his hand over his forehead. "Now that I have said that," he added, "it seems as old as the Cathedral there, and as familiar, yet the moment before I spoke it appeared to have only just occurred to me. If it is an ill-digested reminiscence and

you come across the original in some book, I am afraid you will lose your faith in me for ever; but I pray you of your charity make due allowance. I must go."

"Oh no, not yet a moment!" Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed. "I want to ask you: How are Lady Adeline and the twins?"

"I haven't seen Lady Adeline for a month," he answered, rising to go, as he spoke. "But Dawne tells me that the twins are as awful as ever. It is a question of education now, and it seems that the twins have their own ideas on the subject, and are teaching their parents. But take care of your girlie out there," he added, his strong face softening as he took a last look at her. "Her body is not so robust as her brain, I should say, and it is late in the year to be sitting out of doors."

"Tell me, Dr. Galbraith," Mrs. Orton Beg began, detaining him, "you are a Scotchman, you should have the second sight; tell me the fate of my girlie out there. I am anxious about her."

"She will marry," he answered in his deliberate way, humouring her, "but not have many children, and her husband's name should be George."

"Oh, most oracular! a very oracle! a Delphic oracle, only to be interpreted by the event!"

"Just so!" he answered from the door, and then he was gone.

"Evadne, come in!" Mrs. Orton Beg called. 'It is getting damp." Evadne roused herself and entered at once by the window.

"I have been hearing voices through my 'dim dreaming consciousness" she said. "Have you had a visitor?"

"Only the Doctor," her aunt replied. "By the way, Evadne," she added, "What is Major Colquhoun's christian name?"

"George," Evadne anwered surprised. "Why, auntie?"

"Nothing; I wanted to know."

CHAPTER XVI.

When breakfast was over at Fraylingay next morning, and the young people had left the table, Mrs. Frayling helped herself to another cup of coffee, and solemnly opened Evadne's last letter. The coffee was cold, for the poor lady had been waiting, not daring to take the last cup herself, because she knew that the moment she did so her husband would want more. The emptying of the urn was the signal which usually called up his appetite for another cup. He might refuse several times, and even leave the table amiably, so long as there was any left; but the knowledge or suspicion that there was none, set up a sense of injury, unmistakably expressed in his countenance, and not to be satisfied by having more made immediately, although he invariably ordered it just to mark his displeasure. He would get up and ring for it emphatically, and would even sit with it before him for some time after it came, but would finally go out without touching it, and be, as poor Mrs. Frayling mentally expressed it: "Oh, dear! quite upset for the rest of the day."

On this occasion, however, the pleasure of a wholly new grievance left no space in his fickle mind for the old-worn item of irritation, and he never even noticed that the coffee was done. 'Dear George' sat beside Mrs. Frayling. She kept him there in order to be able to bestow a stray pat on his hand or make him some other sign of that maternal tenderness of which she considered the poor dear fellow stood so much in need.

Mr. Frayling sat at the end of the table reading a local paper with one eye, as it were, and watching his wife for her news with the other. A severely critical expression sat singularly ill upon

his broad face, which was like a baked apple, puffy, and wrinkled, and red, and there was about him a queerly pursed-up air of settled opposition to everything which did duty for both the real and spurious object of his attention.

Mrs. Frayling read the letter through to herself, and then she put it down on the table, and raised her handkerchief to her eyes with a heavy sigh.

"Well, what does she say now," Mr. Frayling exclaimed, throwing down the local paper, and giving way to his impatience openly.

'Dear George' was perfectly cool.

"She says," Mrs. Frayling rejoined between two sniffs, "that Major Colquhoun isn't good enough, and she won't have him."

"Well, I understand that, at all events, better than anything else she has said," Major Colquhoun observed, almost as if a weight had been removed from his mind. "And I am quite inclined to come to terms with her, for I don't care much myself for a young lady who goes into hysterics about things that other women think nothing of."

"Oh, *don't* say think *nothing* of, George," Mrs. Frayling deprecated. "We lament and deplore, but we forgive and endure."

"It comes to the same thing," said Major Colquhoun.

A big dog which sat beside him with its head on his knee, thumped his tail upon the ground here, and whined sympathetically; and he laid one hand caressingly upon its head, while he twirled his big blond moustache with the other. He was fond of children and animals, and all creatures that fawned upon him and were not able to argue if they disagreed with him, or resent it if he kicked them, actually or metaphorically speaking; not that he was much given to that kind of thing. He was agreeable naturally as all pleasure-loving people are; only when he did lose his temper that was the way he showed it. He would cut a woman to the quick with a word, and knock a man down; but both ebullitions

were momentary as a rule. It was really too much trouble to cherish anger.

And just then he was thinking quite as much about his moustache as about his wife. It had once been the pride of his life, but had come to be the cause of some misgivings; for "heavy moustaches" had gone out of fashion in polite society.

Mr. Frayling followed up the last remark. "This is very hard on you, Colquhoun, very hard," he declared, pushing his plate away from him; "and I may say that it is very hard on me too. But it just shows you what would come of the Higher Education of Women! Why, they'd raise some absurd standard of excellence, and want to import angels from Eden if we didn't come up to it."

Major Colquhoun looked depressed.

"Yes," Mrs. Frayling protested, shaking her head. "She says her husband must be a Christlike man. She says men have agreed to accept Christ as an example of what a man should be, and asserts that therefore they must feel in themselves that they *could* live up to His standard if they chose."

"There now!" Mr. Frayling exclaimed triumphantly. "That is just what I said. A Christlike man, indeed! What absurdity will women want next? I don't know what to advise, Colquhoun. I really don't."

"Can't you *order* her?" Mrs. Frayling suggested.

"Order her! How can *I* order her? She belongs to Major Colquhoun now," he retorted irritably, but with a fine conservative regard for the rights of property.

"And this is the way she keeps her vow of obedience," Major Colquhoun muttered.

"Oh, but you see—the poor misguided child considers that she made the vow under a misapprehension," Mrs. Frayling explained, her maternal instinct acting on the defensive when her offspring's integrity was attacked, and making the position clear to her.

"Don't you think, dear"—to her husband—"that if you asked the Bishop, he would talk to her."

"The Bishop!" Mr. Frayling ejaculated with infinite scorn. "*I* know what women are when they go off like this. Once they set up opinions of their own, there's *no* talking to them. Why, haven't they gone to the stake for their opinions! She wouldn't obey the whole bench of bishops in her present frame of mind; and if they condescended to talk to her, they would only confirm her belief in her own powers. She would glory to find herself opposing what she calls her opinions to theirs."

"Oh, the child is mad!" Mrs. Frayling wailed. "I've said it all along. She's quite mad."

"Is there any insanity in the family?" Major Colquhoun asked, looking up suspiciously.

"None, none whatever," Mr. Frayling hastened to assure him. "There has never been a case. In fact, the women on both sides have always been celebrated for good sense and exceptional abilities —*for* women, of course; and several of the men have distinguished themselves, as you know."

"That does not alter *my* opinion in the least!" Mrs. Frayling put in. "Evadne must be mad."

"She's worse, I think," Major Colquhoun exclaimed in a tone of deep disgust. "She's worse than mad. She's clever. You can do something with a mad woman; you can lock her up; but a clever woman's the devil. And I'd never have thought it of her," he added regretfully. "Such a nice quiet little thing as she seemed, with hardly a word to say for herself. You wouldn't have imagined that she knew what 'views' are, let alone having any of her own. But that is just the way with women. There is no being up to them."

"That is true," said Mr. Frayling.

"Well, I don't know where she got them," Mrs. Frayling protested, "for I am sure *I* haven't any. But she seems to know

so much about—*everything!*" she declared, glancing again at the letter. "At *her* age, I knew *nothing!*"

"I can vouch for that!" her husband exclaimed. He was one of those men who oppose the education of women might and main, and then jeer at them for knowing nothing. He was very particular about the human race when it was likely to suffer by any injurious indulgence on the part of women, but when it was a question of extra port wine for himself, he never considered the tortures of gout he might be entailing upon his own hapless descendants. However, there was an excuse for him on this occasion, for it is not every day that an irritated man has an opportunity of railing at his wife's incapacity and the inconvenient intelligence of his daughter both in one breath. "But how has Evadne obtained all this mischievous information? I cannot think how she could have obtained it!" he ejaculated, knitting his brows at his wife in a suspicious way, as he always did when this importunate thought recurred to him. In such ordinary everyday matters as the management of his estate, and his other duties as a county gentleman, and also in solid comprehension of the political situation of the period, he was by no means wanting; but his mind simply circled round and round this business of Evadne's like a helpless swimmer in a whirlpool, able to keep afloat, but with nothing to take hold of. The risk of sending the mind of an elderly gentleman of settled prejudices spinning "down the ringing grooves of change" at such a rate is considerable.

During the day he wandered up to the rooms which had been Evadne's. They were kept very much as she was accustomed to have them, but there was that something of bareness about them, and a kind of spick-and-spanness conveying a sense of emptiness and desertion which strikes cold to the heart when it comes of the absence of someone dear. And Mr. Frayling felt the discomfort of it. The afternoon sunlight slanted across the little sitting-room, falling on the backs of a row of well-worn books, and showing the scars of use and abuse on them. Without deliberate intention, Mr.

Frayling followed the ray, and read the bald titles by its uncompromising clearness—histology, pathology, anatomy, physiology, prophylactics, therapeutics, botany, natural history, ancient and outspoken history, not to mention the modern writers, and the various philosophies. Mr. Frayling took out a work on sociology, opened it, read a few passages which Evadne had marked, and solemnly ejaculated, "Good heavens!" several times. He could not have been more horrified had the books been *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, *Nana*, *La Terre*, *Madame Bovary*, and *Sapho*; yet, had women been taught to read the former and reflect upon them, our sacred humanity might have been saved sooner from the depth of degradation depicted in the latter.

The discovery of these books was an adding of alkali to the acid of Mr. Frayling's disposition at the moment, and he went down to look for his wife while he was still effervescing. How did Evadne get them? he wanted to know. Mrs. Frayling could not conceive. She had forgotten all about Evadne's discovery of the box of books in the attic, and the sort of general consent she had given when Evadne worried her for permission to read them.

"She must be a most deceitful girl. I shall go and talk to her myself," Mr. Frayling concluded.

And, doubtless, if only he had had a pair of wings to spread, he would presently have appeared sailing over the Cathedral into the Close at Morningquest, a portly bird, in a frock coat, tall hat, and a very bad temper.

But, poor gentleman! he really was an object for compassion. All his ideas of propriety and the natural social order of the universe were being outraged, and by his favourite daughter too, the one whom everybody thought so like him. And in truth, she was like him, especially in the matter of sticking to her own opinion; just the very thing he had no patience with, for he detested obstinate people. He said so himself. He did not go, however. Having preparations to make and a train to wait for, gave him time to

reflect, and, perceiving that the interview must inevitably be of a most disagreeable nature, he decided to send his wife next day to reason with her daughter.

Mrs. Frayling came upon Evadne unawares, and the shock it gave the girl to see her mother all miserably agitated and worn with worry, was a more powerful point in favour of the success of the latter's mission than any argument would have been.

The poor lady was handsomely dressed, and of a large presence calculated to inspire awe in inferiors unaccustomed to it. She was a well-preserved woman, with even teeth, thick brown hair, scarcely tinged with grey, and a beautiful soft transparent pink and white complexion, and Evadne had always seen her in a state of placid content, never really interrupted except by such surface squalls as were caused by having to scold the children, or the shedding of a few sunshiny tears; and had thought her lovely. But when she entered now, and had given her daughter the corner of her cheek to kiss for form's sake, she sat down with quivering lips and watery eyes all red with crying, and a broken-up aspect generally which cut the girl to the quick.

"O mother!" Evadne cried, kneeling down on the floor beside her, and putting her arms about her. "It grieves me deeply to see you so distressed."

But Mrs. Frayling held herself stiffly, refusing to be embraced, and presenting a surface for the operation as unyielding as the figure head of a ship.

"If you are sincere," she said severely, "you will give up this nonsense at once."

Evadne's arms dropped, and she rose to her feet, and stood, with fingers interlaced in front of her, looking down at her mother for a moment, and then up at the Cathedral. Her talent for silence came in naturally here.

"You don't say anything, because you know there is nothing to be said for you," Mrs. Frayling began. "You've broken my heart,

Evadne, indeed you have. And after everything had gone off so well too. What a tragedy! How could you forget? And on the very day itself! Your wedding day, just think! Why, we keep ours every year. And all your beautiful presents, and such a trousseau! I am sure no girl was ever more kindly considered by father, mother, friends—everybody!"

She was obliged to stop short for a moment. Ideas, by which she was not much troubled as a rule, had suddenly crowded in so thick upon her when she began to speak, that she became bewildered, and in an honest attempt to make the most of them all, only succeeded in laying hold of an end of each, to the great let and hindrance of all coherency as she herself felt when she pulled up.

"Yes, you may well look up at the Cathedral," she began again, unreasonably provoked by Evadne's attitude. "But what good does it do you? I should have supposed that the hallowed associations of this place would have restored you to a better frame of mind."

"I do feel the force of association strongly," Evadne answered; "and that is why I shrink from Major Colquhoun. People have their associations as well as places, and those that cling about him are anything but hallowed."

Mrs. Frayling assumed an aspect of the deepest depression: "I never heard a girl talk so in my life," she said. "It is positively indelicate. It really is. But *we* have done all we could. Now, honestly, have you anything to complain of?"

"Nothing, Mother, nothing," Evadne exclaimed. "Oh, I wish I could make you understand!"

"Understand! What is there to understand? It is easy enough to understand that you have behaved outrageously. And written letters you ought to be ashamed of. Quoting Scripture too, for your own purposes. I cannot think that you are in your right mind, Evadne, I really cannot. No girl ever acted so before. If

only you would read your Bible properly, and say your prayers, you would see for yourself, and repent. Besides, what is to become of you? We can't have you at home again, you know. How we are any of us to appear in the neighbourhood if the story gets about—and of course it must get about if you persist—I cannot think. And everybody said, too, how sweet you looked on your wedding day, Evadne; but I said, when those children changed clothes, it was unnatural, and would bring bad luck; and there was a terrible gale blowing too, and it rained. Everything went so well up to the very day itself; but, since then, for no reason at all but your own wicked obstinacy, all has gone wrong. You ought to have been coming back from your honeymoon soon now, and here you are in hiding—yes, literally *in hiding like a criminal*, ashamed to be seen. It must be a terrible trial for my poor sister, Olive, and a great imposition on her good nature, having you here. You consider no one. And I might have been a grandmother in time too, although I don't so much mind about that, for I don't think it is any blessing to a military man to have a family. They have to move about so much. But, however, all that, it seems, is over. And your poor sisters—five of them—are curious to know what George is doing all this time at Fraylingay, and asking questions. You cannot have imagined *my* difficulties, or you never would have been so selfish and unnatural. I had to box Barbara's ears the other day, I had indeed, and who will marry them now, I should like to know? If only you had turned Roman Catholic and gone into a convent, or died, or never been born—O dear! O dear!"

Evadne looked down at her mother again. She was very white, but she did not utter a word.

"Why don't you speak?" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed. "Why do you stand there like a stone or statue, deaf to all my arguments?"

Evadne sighed: "Mother, I will do anything you suggest except the one thing. I will not live with Major Colquhoun as his wife," she said.

"I thought so!" Mrs. Frayling exclaimed. "You will do everything but what you ought to do. It is just what your father says. Once you over-educate a girl, you can do nothing with her, she gives herself such airs; and you have managed to over-educate yourself somehow, although *how* remains a mystery. But one thing I am determined upon. Your poor sisters shall never have a book I don't know off by heart myself. I shall lock them all up. Not that it is much use, for no one will marry them now. No man will ever come to the house again to be robbed of his character, as Major Colquhoun has been by you. I am sure no one ever knew anything bad about him—at least *I* never did, whatever your father may have done—until you went and ferreted all those dreadful stories out. You are shameless, Evadne, you really are. And what good have you done by it all, I should like to know? When you might have done so much, too."

Mrs. Frayling paused here, and Evadne looked up at the Cathedral again, feeling for her pitifully. This new view of her mother was another terrible disillusion, and the more the poor lady exposed herself, the greater Evadne felt was the claim she had upon her filial tenderness.

"Why don't you say something?" Mrs. Frayling recommenced.

"Mother, what *can* I say?"

"If you knew what a time I have had with your father and your husband, you would pity me. I can assure you George has been so sullen there was no doing anything with him, and the trouble I have had, and the excuses I have made for you, I am quite worn out. He said if you were that kind of girl you might go, and I've had to go down on my knees to him almost to make him forgive you. And now I will go down on my knees to you"—she exclaimed, acting on a veritable inspiration, and suiting the action to the word—"to beg you for the sake of your sisters, and for the love of God, not to disgrace us all!"

"Oh mother—no! Don't do that. Get up—do get up! This is too dreadful!" Evadne cried, almost hysterically.

"Here I shall kneel until you give in," Mrs. Frayling sobbed, clasping her hands in the attitude of prayer to her daughter, and conscious of the strength of her position.

Evadne tried in vain to raise her. Her bonnet had slipped to one side, her dress had been caught up by the heels of her boots and the soles were showing behind, her mantle was disarranged; she was a figure for a farce; but Evadne saw only her own mother, shaken with sobs, on her knees before her.

"Mother—mother," she cried, sinking into a chair, and covering her face with her hands to hide the dreadful spectacle: "Tell me what I am to do? Suggest something!"

"If you would even consent," Mrs. Frayling began, gathering herself up slowly, and standing over her daughter, "if you would even consent to live in the same house with him until you get used to him and forget all this nonsense, I am sure he would agree. For he is *dreadfully* afraid of scandal, Evadne. I never knew a man more so. In fact, he shows nothing but right and proper feeling, and you will love him as much as ever again when you know him better, and get over all these exaggerated ideas. *Do* consent to this, dear child, for my sake. You shall have your own way in everything else. And I will arrange it all for you, and get his written promise to allow you to live in his house quite independently, like brother and sister, as long as you like, and there will be no awkwardness for you whatever. Do, my child, do consent to this," and the poor lady knelt once more, and put her arms about her daughter, and wept aloud.

Evadne broke down. The sight of the dear face so distorted, the poor lips quivering, the kind eyes all swollen and blurred with tears was too much for her, and she flung her arms round her mother's neck and cried: "I consent, Mother, for your sake—to keep up appearances; but only that, mother, you promise me. You will arrange all that?"

"I promise you, my dear, I promise," Mrs. Frayling rejoined, rising with alacrity, her countenance clearing on the instant, her heart swelling with the joy and pride of a great victory. She knew she had done what the whole bench of bishops could not have done—nor that most remarkable man, her husband, either, for the matter of that, and she enjoyed her triumph.

As she had anticipated, Major Colquhoun made no difficulty about the arrangement.

"I should not care a rap for an unwilling wife," he said. "Let her go *her* way, and I'll go mine. All I want now is to keep up appearances. It would be a deuced nasty thing for me if the story got about. Fellows would think there was more in it than there is."

"But she will come round," said Mrs. Frayling. "If only you are nice to her, and I am sure you will be, she is sure to come round."

"Oh, of course she will," Mr. Frayling decided.

And Major Colquhoun smiled complacently. He often asserted that there was no knowing women; but he took credit to himself for a superior knowledge of the sex all the same.

CHAPTER XVII.

Before writing the promise which Evadne required, Major Colquhoun begged to be allowed to have an interview with her, and to this also she consented at her mother's earnest solicitation, although the idea of it went very much against the grain. She perceived, however, that the first meeting must be awkward in any case, and she was one of those energetic people who, when there is a disagreeable thing to be done, do it, and get it over at once. So she strengthened her mind by adding a touch of severity to her costume, and sat herself down in the drawing-room with a book on her lap when the morning came, well nerved for the interview. Her heart began to beat unpleasantly when he rang, and she heard him in the hall, doubtless inquiring for her. At the sound of his voice she arose from her seat involuntarily, and stood, literally awaiting in fear and trembling the dreadful moment of meeting.

"What a horrible sensation!" she ejaculated mentally.

"Colonel Colquhoun," the servant announced.

He entered with an air of displeasure he could not conceal, and bowed to her from a distance stiffly, but, although she looked hard at him, she could not see him, so great was her trepidation. It was she, however, who was the first to speak.

"I—I'm nervous," she gasped, clasping her hands and holding them out to him piteously.

Colonel Colquhoun relaxed. It flattered his vanity to perceive that this curiously well-informed and exceedingly strong-minded young lady became as weakly emotional as any ordinary school girl the moment she found herself face to face with him. "There is nothing to be afraid of," he blandly assured her.

"Will you—sit down," Evadne managed to mumble, dropping into her own chair again from sheer inability to stand any longer.

Colonel Colquhoun took a seat at an exaggerated distance from her. His idea was to impress her with a sense of his extreme delicacy, but the act had a contrary effect upon her. His manners had been perfect so far as she had hitherto seen them, but thus to emphasize an already sufficiently awkward position was not good taste, and she registered the fact against him.

After they were seated, there was a painful pause. Evadne knit her brows and cast about in her mind for something to say. Suddenly the fact that the maid had announced him as "Colonel" Colquhoun recurred to her.

"Have you been promoted?" she asked very naturally.

"Yes," he answered.

"I congratulate you," she faltered.

Again he bowed stiffly.

But Evadne was recovering herself. She could look at him now, and it surprised her to find that he was not in appearance the monster she had been picturing him—no more a monster, indeed, than he had seemed before she knew of his past. Until now, however, except for that one glimpse in the carriage, she had always seen him through such a haze of feeling as to make the seeing practically null and void, so far as any perception of his true character might be gathered from his appearance, and useless for anything really but ordinary purposes of identification. Now, however, that the misty veil of passion was withdrawn from her eyes, the man whom she had thought noble she saw to be merely big; the face which had seemed to beam with intellect certainly remained fine-featured still, but it was like the work of a talented artist when it lacks the perfectly perceptible, indefinable finishing touch of genius that would have raised it above criticism, and drawn you back to it again and again, but, wanting which, after the first glance of admiration, interest fails, and you pass on only convinced of a

certain cleverness, a thing that soon satiates without satisfying. Evadne had seen soul in her lover's eyes, but now they struck her as hard, shallow, glittering, and obtrusively blue; and she noticed that his forehead, although high, shelved back abruptly to the crown of his head, which dipped down again sheer to the back of his neck, a very precipice without a single boss upon which to rest a hope of some saving grace in the way of eminent social qualities. "Thank heaven I see you as you are in time!" thought Evadne.

Colonel Colquhoun was the next to speak.

"I shall be able to give you rather a better position now," he said.

"Yes," she replied, but she did not at all appreciate the advantage, because she had never known what it was to be in an inferior position.

"May I speak to you with reference to our future relations?" he continued.

She bowed a kind of cold assent, then looked at him expectantly, her eyes opening wide, and her heart thumping horribly in the very natural perturbation which again seized upon her as they approached the subject; yet, in spite of her quite perceptible agitation there was both dignity and determination in her attitude, and Colonel Colquhoun, meeting the unflinching glance direct, became suddenly aware of the fact that the timid little love-sick girl with half-shut sleepy eyes he had had such a fancy for, and this young lady, modestly shrinking in every inch of her sensitive frame, but undaunted in spirit nevertheless, were two very different people. There had been misapprehension of character on both sides, it seemed, but he liked pluck, and, by Jove! the girl was handsomer than he had imagined. Views or no views, he would lay siege to her senses in earnest; there would be some satisfaction in such a conquest.

"Is there no hope for me, Evadne?" he pleaded.

"None—none," she burst out impetuously, becoming desperate

in her embarrassment. "But I cannot discuss the subject. I beg you will let it drop."

Her one idea was to get rid of this big blond man, who gazed at her with an expression in his eyes from which, now that her own passion was dead, she shrunk in revolt.

Again Colonel Colquhoun bowed stiffly. "As you please," he said. "My only wish is to please you." He paused for a reply, but as Evadne had nothing more to say, he was obliged to recommence: "The regiment," he said, "is going to Malta at once, and I must go with it. And what I would venture to suggest is, that you should follow when you feel inclined, by P. and O. Fellows will understand that I don't care to have you come out on a troopship. And I should like to get your rooms fitted up for you too, before you arrive. I am anxious to do all in my power to meet your wishes. I will make every arrangement with that end in view; and if you can suggest anything yourself that does not occur to me, I shall be glad. You had better bring an English maid out with you, or a German. Frenchwomen are flighty." He got up as he said this, and added: "You'll like Malta, I think. It is a bright little place, and very jolly in the season."

Evadne rose too. "Thank you," she said. "You are showing me more consideration than I have any right to expect, and I am sure to be satisfied with any arrangement you may think it right to make."

"I will telegraph to you when my arrangements for your reception are complete," he concluded. "And I think that is all."

"I can think of nothing else," she answered.

"Good-bye, then," he said.

"Good-bye," she rejoined, "and I wish you a pleasant voyage, and all possible success with your regiment."

"Thank you," he answered, putting his heels together, and making her a profound bow as he spoke.

So they parted, and he went his way through the old Cathedral Close, with that set expression of countenance which he had worn when he first became aware of her flight. But, curiously enough, although he had no atom of lover-like feeling left for her, and the amount of thought she had displayed in her letters had shocked his most cherished prejudices on the subject of her sex, she had gained in his estimation. He liked her pluck. He felt she could be nothing but a credit to him.

She remained for a few seconds as he had left her, listening to his footsteps in the hall and the shutting of the door; and then from where she stood she saw him pass, and watched him out of sight—a fine figure of a man, certainly; and she sighed. She had been touched by his consideration, and thought it a pity that such a kindly disposition should be unsupported by the solid qualities which alone could command her lasting respect and affection.

She walked to the window, and stood there drumming idly on the glass, thinking over the conclusion they had come to, for some time after Colonel Colquhoun had disappeared. She felt it to be a lame one, and she was far from satisfied. But, what, under the circumstances, would have been a better arrangement? The persistent question contained in itself its own answer. Only, the prospect was blank—blank. The excitement of the contest was over now, the reaction had set in. She ventured to look forward, and seeing for the first time what was before her, the long, dark, dreary level of a hopelessly uncongenial existence reaching from here to eternity, as it seemed from her present point of view, her over-wrought nerves gave way, and when Mrs. Orton Beg came to her a moment later, she threw herself into her arms, and sobbed hysterically: "Oh, auntie! I have suffered horribly! I wish I were dead!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE first news that Evadne received on arriving in Malta was contained in a letter from her mother. It announced that her father had determined to cut her off from all communication with her family until she came to her senses.

She had remained quietly with Mrs. Orton Beg until it was time to leave England. She did not want to go to Fraylingay. She shrank from occupying her old rooms in her new state of mind, and she would not have thought of proposing such a thing herself; but she did half expect to be asked. This not liking to return home, not recognizing it as home any longer, or herself as having any right to go there uninvited, marked the change in her position, and made her realize it with a pang. Her mother came and went, but she brought no message from her father, nor ever mentioned him. Something in ourselves warns us at once of any change of feeling in a friend, and Evadne asked no questions, and sent no messages either. But this attitude did not satisfy her father at all. He thought it her duty clearly to throw herself at his feet and beg for mercy and forgiveness ; and he waited for her to make some sign of contrition until his patience could hold out no longer, and then he asked his wife: "Has Evadne—eh—what is her attitude at present ? "

" She is perfectly cheerful and happy," Mrs. Frayling replied.

" She expresses no remorse for her most unjustifiable conduct ?"

" She thinks she only did what is right," Mrs. Frayling reminded him.

" Then she is quite indifferent to my opinion ? " he began,

swelling visibly and getting red in the face. "Has she asked what I think? Does she ever mention me?"

"No, never," Mrs. Frayling declared apprehensively.

"A most unnatural child," he exclaimed in his pompous way; "a most unnatural child."

It was after this that he became obstinately determined to cut Evadne off from all communication with her friends until she should become reconciled to Colonel Colquhoun as a husband. Mr. Frayling was not an astute man. He was simply incapable of sitting down and working out a deliberate scheme of punishment which should have the effect of bringing Evadne's unruly spirit into what he considered proper subjection. In this matter he acted, not upon any system which he could have reduced to writing, but rather as the lower animals do when they build nests, or burrow in the ground, or repeat, generation after generation, other arrangements of a like nature with a precision which the cumulative practice of the race makes perfect in each individual. He possessed a certain faculty, transmitted from father to son, that gives the stupidest man a power in his dealings with women which the brightest intelligence would not acquire without it; and he used it to obtain his end with the decision of instinct, which is always neater and more effectual than reason and artifice in such matters. He denied hotly, for instance, that Evadne had any natural affection, and yet it was upon that woman's weakness of hers that he set to work at once, proving himself to be possessed of a perfect, if unconscious, knowledge of her most vulnerable point; and he displayed much ingenuity in his manner of making it a means of torture. He let no hint of the cruel edict be breathed before she went abroad; she might have altered her arrangements had she known of it before, and remained with Mrs. Orton Beg—and there was something of foresight too, in timing her mother's tear-stained letter of farewell, good advice, pious exhortation, and plaintive reproach to meet her on her arrival, to greet her on the threshold of her new life, and make her

realize the terrible gulf which she was setting between herself and those who were dearest to her, by her obstinacy.

The object was to make her suffer, and she did suffer; but her father's cruelty did not alter the facts of the case, or appeal to her reason as an argument worthy to influence her decision.

Mrs. Orton Beg ventured to express her opinion to Mr. Frayling on the subject seriously. She often said more to him in her quiet way than most people would have dared to.

"I think you are making a mistake," she said.

"What!" he exclaimed, ready to bluster; "Would you have me countenance such conduct? Why, it is perfectly revolutionary, perfectly revolutionary. If other women follow her example, not one man in ten will be able to get a wife when he wants to marry."

"It is very terrible," she answered in her even way, "to hear that so large a majority will be condemned to celibacy; but I have no doubt you have good grounds for making the assertion. That is not the point, however. What I was thinking of was the risk you run of bringing more serious trouble on yourself by cutting Evadne adrift from every influence of her happy childhood, and casting her among strangers, and into a world of intrigue alone."

"She will come to her senses when she finds herself so situated, perhaps," he retorted testily; "and if she does not, it will just show that she is incorrigible."

Evadne answered this last letter of her mother's with dignity.

"Of course I regret my father's decision," she wrote, "and I consider it neither right nor wise. But I shall take the liberty of writing to you regularly every mail nevertheless. I know my letters will be a pleasure to you although you cannot answer them. But where is the reason and right, mother, in this decision of my father's? We both know, you and I, that it is merely the outcome of irritation caused by a difference of opinion, and no more binding in reason upon you than upon me."

When Mrs. Frayling received this letter, she wrote off a hurried note to Evadne, saying that she did think her husband unreasonable,

and also that he had no right to separate her from any of her children, and that therefore she should write to Evadne as often as she liked, but without letting him know it. She thought his injustice quite justified such tactics; but Evadne answered, "No!"

"There has been too much of that kind of cowardice amongst women already," she wrote. "Whatever we do we should do openly and fearlessly. We are not the property of our husbands; they do not buy us. We are perfectly free agents to write to whomsoever we please, and, so long as we order our lives in all honour and decency, they have no more right to interfere with us than we with them. Tell him once for all that you see no reason in his request, and write openly. What can he do? Storm, I suppose. But storming is no proof of his right to interfere between you and me. Once on a time the ignorant were taught to believe that the Lord spoke in the thunder, and they could be influenced through their terror and respect to do anything while an opportune storm was raging; and when women were weak and ignorant men used their wrath in much the same way to convince them of error. To us, educated as we are, however, an outburst of rage is about as effectual an argument as a clap of thunder would be. Both are startling, I grant, but what do they prove? I have seen my father in a rage. His face swells and gets very red, he prances up and down the room, he shouts at the top of his voice, and presents altogether a very disagreeable spectacle which one never quite forgets. But he cannot go on like that for ever, mother. So tell him gently you have been thinking about his proposition, and are sorry that you find you must differ from him, but you consider that it is clearly your duty to correspond with me. Then sit still, and say nothing, and let him storm till he is tired; and when he goes out and bangs the door, finish your letter, and put it in a conspicuous position on the hall table to be posted. He will scarcely tear it up, but if he does, write another, send it to the post yourself, and tell him you have done so, and shall continue to do so. Be open before everything, and stand upon your dignity. Things have come to a pretty pass, indeed, when an honourable woman only dares to write to her own daughter surreptitiously as if she were doing something she should be ashamed of."

But poor Mrs. Frayling was not equal to such opposition. She would rather have faced a thunderstorm than her husband in his wrath, so she concealed Evadne's letter from him, and wrote to her again surreptitiously in order to reproach her for seeming to insinuate that she, her mother, would stoop to do anything underhand. Evadne sighed when she received this letter, and thought of letting the matter drop. Why should she dislike to see her father

in the position unreasonable husbands and fathers usually occupy, that of being ostensibly obeyed while in reality they are carefully kept in the dark as to what is going on about them? And why should she object to allow her mother to act as so many other worthy but weak women daily do in self-defence and for the love of peace and quietness? There seemed to be no great good to be gained by persisting, and she might perhaps have ended by acquiescing under protest if her mother had not added by way of postcript:—"I doubt very much if I shall be allowed to receive your letters. Your father will probably send any he may capture straight back to you; and, at any rate, he will insist upon seeing them, so do not, my dear child, allude to having heard from me. I earnestly entreat you to remember this."

But the request only made Evadne's blood boil again. She did not belong to the old corrupt state of things herself, and she would not submit to anything savouring of deceit. If her mother was too weak to assert her own independence she felt herself forced to do it for her, so she wrote to her father sharply:—

"My mother tells me that you intend to stop all communication between her and myself. I consider that you have no right to do anything of the kind, and unless I hear from her regularly in answer to my letters, I shall be reluctantly compelled to send a detailed statement of my case to every paper in the kingdom in order to find out from my fellow countrywomen what their opinion of your action in the matter is, and also what they would advise us to do. You know my mother's affection for you. You have never had any reason to complain of want of devotion on her part, and when you make your disagreement with me a whip to scourge her with, you are guilty of an unjustifiable act of oppression."

This letter arrived at Fraylingay late one afternoon, and was handed to Mr. Frayling on his return from a pleasant country ride. He read it standing in the hall, and lost his equanimity at once.

"Where is Mrs. Frayling?" he asked a servant who happened to be passing, speaking in a way which caused the man to remark

afterwards that "Mrs. Frayling was goin' to catch it about somethin'; and 'e seemed to think I'd made away with 'er."

Mrs. Frayling was in the drawing-room, writing one of her pleasant chatty letters to a friend in India, with a cheerful expression on her comely countenance, and all recollection of her domestic difficulties banished for the moment.

When Mr. Frayling entered in his riding dress, with his whip in his hand and his hat on his head (he was one of those men who are most punctilious with strange ladies, but do not feel it necessary to behave like gentlemen in the presence of their own wives, making it appear as if the latter had lost cast and forfeited all claim to their respect by marrying them) Mrs. Frayling looked round from her writing and smiled.

"Have you had a nice ride, dear?" she said.

"Read that!" he exclaimed, slapping Evadne's letter with his whip, and then throwing it down on the table before her rudely: "Read that, and tell me what you think of your daughter now!" Mrs. Frayling's fair face clouded on the instant and her affectionate heart, which had been so happily expanded the moment before by the kind thoughts about her absent friend that came crowding as she wrote to her, contracted now with a painful spasm of nervous apprehension.

She read the letter through, and then put it down on the table beside her without a word. She did not look at her husband, but at some miniatures which hung on the wall before her. They were portraits of her own people, father, mother, grandmother, a great aunt and uncle, and other near relations, together with a brother and sister much older than herself, and both dead, and forgotten as a rule; but at that moment all that she had ever known of them, details of merry games together, and childish naughtinesses which got them into trouble at the time but made them appear to have been only amusingly mischievous now, recurred to her in one great flash of memory, which showed her also some lost illusions of her

early girlhood about a husband's love and tenderness, his constant friendship, the careful, patient teaching of the more powerful mind which was to strengthen her mind and enlarge it too, and the constant companionship which would banish for ever the indefinite gnawing sense of loneliness from which all healthy, young, unmated creatures suffer. She had actually expected at one time to be more to her husband than the mere docile female of his own kind which was all he wanted his wife to be. She had had aspirations which had caused her to yearn for help to develop something beyond the animal side of her, proving the possession in embryo of faculties other than those which had survived Mr. Frayling's rule; but her nature was plastic; one of those which requires the strong and delicate hand of a master to mould it into distinct and lovely form. Motherhood, as it had appeared to her in the delicate dreams of those young days had promised to be a beautiful and blessed privilege, but then the children of her happy imaginings had been less her own than those of the shadowy perfection who was to have been her husband. She had little sense of humour, but yet she could have smiled when, in this moment of absolute insight, she saw the ideal compared with the real husband, this great fat country gentleman. The folly of having expected even motherhood with such a father for her children to be anything but unsatisfactory and disappointing at the best, dawned upon her for an instant with disheartening effect. But, fortunately, the outlook was so hopeless there seemed nothing more to sigh for, and so she sat for once, looking up at the miniatures without washing out with tears the little mental strength she had left.

Mr. Frayling waited impatiently for her to make some remark when she had read Evadne's letter. Almost anything she could have said must have given him some further food for provocation, and there is nothing more gratifying to an angry man than fresh fuel for his wrath. However, silence sometimes fans the flame as effectually as words, and it did so on this occasion, for, having

waited till he could contain himself no longer, he burst out so suddenly that Mrs. Frayling raised her large soft white hand to the heavy braids which it was then the fashion to pile high on the head and have hanging down in two rows to the nape of the neck behind, as if she expected them to be disarranged by the concussion.

"May I ask if you approve of that letter?" he demanded.

But she only set her lips.

Mr. Frayling took a turn about the room with his hands behind his back, holding his riding whip upright, and flicking himself between the shoulders with it as he went.

"Let her write to the papers!" he exclaimed, addressing the pictures on the walls as if he were sure of their sympathy. "Let her write to the papers. I don't care what she does. I cast her off for ever. This comes of the higher education of women; a promising specimen! Woman's rights, indeed! Woman's shamelessness and want of common decency once she is let loose from proper control. She'll make the matter public, will she? A girl of nineteen! and take the opinion of her fellow countrywomen on the subject, egad! because I won't let her mother write to her; and my not doing so is an unjustifiable act of oppression, is it? What do you consider it yourself?" he demanded of his wife, striding up to her, and standing over her in a way which, with a flourish of the whip, was unpleasantly suggestive of an impulse to visit her daughter's offence upon her shoulders actually as well as figuratively.

Mrs. Frayling did not shrink, but her comely pink and white face, usually so lineless in its healthy matronly plumpness, suddenly took on a look of age and hardness, the one moment of horrid repulsion marking it more deeply than years of those household cares which write themselves on the mind without contracting the heart, had done.

"Do you consider," he repeated, "that I have been guilty of an unmanly act of oppression?"

"I think you have been very unkind," she answered, meaning

the same thing. "Her conduct was bad enough to begin with, but now it will be ten times worse. She will write to the papers, if she says she will. Evadne is as brave—! You can't understand her courage. She will do anything she thinks right. And now there will be a public scandal after all we have done to prevent it, and you will never be able to show your face again anywhere, for there isn't a mother in the country from her Majesty downwards, who will not take my part and say you have no right to separate me from my daughter."

"I know what the end of it will be," he roared. "I know what happens when women leave the beaten track. They go to the bad altogether. That's what will happen, you'll see. She'll write a volume next to prove that she has a right to be an immoral woman if she chooses. She'll be a common hussey yet, I promise you."

"*Sir!*" said Mrs. Frayling, stung into dignity for a moment, and rising to her feet in order to confront him boldly while she spoke. "Sir, I have been a good and loyal wife to you, as my daughter says, and it seems she was right too, when she declared that you are capable of making your disapproval of her opinions a whip to scourge me with; but I warn you, if you do not instantly retract that cowardly insult, I shall walk straight out of your house, and make the matter public myself."

Mr. Frayling stared at her. "I—I beg your pardon, Elizabeth," he faltered in sheer astonishment. "What with you and your daughter, I am provoked past endurance. I don't know what I am saying."

"No amount of provocation justifies such an attack upon your daughter's reputation," Mrs. Frayling rejoined, following up her advantage. "If she had been that kind of girl she would not have objected to Colonel Colquhoun; and at any rate she has every right to as much of your charity as you give him."

"Women are different," Mr. Frayling ventured feebly.

"Are they?" said Mrs. Frayling, some of Evadne's wisdom occurring to her with the old worn axiom upon which for untold ages the masculine excuse for self-indulgence at the expense of the woman has rested. "I believe Evadne is right after all. I shall get out her letters, and read them again. And what is more, I shall write to her just as often as I please."

Mr. Frayling stared again in his amazement, and then he walked out of the room without uttering another word. He had not foreseen the possibility of such spirited conduct on the part of his wife; but since she had ventured to revolt, the question of a public scandal was disposed of, and that being a consummation devoutly to be wished, he said no more, salving his lust of power with the reflection that, by deciding the question for herself she had removed all responsibility from his shoulders, and proved herself to be a contumacious woman and blameworthy. So long as there is no risk of publicity the domestic tyrannies of respectable elderly gentlemen of irascible disposition may be carried to any length, but once there is a threat of scandal they coil up.

By that one act of overt rebellion, Mrs. Frayling secured some comfort in her life for a few months at least, and taught her husband a little lesson which she ought to have endeavoured to inculcate long before. It was too late then, however, to do him any permanent good; the habit of the slave-driver was formed. When a woman sacrifices her individuality and the right of private judgment at the outset of her married life, and limits herself to "What thou biddest, unargued I obey," taking it for granted that "God is thy law" without making any inquiries, and accepting the assertion that "To know no more is woman's happiest knowledge, and her praise," as confidently as if the wisdom of it had been proved beyond a doubt, and its truth had never been known to fail in a single instance, she withdraws from her poor husband all the help of her keener spiritual perceptions, which she should have used with authority to hold his grosser nature in check, and leaves him to drift about on

his own conceit, prejudices, and inclinations, until he is past praying for.

There was a temporary lull at Fraylingay after that last battle, during which Mrs. Frayling wrote to her daughter freely and frequently. She described the fight she had had for her rights, and concluded: "Now the whole difficulty has blown over, and I have no more opposition to contend against"—to which Evadne had replied in a few words, judiciously, adding:—

> "Before the curing of a strong disease,
> Even in the instant of repair and health,
> The fit is strongest; evils that take leave,
> On their departure most of all show evil."

CHAPTER XIX.

It came to be pretty generally known that all had not gone well with the Colquhouns immediately after their marriage. Something of the story had of necessity leaked out through the servants; but as the Fraylings had the precaution, common to their class, to keep their private trouble to themselves, nobody knew precisely what the difficulty had been, and their intimate friends, whom delicacy debarred from making inquiries, least of all. Lady Adeline just mentioned the matter to Mrs. Orton Beg, and asked: "Is it a difficulty that may be discussed?"

"No, better not, I think," the latter answered, and of course the subject dropped.

But poor Lady Adeline was too much occupied with domestic anxieties of her own at that time to feel more than a passing gleam of sympathetic interest in other people's. As Lord Dawne had hinted to Mrs. Orton Beg, it was now a question of how best to educate the twins. Their parents had made what they considered suitable arrangements for their instruction; but the children, unfortunately, were not satisfied with these. They had had a governess in common while they were still quite small; but Mr. Hamilton-Wells had old-fashioned ideas about the superior education of boys, and, consequently, when the children had outgrown their nursery governess, he decided that Angelica should have another, more advanced; and had, at the same time, engaged a tutor for Diavolo, sending him to school being out of the question because of the fear of further trouble from the artery he had severed. When this arrangement became known, the children were seen to put their heads together.

"Do we like having different teachers?" Diavolo inquired tentatively.

"No, we don't," said Angelica.

Lady Adeline had tried to prepare the governess, but the latter brought no experience of anything like Angelica to help her to understand that young lady, and so the warning went for nothing. "A little affection goes a long way with a child," she said to Lady Adeline, "and I always endeavour to make my pupils understand that I care for them, and do not wish to make their lessons a task, but a pleasure to them."

"It is a good system, I should think," Lady Adeline observed, speaking dubiously, however.

"Can you do long division, my dear," the governess asked Angelica when they sat down to lessons for the first time.

"No, Miss Apsley," Angelica answered sweetly.

"Then I will show you how. But you must attend, you know"—this last was said with playful authority.

So Angelica attended.

"How did you get on this morning?" Lady Adeline asked Miss Apsley anxiously afterwards.

"Oh, perfectly!" the latter answered. "The dear child was all interest and endeavour."

Lady Adeline said no more; but such docility was unnatural, and she did not like the look of it at all.

Next day Angelica, with an innocent air, gave Miss Apsley a long division sum which she had completed during the night. It was done by an immense number of figures, and covered four sheets of foolscap gummed together. Miss Apsley worked at it for an hour to verify it, and, finding it quite correct, she decided that Angelica knew long division enough, and must go on to something else. Her first impression was that she had secured a singularly apt pupil, and she was much surprised, when she began to teach Angelica the next rule in arithmetic, to find that she could *not* make

the dear child see it. Angelica listened, and tried, with every appearance of honest intention, getting red and hot with the effort; and she would not put the slate down ; she would go on trying till her head ached, she was so eager to learn ; but work as she might, she could do nothing but long division. Miss Apsley said she had never known anything so singular. Lady Adeline sighed.

For about a week, the twins "lay low."

The tutor had found it absolutely impossible to teach Diavolo anything. The boy was perfectly docile. He would sit with his bright eyes riveted on his master's face, listening with might and main apparently ; but at the end of every explanation the tutor found the same thing. Diavolo never had the faintest idea of what he had been talking about.

At the end of a week, however, the children changed their tactics. When lessons ought to have begun one morning Diavolo went to Miss Apsley, and sat himself down beside her in Angelica's place, with a smiling countenance and without a word of explanation ; while Angelica presented herself to the tutor with all Diavolo's books under her arm.

"Please, sir," she said, "there must have been some mistake. Diavolo and I find that we were mixed somehow wrong, and I got his mind and he got mine. I can do his lessons quite easily, but I can't do my own ; and he can do mine, but he can't do these"—holding up the books. "It's like this, you see. I can't learn from a lady, and he can't learn from a man. So I'm going to be your pupil, and he's going to be Miss Apsley's. You don't understand twins, I expect. It's always awkward about them ; there's so often something wrong. With us, you know, the fact of the matter is that *I* am Diavolo and *he* is me."

The tutor and governess appealed to Mr. Hamilton-Wells, and Mr. Hamilton-Wells sent for the twins and lectured them, Lady Adeline sitting by, seriously perplexed. The children stood to attention together, and listened respectfully ; and then went back

to their lessons with undeviating cheerfulness; but Diavolo did Angelica's, and Angelica did his diligently, and none other would they do.

But this state of things could not continue, and in order to end it, Mr. Hamilton-Wells had recourse to a weak expedient which he had more than once successfully employed unknown to Lady Adeline. He sent for the twins, and consulted their wishes privately.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Well, sir," Diavolo answered, "we don't think it's fair for Angelica only to have a beastly governess to teach her when she knows as much as I do, and is a precious sight sharper."

"I taught you all you know, Diavolo, didn't I?" Angelica broke in.

"Yes," said Diavolo, with a wise nod.

"And it is beastly unfair," she continued, "to put me off with a squeaking governess, and long division, when I ought to be doing mathematics, and Latin, and Greek."

"My dear child, what use would mathematics, and Latin, and Greek be to you?" Mr. Hamilton-Wells protested.

"Just as much use as they will to Diavolo," she answered decidedly. "He doesn't know half as much about the good of education as I do. Just ask him." She whisked round on her brother as she spoke, and demanded: "Tell papa, Diavolo, what *is* the use of being educated?"

"I am sure I don't know," Diavolo answered impressively.

"My dear boy, mathematics are an education in themselves," Mr. Hamilton-Wells began didactically, moving his long white hands in a way that always suggested lace ruffles. "They will teach you to reason."

"Then they'll teach me to reason too," said Angelica, setting herself down on the arm of a chair as if she had made up her mind, and intended to let them know it. All her movements were quick,

all Diavolo's deliberate. "Men are always jeering at women in books for not being able to reason, and I'm going to learn, if there's any help in mathematics," she continued. "I found something the other day—where is it now?" She was down on her knees in a moment, emptying the contents of her pocket on to the floor, and sifting them. There were two pocket-handkerchiefs of fine texture, and exceedingly dirty, as if they had been there for months (the one she used she carried in the bosom of her dress or up her sleeve), a ball of string, a catapult, and some swan shot, a silver pen, a pencil holder, part of an old song book, a pocket book, some tin tacks, a knife with several blades, and scissors, &c.; also a silver fruit knife, two coloured pencils, indiarubber, and a scrap of dirty paper wrapped round a piece of almond toffee. This was apparently what she wanted, for she took it off the toffee, threw the latter into the grate—whither Diavolo's eyes followed it regretfully—and spread the paper out on her lap, whence it was seen to be covered with cabalistic-looking figures.

"Here you are," she said. "I copied it out of a book the other day, and put it round the toffee because I knew I should be wanting that, and then I should see it every time I took it out of my pocket, and not forget it?"

"But why did you throw the toffee away?" said Diavolo.

"Shut up, and listen," Angelica rejoined from the floor, politely; and then she began to read: '*Histories make men wise; poets witty; mathematics subtle; natural philosophy, deep, moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend.*' Now that's what I want, papa. I want to know all that, and have a good time; and I expect I shall have to contend to get it!"

"You'll soon learn how," said Diavolo encouraginlgy.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells had always enjoyed his children's precocity, and, provided they amused him, they could make him do anything. So after the conference, he announced that he had been questioning Angelica, and had found that she really was too far advanced for a

governess, and he had therefore decided that she should share Diavolo's lessons with the tutor. The governess accordingly disappeared from Hamilton House, the first tutor found that he had no vocation for teaching, and left also, and another was procured with great difficulty, and at considerable expense, for the fame of the Heavenly Twins was wide-spread, and their parents were determined besides not to let any candidate engage himself under the pleasing delusion that the task of teaching them would be something of a sinecure.

The tutor they finally secured turned out to be a very good fellow, fortunately; a gentleman, and with a keen sense of humour which the twins appreciated, so that they took to him at once, and treated him pretty well on the whole; but lessons were usually a lively time. Angelica, who continued to be the taller, stronger, and wickeder of the two, soon proved herself the cleverer also. Like Evadne, she was consumed by the rage to know, and insisted upon dragging Diavolo on with her. It was interesting to see them sitting side by side, the dark head touching the fair one as they bent together intently over some problem. When Diavolo was not quick enough, Angelica would rouse him up in the old way by knocking her head, which was still the harder of the two, against his.

"Angelica, did I see you strike your brother?" Mr. Ellis sternly demanded, the first time he witnessed this performance.

"I don't know whether you saw me or not, sir, but I certainly did strike him," Angelica answered irritably.

"Why?"

"To wake him up."

"You see, sir," Diavolo proceeded to explain in his imperturbable drawl; "Angelica discovered that I was born with a hee-red-it-air-ee predisposition to be a muff. We mostly are on father's side of the family——"

"And if he isn't one, it's because I slapped the tendency out of him as soon as I perceived it," Angelica interrupted. "Get on,

Diavolo, I've no patience with you when you're so slow. You know you don't want to learn this, and that's why you're snailing."

It was rather a trick of Diavolo's "to snail" over his lessons, for in that as in many other things he was very unlike the good little boy who loved his book, besides evincing many other traits of character equally unpopular at the present time. Diavolo would not work unless Angelica made him, and the worst collision with the tutor was upon this subject.

"Wake up, Theodore, will you!" Mr. Ellis said, during the first week of their studies.

"Not until you call me Diavolo," was the bland response.

Mr. Ellis resisted for some time, but Diavolo was firm and would do nothing, and Lady Adeline cautioned the tutor to give in if he saw an opportunity of doing so with dignity.

"But the young scamp will be jeeringly triumphant if I do," Mr. Ellis objected.

"Oh, no," Lady Adeline answered. "Diavolo prides himself upon being a gentleman, and he says a gentleman never jeers or makes himself unpleasant. His ideas on the latter point, by the way, are peculiarly his own, and you will probably differ from him as to what is or is not unpleasant."

Mr. Ellis made a point of calling the boy "Diavolo" in a casual way, as if he had forgotten the dispute, as early as possible after this, and found that Lady Adeline was right. Diavolo showed not the slightest sign of having heard, but he got out his books at once, and did his lessons as if he liked them.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells had a habit of always saying a little more than was necessary on some subjects. He was either a born *naturalist* or had never conquered the problem of what not to say, and he was so incautious as to come into the schoolroom one morning while lessons were going on, and warn Mr. Ellis to be most careful about what he gave the twins to read in Latin, because some of the classic delicacies which boys are expected to swallow without injury to

themselves are much too highly seasoned for a young lady: "You must make judicious excerpts," he said.

Slap came the dictionary down upon the table, and Angelica was deep in the "ex's" in a moment. Excerpt, she found, was to pick or take out. She passed the dictionary to Diavolo, who studied the definition; but neither of them made a remark. From that day forth, however, they spent every spare moment they had in pouring over Latin text books, until they mastered the language, simply for the purpose of finding out what it was that Angelica ought not to know.

There were, as has already been stated, some lively scenes at lessons.

"Talk less and do more," Mr. Ellis rashly recommended in the early days of their acquaintance, and after that, when they disagreed, they claimed that they had his authority to settle the difference by tearing each other's hair or scratching each other across the table; and when he interfered, sometimes they scratched him too. Mr. Hamilton-Wells raised his salary eventually.

The children invariably had a discussion about everything as soon as it was over. They called it "talking it out;" and after they had sinned and suffered punishment, their great delight was to come and coax the tutor "to talk it out." They would then criticize their own conduct and his, impartially, point out what they might have done and what he might have done, and what ought to have been done on both sides.

These discussions usually took place at the school-room tea, a meal which both tutor and children as a rule thoroughly enjoyed. Mr. Ellis was not bound to have tea with the twins, but they had politely invited him on the day of his arrival, explaining that their parents were out, and it would give them great pleasure to entertain him.

Tea being ready, they took him to the school-room, where he found a square table, just large enough for four, daintily decorated with flowers, and very nice china.

"We have to buy our own china, because we break so much," Angelica said, seeing that the tutor noticed it. "That was the kind of thing papa got for us"—indicating a hugely thick white cup and saucer which stood on the mantelpiece on a stand of royal blue plush, and covered with a glass shade.

"We broke the others, but we had that one mounted as a warning to him. Papa has no taste at all."

The tutor's face was a study. It was the first of these remarks he had heard.

The children decided that it would balance the table better if he poured out the tea, and he good-naturedly acquiesced, and sat down with Angelica on his right, and Diavolo on his left. The fourth seat opposite was unoccupied, but there was a cover laid, and he asked who was expected.

"Oh, that is for the Peace Angel," said Diavolo casually.

"Prevents difficulties at tea, you know," Angelica supplemented, "*We* don't mind difficulties, but we thought you might object, so we asked his holiness"—indicating the empty chair—"to preserve order."

Mr. Ellis did not at first appreciate the boon which was conferred on him by the presence of the Peace Angel, but he soon learnt to.

"I am on my honour and thick bread and butter to-day," said Diavolo, looking longingly at the plentiful supply and variety of cakes on the table.

"What does that mean exactly?" Mr. Ellis asked, pausing with the teapot raised to pour.

"Why, you see, he was naughty this morning," Angelica explained. "And as mamma was going out, she put him on his honour as a punishment not to eat cake."

"I've a good mind not to eat anything," said Diavolo, considering the plate of thick bread and butter beside him discontentedly.

"Then you'll be cutting off your nose to vex your face," said Angelica.

Diavolo caught up a piece of bread and butter to throw it at her; but she held up her hand, crying: "I appeal to the Peace Angel!"

"I forgot," said Diavolo, transferring the bread to his plate.

The children studied the tutor during tea.

He was a man of thirty, somewhat careworn about the eyes, but with an excessively kind and pleasant face, clean shaven; and thick reddy-brown hair. He was above the middle height, a little stooped at the shoulders, but of average strength.

"I like the look of you," said Angelica, frankly.

"Thank you," he answered smiling.

"And I vote for a permanent arrangement," she said, looking at Diavolo.

He was just then hidden behind a huge slice of bread, biting it, but he nodded intelligently.

The permanent arrangement referred to was having the tutor to tea, and he agreed, wisely stipulating, however, that the presence of the Peace Angel should also be permanent. He even tried to persuade the twins to invite him to lessons; but that they firmly declined.

"You'll like being our tutor, I think," Diavolo observed during this first tea.

"He will if we like him," said Angelica, significantly.

"Are we going to?" Diavolo asked.

"Yes, I think so," she answered, taking another good look at Mr. Ellis. "I like the look of that red in his hair."

"Now, isn't that a woman's reason?" Diavolo exclaimed, appealing to Mr. Ellis.

"Yes, it is," said Angelica, preparing to defend it by shuffling a note-book out of her pocket, and ruffling the leaves over: "Listen to this"—and she read—'A tinge of red in the hair denotes strength and energy of character and good staying power.' We don't want a muff for a tutor, do we? There are born muffs enough in the family without importing them. And a woman's reason is always

a good one, as men might see if they'd only stop chattering and listen to it."

"It mayn't be well expressed, but it will bear examination," Mr. Ellis suggested.

"Do you like being a tutor?" Diavolo asked.

"It depends on whom I have to teach."

"If you're a good fellow, you'll have a nice time here—on the whole—I hope, sir," Angelica observed. "But why are you a tutor?"

"To earn my living," Mr. Ellis answered, smiling again.

The children remembered this, and when they were having tea under the shadow of the supposititious Peace Angel's wing, after the first occasion on which, when the tutor tried to separate them during a fight at lessons, they had turned simultaneously and attacked him, they made it the text of some recommendations. He expressed a strong objection to having manual labour imposed upon him as well as his other work; but they maintained that if only he had called the affray "a struggle for daily bread" or "a fight for a livelihood," he would quite have enjoyed it; and they further suggested that such diversion must be much more interesting than being a mere commonplace tutor who only taught lessons. They could not understand why a fight was not as much fun for him as for them, and thought him unreasonable when they found he was not to be persuaded to countenance that way of varying the monotony. Not that there was ever much monotony in the neighbourhood of the Heavenly Twins; they managed to introduce variety into everything, and their quickness of action, when both were roused, was phenomenal. One day while at work they saw a sparrow pick up a piece of bread, take it to the roof-tree of an angle of the house visible from the schoolroom window, drop it, and chase it as it fell; and the twins had made a bet as to which would beat, bird or bread, quarrelled because they could not agree as to which had bet on bird and which on bread, and boxed each other's ears almost before the race was over.

Mr. Ellis, although continually upon his guard, was not by any means always a match for them. Over and over again he found that his caution had been fanned to sleep by flattering attentions while traps were being laid for him with the most innocent air in the world, as on one occasion when Diavolo betrayed him into a dissertation on the consistency of the Scriptures, and Angelica asked him to kindly show her how to reconcile *Prov. viii. 2:* "*For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it,*" with *Eccles. i. 18:* "*For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.*"

His way with them was admirable, however, and he completely won their hearts. The thing that they respected him for most was the fact that he took in *Punch* on his own account, and could show you a lot of things in it that you could never have discovered yourself, as Angelica said, and read bits in a way that made them seem ever so much funnier than when *you* read them; and could tell you who drew the pictures the moment he looked at them—so that "*Punch* Day" came to be looked forward to by the children as one of the pleasantest events of the week. Lessons were suspended the moment the paper arrived, if they had been good; but when they were naughty Mr. Ellis put the paper in his pocket, and that was the greatest punishment he could inflict upon them—the only one that ever made them sulk. They would be good for hours in advance to earn the right of having *Punch* shown to them the moment it came. And it was certainly by means of his intelligent interpretation of it that their tutor managed to cultivate their taste in many ways, and give them true ideas of art, and the importance of art, at the outset, and also of ethics. He was as careful of Angelica's physical as of her mental education, being himself strongly imbued by the then new idea that a woman should have the full use of her limbs, lungs, heart, and every other organ and muscle, so that life might be a pleasure to her and not a

continual exertion. He had a strong objection to the artificial waist, and impressed the beauty of Tenniel's classical purity of figure upon the children by teaching them to appreciate the contrast it presents to the bulging vulgarities made manifest by Keene; and showed them also that while Du Maurier depicted with admirable artistic intepretation the refined surroundings and attenuated forms of women as they are, Linley Sambourne, that master of lovely line, pointed the moral by drawing women as they should be. There was nothing conventional about the Heavenly Twins, and it was therefore easy to make a good impression upon them in this direction, and the tutor soon had a practical proof of his success which must have been eminently satisfactory if a trifle embarrassing.

The children were out on the lawn in front of the house one afternoon when a lady arrived to call upon their mother. They were struck by her appearance as she descended from her carriage, and followed her into the drawing-room to have a good look at her. She was one of those heroic women who have the constancy to squeeze their figures in beyond the V-shape, which is the commonest deformity, to that of the hour-glass which bulges out more above and below the line of compression.

There were a good many other people in the room whom the Heavenly Twins saluted politely; and then they sat down opposite to the object of their interest and gazed at her.

"Why are you tied so tight in the middle?" Angelica asked at last in a voice that silenced everybody else in the room. "Doesn't it hurt? I mean to have a *good* figure when I grow up, like the Venus de Medici, you know. I can show you a picture of her, if you like. She hasn't a stitch on her."

"She looks awfully nice though," said Diavolo, "and Angelica thinks she'd be able to eat more with that kind of figure."

"Yes," Angelica candidly confessed, looking at her victim compassionately. "I shouldn't think, now, that you can eat both pudding and meat, can you?"

"Not to mention dessert!" Diavolo ejaculated with genuine concern.

"Mr. Ellis, will you get those children out of the room, somehow," Lady Adeline whispered to the tutor, who had come in for tea.

"Is it true, do you think," Mr. Ellis began loudly, addressing Mr. Hamilton-Wells across the room—"Is it true that Dr. Galbraith is going to try some horrible experiments in vivisection this afternoon?"

"What is vivisection?" asked Angelica, diverted.

"Cutting up live animals to find out what makes them go," said the tutor.

In three minutes there wasn't a vestige of the Heavenly Twins about the place.

CHAPTER XX.

THE twins had a code of ethics which differed in some respects from that ordinarily accepted in their state of life. They honoured their mother—they couldn't help it, as they said themselves, apologetically; but their father they looked upon as fair game for their amusement.

"What was that unearthly noise I heard this morning?" Mr. Ellis asked one day.

"Oh, did we wake you, sir?" Diavolo exclaimed. "We didn't mean to. We were only yowling papa out of bed with our fiddles. He's idle sometimes, and won't get up, and it's so bad for him, you know."

"I wish you could see him scooting down the corridor after us," Angelica observed. "And do you know, he speaks just the same at that time of day in his dressing-gown, as he does in the evening in dress clothes. You'd die if you heard him."

Another habit of the twins was to read any letters they might find lying about.

"It is dishonourable to read other people's letters," Mr. Ellis admonished them severely when he became aware of this peculiarity.

"It isn't for us," Angelica answered defiantly. "You might as well say its dishonourable to squint. We've always done it, and everybody knows we do it. We warn them not to leave their letters lying about, don't we, Diavolo?"

"That is because it is greater fun to hunt for them," Diavolo interpreted precisely. When Angelica gave a reason he usually cleared it of all obscurity in this way.

"And how are we to know what goes on in the family if we don't read the letters?" Angelica demanded.

"What necessity is there for you to know?"

"Every necessity!" she retorted. "Not be interested in one's own family affairs? Why, we should be wanting in intelligence, and we're not that, you know! And we should be wanting in affection too, and every right feeling; and I hope we are not that either, Mr. Ellis, *quite*. But you needn't be afraid about your own letters. We shan't touch them."

"No," drawled Diavolo. "Of course that would be a very different thing."

"I am glad you draw the line somewhere," Mr. Ellis observed sarcastically. He was far from satisfied, however, but he noticed eventually that the dust collected on letters of his own if he left them lying about, and he soon discovered that when his intelligent pupils gave their word they kept it uncompromisingly. It was one of their virtues, and the other was loyalty to each other. Their devotion to their mother hardly counted for a virtue, because they never carried it far enough to make any sacrifice for her sake. But they would have sacrificed their very lives for each other, and would have fought for the right to die until there was very little left of either of them to execute; of such peculiar quality were their affections.

They had gone straight to Fountain Towers by the shortest cut across the fields that afternoon when Mr. Ellis suggested vivisection as a possible occupation for Dr. Galbraith. They never doubted but that they should discover him hard at work, in some underground cellar most likely, to which they would be guided by the cries of his victims, and would be able to conquer his reluctance to allow them to assist at his experiments, by threats of exposure; and they were considerably chagrined when, having carefully concealed themselves in a thick shubbery, in order to reconnoitre the house, they came upon him in the garden, innocently occupied in the idle pursuit of pruning rose-trees.

He was somewhat startled himself when he suddenly saw their hot red faces, set like two moons in a clump of greenery, peeping out at him with animated eyes.

"Hallo!" he said. "Are you hungry?" The faces disappeared behind the bushes.

"Are we, Angelica?" Diavolo whispered anxiously.

"Of course we are," she retorted.

"I thought we were too angry—disgusted—disappointed—*something*," he murmured apologetically, but evidently much relieved.

Dr. Galbraith went on with his pruning, and presently the twins appeared walking down the proper approach to the garden hand in hand demurely.

After they had saluted their host politely, they stood and stared at him.

"Well?" he said at last.

"I suppose we are too late?" said Angelica.

"For what?" he asked, without pausing in his occupation.

"For the viv-viv-vivinesectionining."

"Vivinesectionining! What on earth—Oh!" Light broke in upon him. "Who told you I was?"

"Mr. Ellis," said Angelica.

"No, he didn't tell us you were exactly," Diavolo explained with conscientious accuracy. "He asked papa if it was true that you were going to this afternoon?"

"And what were *you* doing?" Dr. Galbraith asked astutely.

"We were in the drawing-room," Angelica answered, "trying to find out from a lady why she tied herself up so tight in the middle."

"And so you came off here to see?"

"Yes," said Diavolo. "We wanted to catch you at it."

"You little brute, misbegotten by the——" Dr. Galbraith began, but Diavolo interrupted him.

"*Sir!*" he exclaimed, drawing himself up with an expression of as much indignation as could be got into his small patrician features. "If you do not instantly withdraw that calumny, I shall have to fight you on my mother's behalf, and I shall consider it my duty to inform her of the insinuation which is the cause of offence."

"I apologize," said Dr. Galbraith, taking off his hat and bowing low. "I assure you the expression was used as a mere *façon de parler*."

"I accept your explanation, sir," said Diavolo, returning the salute. But I caution you to be careful for the future. What is a *façon de parler*, Angelica?" he whispered as he put his hat on.

"O just a way of saying it," she answered. "I wish you wouldn't talk so much. Men are always cackling by the hour all about nothing. If people come to see me when *I* have a house of my own, I shall not forget the rites of hospitality."

The doctor put up his pruning knife. There was a twinkle in his grey eyes.

"If you will do me the favour to come this way," he said, "my slaves will prepare a small collation on the instant."

"O yes," said Diavolo. "Arabian Nights, you know! You must have fresh fruits, and dried fruits, choice wines, cakes, sweets, and nuts."

"It shall be done as my lord commands," said the Doctor.

That same evening when he took the children home, Dr. Galbraith found Lady Adeline alone. She was a plain woman, but well-bred in appearance; and tender thoughts had carved a sweet expression on her face.

Next to her brother, Dawne, Dawne's most intimate friend, Dr. Galbraith, was the man in the world upon whom she placed the greatest reliance.

"I have brought back the children," he said.

"Ah, then they *have* been with you!" she answered in a tone of relief. "We hoped they were."

"O yes," he said smiling. "They showed me exactly what the difficulty here had been, and I have been endeavouring to win back their esteem, for they made it appear plainly that they despised me when they found me peacefully pruning rose-trees instead of dismembering live rabbits, as Mr. Ellis had apparently led them to expect."

"They told you, then?"

"Oh, exactly, I am sure—about the lady tied too tight in the middle, and everything."

"They are terrible, George, those children," Lady Adeline declared. "My whole life is one ache of anxiety on their account. I am always in doubt as to whether their unnatural acuteness portends vice or is promising; and whether we are doing all that ought to be done for them."

"I am sure they are in very good hands now," he answered cheerfully. "Mr. Ellis is an exceedingly good fellow; they like him too, and I don't think anybody could manage them better."

"No," said Lady Adeline: "but that only means that no one can manage them at all. They are everywhere. They know everything. They have already mastered every fact in natural history that can be learnt upon the estate; and they will do almost anything, and are so unscrupulous that I fear sometimes they are going to take after some criminal ancestor there may have been in the family, although I never heard of one, and go to the bad altogether. Now, what is to be done with such children? I hardly dare allow myself to hope that they have good qualities enough to save them, and yet—and yet they are lovable," she added, looking at him wistfully.

"Most lovable, and I am sure you need not disturb yourself seriously," he answered with confidence. "The children have vivid imaginations and incomparable courage; and their love of mischief comes from exuberance of spirits only, I am sure. When Angelica's womanly instincts develop, and she has seen something of the

serious side of life—been made to *feel* it, I mean—she will become a very different person, or I am much mistaken. Her character promises to be as fine, when it is formed, as it will certainly be unusual. And as for Diavolo—well, I have seen no sign of any positive vice in either of them."

"You comfort me," said Lady Adeline. "How did you entertain them?"

"Oh, we had great fun!" he replied, laughing. "We had an impromptu Arabian Night's entertainment with all the men and women about the place disguised as slaves; and they all entered into the spirit of the thing heartily. I assure you, I never enjoyed anything more in my life. But I must go. I am on my way to town to-night to read a paper to-morrow morning upon a most interesting case of retarded brain development, which I have been studying for the last year. If I am right in my conclusions, we are upon the high road to some extraordinary and most valuable discoveries."

"Now, that is a singular man," Lady Adeline remarked to Mr. Ellis afterwards. She had been telling the tutor about the success of his stratagem. "He spent valuable hours to-day playing with my children, and says he never enjoyed anything so much in his life, and I quite believe him; and to-morrow he will probably astonish the scientific world with a discovery of the last importance."

"I call him a human being, perfectly possessed of all his faculties," Mr. Ellis answered.

The twins worked well by fits and starts; but when they did not choose to be diligent, they considerately gave their tutor a holiday. The last threat of a thrashing for Diavolo happened to be on the first of these occasions.

"It looks a good morning for fishing," he remarked casually to Angelica, just after they had settled down to lessons.

"Yes, it does," she answered.

There was a momentary pause, and then away went their books, and they were off out of the window.

But Mr. Ellis succeeded in capturing them, and, laying hold of an arm of each, he dragged them before the paternal tribunal in the library. He was not intimate with the peculiar relations of the household to each other at that particular time, and he thought Mr. Hamilton-Wells would prefer to order the punishment himself for so serious an offence. Angelica shook her hair over her face, and made sufficient feint of resistance to tumble her frock on the way, while Diavolo pretended to be terror-stricken; but this was only to please Mr. Ellis with the delusion that fear of their father gave him a moral hold over them, for the moment Mr. Hamilton-Wells frowned upon them they straightened themselves and beamed about blandly.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells ordered Diavolo to be thrashed, and Diavolo dashed off for the cane and handed it to his tutor politely, saying at the same time: "Do be quick, Mr. Ellis, I want to get out."

"You wouldn't dare to thrash him if he were big enough to thrash you back," Angelica shrieked, waltzing round like a tornado; "and it isn't fair to thrash him and not me, for I am much worse than he is. You know I am, Papa! and I shall *hate* you if Diavolo is thrashed, and teach him how to make your life a burden to you for a month, I *shall*"—stamping her foot.

It always made her blood boil if there were any question of corporal punishment for Diavolo. She could have endured it herself without a murmur, but she had a feminine objection to knowing that it was being inflicted, especially as she was not allowed to be present.

"Don't be an idiot, Angelica," Diavolo drawled. "I would rather be thrashed, and have done with it. It does fellows good to be thrashed; makes them manly, they say in the books. And it hurts a jolly sight less than being scratched by *you*, if that is any comfort."

"Oh, you *are* mean!" Angelica exclaimed. "Wait till we get outside!"

"I think, sir," Mr. Ellis ventured to suggest in answer to an appealing glance from Mr. Hamilton-Wells, and looking dubiously at the cane—"I think, since Diavolo doesn't care a rap about being flogged, I had better devise a form of punishment for which he will care."

"Then come along, Diavolo," Angelica exclaimed, making a dash for the door. "They won't want us while they're devising."

Mr. Ellis would have followed them, but Mr. Hamilton-Wells gently restrained him. "It is no use, Mr. Ellis," he said, sighing deeply. "I would recommend you to keep up a show of disapproval for form's sake, but I beg that you will not give yourself any unnecessary trouble. They are quite incorrigible."

"I hope not," the tutor answered.

"Well, I leave them to you, make what you can of them!" their father rejoined. "I wash my hands of the responsibility while you are here."

The Heavenly Twins got their day's sport on that occasion, and returned with a basket full of trout for tea, fishy themselves, and tired, but bland and conciliatory. They dressed for the evening carefully, and without coercion, which was always a sign of repentance; and then they went down to the school-room, where they found Mr. Ellis standing with his back to the fireplace, reading a newspaper. He looked at them each in turn as they entered, and they looked at him, but he made no remark.

"I wish you would give us a good scolding at once, and have done with it," Angelica observed.

He made no sign of having heard, however, but quietly turned the paper over, chose a fresh item of information, and began to read it. Angelica sat down in her place at table, leant back with her short frock up to her knees and her long legs tucked under her chair, and reflected. Diavolo did the same, yawning aggressively.

"I'd sell my birthright for a mess of pottage with pleasure this minute," he exclaimed.

"What was pottage, Mr. Ellis?" Angelica asked insinuatingly.

"You don't suppose the recipe has been handed down in the Ellis family, do you?" said Diavolo.

Angelica looked round for a missile to hurl at him, but there being nothing handy, she tried the effect of a withering glance, to which he responded by making a face at her. A storm was evidently brewing, but fortunately just at that moment the tea arrived, and caused a diversion which prevented further demonstrations. Happily for those in charge of the twins, their outbursts of feeling were all squalls which subsided as suddenly as those of the innocent babe which howls everybody in the house out of bed for his bottle, and is beyond all comfort till he gets it, when his anger instantly goes out, and only a few gurgling "Oh's" of intense satisfaction mark the point from which the racket proceeded.

For a week Mr. Ellis maintained an attitude of dignified reserve with the twins, and their sociable souls were much exercised to devise a means to break down the barrier of coldness which they found between themselves and their tutor. They tried everything they could think of to beguile him back to the old friendly footing, and it was only after all other means had failed that they thought at last of apologising for their unruly conduct. It was the first time that they had ever done such a thing in their lives spontaneously, and they were so proud of it that they went and told everybody they knew.

Mr. Ellis having graciously accepted the apology, found himself expected to discuss the whole subject at tea that evening.

"Of course, we were quite in the wrong," said Angelica, taking advantage of the Peace Angel's presence to sum up comprehensively; "but you must acknowledge that we were not altogether to blame, for you really have not been making our lessons sufficiently interesting to rivet our attention lately."

"That is true," said the diligent Diavolo. "My attention has not been riveted for weeks."

After the twins had made their memorable apology, they were so impressed by the importance of the event that they determined to celebrate it in some special way. They wanted to do something really worthy of the occasion.

"We'll do some good to somebody, shall we?" said Angelica.

"Not unless there's some fun in it," said Diavolo.

"Well, who proposed to do anything without fun in it?" Angelica wanted to know. "You've no sense at all, Diavolo. When people get up Fancy Fairs and Charity Balls, do they pretend to be doing it for fun? No! They say, 'Oh, my dear, I *am* so busy, I hardly know what to do first; but what keeps me up is the object! the good object!' And then they're enjoying it as hard as they can all the time. And that's what we'll do. We'll give the school children a treat."

The twins were allowed an hour to riot about the place after their early dinner, and then a bell was rung to summon them in to lessons, but on that particular day Mr. Ellis waited in vain for them. Angelica had concealed her riding habit in a loft, and as soon as they got out they ran to the stables, which were just then deserted, the men being at their dinner; and Angelica changed her dress while Diavolo got out their ponies and saddled them, and having carefully stolen through a thick plantation on to the high road, they scampered off to Morningquest as hard as their lively little steeds could carry them.

They were well-known in Morningquest, and many an admiring as well as inquiring glance followed them as they cantered close together side by side through the quaint old streets. The people were wondering what on earth they were up to.

"Everybody looks so pleased to see us," said Diavolo smiling genially; "I think we ought to come oftener."

"We will," said Angelica.

They pulled up at the principal confectioner's in the place, and bought as many pounds of sweets as they could carry, desiring the

proprietor in a lordly way to send the bill to Hamilton House at his earliest convenience; and then they rode off to the largest day school in the city, stationed themselves on either side of a narrow gateway through which both girls and boys had to pass to get in, and pelted the children with sweets as they returned from their midday dinners; and as they had chosen sugar almonds, birds' eggs, and other varieties of a hard and heavy nature, which, although interesting in the mouth of a child are inconvenient when received in its eyes, and cause irritation, which is apt to be resented, when pelted at the back of its head, the scene in a few minutes was extremely animated. This was what the Heavenly Twins called giving the school children a treat, and they told Mr. Ellis afterwards that they enjoyed doing good very much.

"What shall we do now?" said Diavolo as they walked their ponies aimlessly down the street when that episode was over.

"Let's call on grandpapa and the Bishop," Angelica suggested.

"The Bishop first, then," said Diavolo. "They've such good cakes at the Palace."

"Well, that's just why we should do grandpapa first," said Angelica. "Don't you see? We can have cake at Morne; and we shall be able to eat the ones at the Palace too, if they're better."

"Yes," said Diavolo, with grave precision. "I notice myself, that, however much I have had, I can always eat a little more of something better."

"That's what they mean by tempting the appetite," observed Angelica, sagely.

When the children arrived at the Castle, it occurred to them that it would be a very good idea to ride right in and go upstairs on their ponies; but they only succeeded in mounting the broad steps and entering the hall, where they were captured by the footmen and respectfully persuaded to alight. They announced that they had come to call on the Duke of Morningquest, and were conducted to his presence with pomp and ceremony enough to have embarrassed

any other equally dusty dishevelled mortals, but the twins were not troubled with self-consciousness, and entered with perfect confidence. The duke was delighted. If there was one thing which could give him more pleasure than another in his old age, it was the wicked ways of the Heavenly Twins, and especially of the promising Angelica, who very much resembled him both in appearance, decision of character, and sharpness of temper. She promised, however to be on a much larger scale, for the duke was diminutive. He looked like one who stands in a picture at the end of a long line of ancestors, considerably reduced by the perspective, and it was as if in his person an attempt had been made to breed the race down to the vanishing point. His high-arched feet were admired as models of size and shape, and so also were his slender delicate hands; but neither were agreeable to an educated eye and an intelligence indifferent to the dignity of dukes, but nice in the matter of proportion.

The children found their grandfather in the oriel room, so called because of the great oriel window, which was a small room in itself, although it looked, as you approached the Castle, no bigger than a swallow's nest on the face of the solid masonry, being the only excrescence visible above the trees from that point of view. The Castle stood on a hill which descended precipitously from under the oriel, so that the latter almost overhung the valley in which the city lay below, and commanded a magnificent view of the flat country beyond, thridded by a shining winding ribbon of river. The hill was wooded on that side to the top, and the Castle crowned it, rising above the trees, in irregular outline against the sky, imposingly. The old duke sat in the oriel often, looking down at the wonderful prospect, but thinking less of his own vast possessions than of the great Cathedral of Morningquest which he coveted for Holy Church. He had become a convert to Roman Catholicism in his old age, and his bigotry and credulity were as great now as his laxity and scepticism had been before his conversion.

He was sitting alone with his confessor and private chaplain, Father Ricardo, a man of middle age, middle height, attenuated form, round head with coarse black hair, piercing dark eyes, aquiline nose somewhat thick, and the loose mouth characteristic of devout Roman Catholics, High Church people, and others who are continually being wound up to worship an unseen deity by means of sensuous enjoyment; the uncertain lines into which the lips fall in repose indicating fairly the habitual extent of their emotional indulgences. His manners were suave and deferential, his motives sincerely disinterested in the interests of the Church, his method of gaining his ends unhampered by any sense of the need of extreme verbal accuracy. He was reading to the duke when the children were announced, and rose and bowed low to them as they entered, with a smile of respectful and affectionate interest.

Diavolo raised his dusty cap to his chest and returned the bow with punctilious gravity. Angelica tossed him a nod as she passed up the room in a business-like way to where her grandfather was sitting facing the window. The old duke looked round as the children approached and his face relaxed; he did not absolutely smile, but his eyes twinkled.

Angelica plumped down on the arm of his chair, put her arm round his neck, and deposited a superficial kiss somewhere in the region of his ear, while Diavolo wrung his hand more ceremoniously, but with much energy. Both children seemed sure of their welcome, and comported themselves with their usual unaffected ease of manner. The old duke controlled his mouth, but there was something in the expression of his countenance which meant that he would have chuckled if his old sense of humour had not been checked by the presence of the priest, which held him somehow to his new professions of faith, and the severe dignity of demeanour that best befits the piety of a professional saint.

He was wearing a little black velvet skull cap, and Angelica, still sitting on the arm of his chair, took it off as soon as she had

saluted him, looked into it, and clapped it on to the back of his head again, somewhat awry.

"I am glad you have your black velvet coat on to-day," she said, embracing the back of his chair with an arm, and kicking her long legs about in her fidgety way. "It goes well with your hair, and I like the feel of it."

"Have you a holiday to-day?" the duke demanded with an affectation of sternness.

"Yes," said Angelica absently, taking up one of his delicate hands and transferring a costly ring from his slender white forefinger to her own dirty brown one.

"No," the more exact Diavolo contradicted; "we gave Mr. Ellis a holiday."

"To tell you the truth, grandpapa, I had forgotten all about lessons," said Angelica candidly. "I fancy Mr. Ellis is fizzing by this time, don't you, Diavolo?"

"What are you doing here if you haven't a holiday?" their grandfather asked.

"Visiting you, sir, "Diavolo answered in his peculiar drawl, which always left you uncertain as to whether he intended an impertinence or not. He was lying at full length on the floor facing his grandfather with the back of his head resting on the low window sill, and the old gentleman was looking at him admiringly. He was not at all sure of the import of Diavolo's last reply, but had the tact not to pursue the subject.

The priest had remained standing with his hands folded upon the book he had been reading, and a set smile upon his thin intellectual face, behind which it was easy to see that the busy thoughts came crowding.

Angelica turned on him suddenly, flinging herself from the arm of her grandfather's chair on to a low seat which stood with its back to the window, in order to do so.

"I say, Papa Ricardo, I want to ask you," she began. "What

do you think of that Baronne de Chantal, whom you call Sainte, when her son threw himself down across the threshold of their home to prevent her leaving the house, and she stepped across his body to go and be *religieuse?*"

"It was the heroic act of a holy woman," the priest replied.

"But I thought Home was the woman's sphere?" said Angelica.

"Yes," the priest rejoined, "unless God calls them to religion."

"But did God give her all those children?" Angelica pursued.

"Yes, indeed," said Father Ricardo. "Children are the gift of God."

"Well, so I thought I had heard," Angelica remarked, with a genial air of being much interested. "But it seems such bad management to give a lady a lot of children, and then take her away so that she can't look after them."

The poor old duke had been dull all day. His mind, under the influence of his father confessor, had been running on the horrors of hell, and such subjects, together with the necessity of accomplishing certain good works and setting aside large sums of money in order to excuse himself from such condemnation as the priest had ventured to hint courteously that even a great duke might entail upon himself by the quite excusable errors of his youth; but since the Heavenly Twins arrived the old gentleman had begun to see things again from a point of view more natural to one of his family, and his countenance cleared in a way which denoted that his spirits were rising. Father Ricardo was accustomed to say that the dear children's high spirits were apt to be too much for his Grace; but this was a mistake, due doubtless to his extreme humility, which would not allow him to mention himself, for whom there was no doubt the dear children *were* apt to be too much.

The old duke, upon that last remark of Angelica's, twinkled a glance at his Father Confessor which had an effect on the latter that made itself apparent in the severity of his reply: "The ways of the

Lord are inscrutable," he said, "and it is presumptuous for mortals, however great their station, to attempt to fathom them."

"I have heard that before too, often," said Diavolo, with a wise nod of commendation.

"So have I," said Angelica; and then both children beamed at the priest cordially, and the long-suppressed chuckle escaped from the duke.

Father Ricardo retired into himself.

"Grandpapa," Diavolo resumed—the Heavenly Twins never allowed the conversation to flag—"Grandpapa, do you believe there ever was a little boy who never, never, told a lie?"

"I hope, sir, you do not mean me to infer that you are mendacious?" the old gentleman sternly rejoined.

"Mendacious?" Diavolo repeated; "that's do I tell lies, isn't it? Well, you see, sir, it's like this. If I'd been up to something, and you asked me if I'd done it, I'd say 'Yes' like a shot; but if Angelica had been up to something, and I knew all about it, and you asked me if she'd done it, I'd say 'No' flatly."

"Do I understand, sir, that you would tell me a lie 'flatly'?"

"Yes," said Diavolo decidedly, "if you were mean enough to expect me to sneak on Angelica."

"Father Ricardo," the latter began energetically, "when you tell a lie do you look straight at a person or just past the side of their heads?"

"*I* always look straight at a person myself," said Diavolo, gravely considering the priest; "I can't help it."

"It's the best way," said Angelica with the assurance of one who has tried both. "I suppose, grandpapa," she pursued, "when people get old they have nothing to tell lies about. They just sit and listen to them;" and again she looked hard at Father Ricardo, whose face had gradually become suffused with an angry red.

"I should think, Father Ricardo," said Diavolo, observing this,

"if you were a layman, you would be feeling now as if you could throttle us ?"

But before the poor priest could utter the reproof which trembled on his lips, the door opened and the duke's unmarried daughter and youngest child, the beautiful Lady Fulda, entered, and changed the moral atmosphere in a moment.

Both children rose to receive her tender kisses affectionately.

Their passionate appreciation of all things beautiful betrayed itself in the way they gazed at her ; and hers was the only presence that ever subdued them for a moment.

"I like her in white and gold," Angelica remarked to Diavolo when she had looked her longest.

"So do I," Diavolo rejoined with a nod of satisfaction.

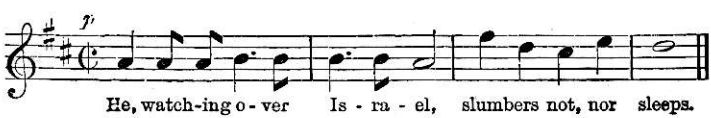
"My dear children ! " Lady Fulda exclaimed. "You must not discuss my appearance in that way. You speak of me as if I were not here."

"You never seem to be here, somehow," said Diavolo, struggling with a big thought he could not express. "I always feel when you come in as if you were miles and miles away from us. Now, mamma is always close to us, and papa gets quite in the way; but you seem to be"—he raised both hands high above his head, with the palms spread outwards, and then let his arms sink to his sides slowly. The gesture expressed an immeasurable distance above and beyond him.

"Yes," said Angelica, "I feel that too. But sometimes, when there's music and flowers and no light to speak of—in church, you know—and you feel as if angels might be about, or even the Lord himself, I rise up beside you somehow, and come quite close."

Lady Fulda's eyes deepened with feeling as Angelica spoke, and drawing the child to her side, she smoothed her hair, and gazed down into her face earnestly, as if she would penetrate the veil of flesh that baffled her when she tried to see clearly the soul of which Angelica occasionally gave her some such glimpse.

The old duke glanced round at the clock, and instantly the attentive priest stepped to the window and opened it wide. Then the duke raised his hand as if to enjoin silence, and presently the music of the bells of the city clocks, striking the hour in various tones, and all at different moments, causing a continuous murmurous sea of sound, arose from below. When the last vibration ceased there was a quite perceptible pause. The duke took off his little round black velvet cap, and leant forward, listening intently; Lady Fulda bent her head and her lips moved; the priest folded his hands and looked straight before him with the unconscious eyes of one absorbed in thought or prayer who sees not; the twins, assuming a sanctimonious expression, bowed their hypocritical heads and watched what was going on out of the corners of their eyes. There was a moment's interval, and then came the chime, mellowed by distance, but clear and resonant:



It was the habit of the old duke to listen for it hour by hour, and while it rang, he, and those of his household who shared his faith, offered a fervent prayer for the restoration of Holy Church.

Lady Fulda insisted on sending the children home under proper escort. They strongly objected. They said they were not going straight home; they had to call on the Bishop of Morningquest.

"Why are you going to call on the Bishop of Morningquest?" their aunt asked.

"We wish to see him," Angelica answered stiffly.

"On the subject of rotten potatoes," Diavolo supplemented.

Lady Fulda stared.

"Sainte Chantal, you know," said the ready Angelica. The reason was new to her, but the twins usually understood each

other like a flash. "They put a rotten potato on her plate one day at dinner, and she ate it."

"She was so hungry?" suggested Lady Fulda, trying hard to remember the story.

"No, so humble," Angelica answered; "at least so they say in the book; but we don't think it could have been humility, it must have been horrid bad taste; but we're going to ask the Bishop. He's so temperate, you know. We tried to discuss the matter with Father Ricardo, but he shut us up promptly."

"My dear child!" Lady Fulda exclaimed, "what an expression!"

"I assure you it is the right one, Aunt Fulda," Angelica maintained. "He got quite red in the face."

"Yes," said Diavolo, gazing at Father Ricardo thoughtfully. "He looked hot enough to set fire to us if he'd touched us."

"I should think he would have been invaluable in the Inquisition," said Angelica, to whom that last remark of Diavolo's had opened up a boundless field of speculation and retrospect. "Wouldn't you like to hear a heretic go off pop on a pile?" she inquired, turning to Father Ricardo.

The duke and Lady Fulda glanced at him involuntarily, and he very good-naturedly tried to smile. This, however, did not necessitate such an effort as the mere cold reading of the twins' remark might make it appear, for they both had a certain charm of manner, expressive of an utter absence of any intention to offend, which no kindly-disposed person could resist; and Father Ricardo was essentially kindly disposed.

The twins were taking their leave by this time. Angelica proceeded to deposit one of her erratic kisses somewhere on the old duke's head, with an emphasis which caused him to wince perceptibly. Then she went up to Father Ricardo, and shook hands with him.

"I hope the next time we come, you will be able to tell us some

nice bogey stories about death and the judgment, and hell, and that kind of thing," she said politely. "They interest us very much. You remember, you told us some before?"

"It must be very jolly for grandpapa to have you here always, ready to make his blood run cold whenever he feels dull," Diavolo observed, looking up at the priest admiringly. "You do it so well, you know, just as if you believed it all."

"We tried it on once with some children we had to spend the day with us at Hamilton House," Angelica said. "We took them into a dark room—the long room, you know, Aunt Fulda; and Diavolo rubbed a match on the wall at the far end, and I explained that that was a glimmer of hell-fire at a great distance off; and then we told them if they didn't keep quite still the old devil himself would come creeping up behind without any noise, and jump on their backs."

"And the little beggars howled," Diavolo added, as if that consequence still filled him with astonishment.

"My dear children, I am afraid you tell dreadful stories," La dy Fulda exclaimed in a horrified tone.

"Yes," said Angelica, with her grave little nod; "and we're improving; but we cannot come up to Father Ricardo yet in that line."

"Not by a long chalk," said Diavolo.

"But, my *dear* child," Lady Fulda solemnly asserted, "Father Ricardo tells you *nothing* but what is *absolutely* true."

"How do you know?" Angelica asked.

"Oh—oh!" Lady Fulda stammered, and then looked at the priest appealingly.

"When you are older, and able to understand these things," Father Ricardo began, with gentle earnestness, "perhaps you will allow me——"

"But how do you *know* it's true yourself?" Angelica demanded.

"Did you ever *see* the devil,
With his little spade and shovel,
Digging praties in the garden
With his tail cocked up ?"—

Diavolo chanted, accompanying the words with a little dance, in which Angelica, holding up her habit, joined, incontinently.

Lady Fulda remained grave, but the old duke and Father Ricardo himself were moved to mirth, and there was no more talk of Revealed Religion, the power of the Popedom, and the glory of the Church on earth, at Morne that day.

Lady Fulda had been firm about sending the children home under escort, and they found a steady old groom waiting ready to mount a spirited horse when they went down to the courtyard to get on their ponies. They had discovered a box of croquet mallets on their way downstairs, and borrowed one each.

As they descended the steep hill leading from the castle, at a walk, they began to discuss recent events, as their habit was.

"What did you do when the chime went, and you hung your head?" said Angelica.

"I hoped there'd be hot cakes for tea; but I didn't mean it for a prayer," Diavolo answered, as if the matter admitted of a doubt.

"I'm glad we decided to go secondly to the Palace; I didn't think much of grandpapa's tea," Angelica observed. "It was all china, and no cakes—to speak of; no crisp ones, you know."

"Well, you see his teeth are bad," said Diavolo, indulgently.

"He has enough of them, then!" Angelica answered.

"Yes, but they aren't much good, they're so loose, you know; every now and again you can see them waggle," said Diavolo.

"I'd like to see him bite a fig!" said Angelica, chuckling.

"They'd stick, I suppose," said Diavolo, meditatively. "I expect there will be great improvements in those matters by the time we want to be patched."

The groom, who had been riding at a respectful distance behind, suddenly perceived that he had lost sight of the children altogether. The descent was steep just there, and winding; and, knowing with whom he had to deal, the man urged his horse on, straining his eyes at every turn to catch a glimpse of the twins, but vainly, till he reached the bottom of the hill, when they bounced out on him suddenly, from amongst the trees on either side of the road, whooping, and flourishing their mallets wildly. The horse, which was very fresh, gave one great bound and bolted, and the Heavenly Twins, shrieking with delight, hunted him hard into Morningquest.

When they arrived at the Palace, Angelica asked with the utmost confidence if the Bishop were at home, and being informed by an obsequious footman that he was, the twins marched into the hall, and were ushered into the presence of Mrs. Beale and her daughter, Edith.

"Tell his Lordship we are here," Angelica said to the servant authoritatively, before she performed her salutations. When these were over, the twins sat down opposite to Edith and inspected her.

"We've just been seeing Aunt Fulda," Diavolo remarked.

Angelica caught the connection: "Your hair is about the same colour as hers, but your face is smoother," she observed. "It looks like porcelain. Hers has little stipples, you know, about the nose when you go close. They seem to come as you get older."

"Uncle Dawne calls you Saxon Edith," said Diavolo. "Don't you wonder he doesn't want to marry you? *I* do. When I'm old enough, I'm going to propose to you; do you think you will have me?"

"Have you! I should think not, indeed!" Angelica exclaimed, with a jealous flash. At that time the notion of sharing her brother's affection with anybody always enraged her.

Diavolo was irritated by her scornful manner.

"I am a little afraid," he began, addressing Mrs. Beale in his

deliberate way: "I am a little afraid Angelica will stand in the way of my making a good match. No respectable wife would have her about."

Quick as thought, Angelica had him by the hair, and the two were tumbling over each other on the floor.

Mrs. Beale and Edith sprang forward to separate them, but that was impossible until the twins had banged each other to their heart's content, when they got up, with their feelings thoroughly relieved, and resumed their seats and the conversation as if nothing had happened. The skirmish, however, had been severe although short. Diavolo had a deep scratch over his right eyebrow which began to bleed profusely. Angelica was the first to notice it, and tearing out a handkerchief which was up her sleeve, she rolled it into a bandage roughly, whirled over to Diavolo, and tied it round his head, covering his right eye and leaving a great knot and two long ends sticking up like rabbit's ears amongst his fair hair, and a pointed flap hanging down on the opposite side.

"I must cut my nails," she remarked, giving a finishing touch to this labour of love, which made Diavolo rock on his chair, but he accepted her attentions as a matter-of-course, merely drawling: "Angelica is *so* energetical!" as he recovered his balance.

Just at this moment the Bishop bustled in. He had been engaged upon some important diocesan duties when the twins were announced, but thinking they must have come with an urgent message, he suspended the work of the diocese, and hurried up to see what was the matter.

The twins rose to receive him with their usual unaffected affability. He was a short stout man with a pleasant face, and a cordial well-bred manner; a little apt to be fussy on occasion, and destitute of any sense of humour in other people although given to making his own little jokes. He was a bishop of the old-fashioned kind, owing his position to family influence rather than to any special attainment or qualification; but he was a good

man, and popular, and the See of Morningquest would have had much to regret if the back door by which he got into the Church had been shut before he passed through it.

"I am afraid there has been an accident," he said with concern when he saw Diavolo's head tied up in a handkerchief.

"Oh, no, thank you, sir," that young gentleman assured him. "It is only a scratch."

"*I* did it," said the candid Angelica; "and it looked unpleasant, so I tied it up."

"Oh," the Bishop ejaculated, glancing inquiringly at his wife and daughter. "You wanted to see me?"

"Yes," said Diavolo, preparing to suit his conversation to the Bishop's taste. "There are a great many things we want to discuss with you; what were they Angelica? I am sure I have forgotten them all."

"Let me see," said Angelica—Sainte Chantal and the rotten potato had quite gone out of her mind. "It was just to have a little interesting conversation, you know."

"We're getting on very well with our lessons," Diavolo gravely assured him, anticipating the inevitable question.

"We've just come from Morne," said Angelica.

"Indeed," the Bishop answered. "How is your grandfather?"

"Rather flat to-day," said Angelica. "He didn't say anything of interest; didn't even lecture us."

"No; but he looked pleasant," said Diavolo.

"I like him to lecture," Angelica insisted. "I like him to talk about the Church, how it is going to encompass the earth, the sea, and all that in them is; and that kind of thing, you know—boom, boom! He makes you feel as if every word he uttered ought to be printed in capital letters; and it seems as if your eyes opened wider and wider, and your skin got tight."

Diavolo nodded his head to one side in intelligent acquiescence.

Not being troubled with self-consciousness, he wore the hand-

kerchief with which his head was decorated with the grave dignity of his best behaviour.

"I sometimes think, sir," he began, addressing the Bishop exactly in his father's precise way, "that there is something remarkable about my grandfather. He is a kind of a prophet, I imagine, to whom the Lord doesn't speak."

Edith walked to the window, Mrs. Beale got out her handkerchief hastily; the Bishop's countenance relaxed.

"I suppose you wouldn't like us to be converted?" Angelica asked.

"We call it *perverted*, dear child," said Mrs. Beale.

"Well, they call it *converted* just as positively up at the Castle," Angelica rejoined, not argumentatively, merely stating the fact.

"I wonder what the angels call it," said Diavolo, looking up in their direction out of a window opposite, and then glancing at the Bishop as if he thought he ought to know.

"I don't suppose they care a button what we call it," Angelica decided off-hand, out of her own inner consciousness. "But you would not like us to be either 'con' or 'per,' would you?" she asked the Bishop.

"I am afraid I must not discuss so serious a question with you to-day," he answered. "I am very busy, and I must go back to my work."

"I thought you looked unsettled," Angelica observed. "I know what it is when you've got to come to the drawing-room, and want to be somewhere else. They won't excuse us at home as a rule, but we'll excuse you, if you like."

"Eh—thank you," the old gentleman answered, glancing with a smile at his wife.

"But I should think some tea would do you good," Diavolo suggested.

"Have you not had any tea?" Edith asked, stretching her hand out towards the bell.

"Well, yes," he answered. "We've had a little"—the tone implied, 'but not nearly enough.'

"We always like your cakes, you know," said Angelica; "and ours at Hamilton House are generally nice; but at Morne they're sometimes sodden."

The Bishop withdrew at this point, and the children devoted the rest of their attention to the cakes.

"Now we've got to go and settle with Mr. Ellis," Diavolo remarked to Angelica, yawning, as they walked their ponies out of the Palace grounds.

"Well, at any rate, we've done the celebration thoroughly," she answered, "and enjoyed it. He won't be able to help that now. Oh—by the way! here's grandpapa's ring. I forgot it."

"It doesn't matter," said Diavolo. "He knows you'll take care of it."

Almost at the same moment the old duke at Morne missed the ring, and remarked: "Ah, I remember, Angelica has it. She put it on her finger when she was sitting beside me this afternoon."

"Shall I go at once to Hamilton House, and bring it back with me?" Father Ricardo asked, somewhat officiously.

"No, sir, thank you," said the duke, with dignity. "My granddaughter will return the ring when it suits her convenience."

Next day Angelica begged her father to take the ring back for her with a note of apology explaining that she had forgotten it, and expressing her regret.

CHAPTER XXI. - Edith's dream

PART of the old grey Palace at Morningquest had been a monastery. The walls were thick, the windows gothic, the bedrooms small, the reception rooms huge, as if built for the accommodation of a whole community at a time; and with unexpected alcoves and angles and deep embrasures, all very picturesque, and also extremely inconvenient; but Edith Beale, who had been born in the Palace and grown up there, under the protection of the great Cathedral, as it were, and the influence of its wonderful chime, was never conscious of the inconvenience, and would not, at any rate, have exchanged it for the comfort and luxury of the best-appointed modern house.

The Bishop of Morningquest and Mrs. Beale had three sons, but Edith was their only daughter, their white child, their pearl; and certainly she was a lovely specimen of a well-bred English girl.

On the day following that upon which the Heavenly Twins had celebrated the important occasion of their first spontaneous "Kow-tow," as they called it, in the early morning, Edith, being still asleep, turned towards the east window of her room, the blind of which was up, and fell into a dream. The sun, as he rose, smiled in upon her. She had flung her left hand up above her head with the pink palm outwards, and the fingers half bent; the right lay on the sheet beside her, palm downwards, spread out, and all relaxed. Her whole attitude expressed the most complete abandonment of deep and restful sleep.

The night had been warm, and the heavier draperies had slipped from her bed on the farther side, leaving only the sheet.

Her warm bright hair, partly loosened from the one thick braid

into which it had been plaited, fell from off the pillow to the floor on her right, and the sun, looking in, lit it up, and made it sparkle. She left that window with the blind undrawn so that he might arouse her every morning, and now, as the first pale ray gleamed over her face, her eyelids quivered, and half opened, but she was still busy with her dream and did not wake. She lived in an atmosphere of dreams and of mystic old associations. Events of the days gone by were often more distinctly pictured in her mind than incidents of yesterday. Mrs. Orton Beg, her mother, and all the gentle mannered, pure-minded women among whom she had grown up, thought less of this world, even as they knew it, than of the next as they imagined it to be; and they received and treasured with perfect faith every legend, hint, and shadow of a communication which they believed to have come to them from thence. They neglected the good which they might have done here in order to enjoy their bright and tranquil dreams of the hereafter. Their spiritual food was faith and hope. They kept their tempers even and unruffled by never allowing themselves to think or know, so far as it is possible with average intelligence not to do either in this world, anything that is evil of anybody. They prided themselves on only believing all that is good of their fellow creatures; this was their idea of Christian charity. Thus they always believed the best about everybody, not on evidence, but upon principle; and then they acted as if their attitude had made their acquaintances all they desired them to be. They seemed to think that by ignoring the existence of sin, by refusing to obtain any knowledge of it, they somehow helped to check it; and they could not have conceived that their attitude made it safe to sin, so that, when they refused to know and to resist, they were actually countenancing evil and encouraging it. The kind of Christian charity from which they suffered was a vice in itself. To keep their own minds pure was the great object of their lives, which really meant to save themselves from the horror and pain of knowing.

Edith, by descent, by teaching, by association, and in virtue of the complete ignorance in which she had been kept, was essentially one of that set. It is impossible for any adult creature to be more spiritually minded than she was. She lived in a state of exquisite feeling. The whole training of her mind had been so directed as to make her existence one long beatific vision, and she was unconsciously prepared to resent in her gentle way, and to banish at once, if possible, any disturbing thought that might break in upon it.

In her dream that morning she smiled at first, and then she fairly laughed. She had met the Heavenly Twins, and they were telling her something—what was it? The most amusing thing she had ever heard them say; she knew it by the way it had made her laugh—why couldn't she repeat it? She was trying to tell her mother, and while in the act, she became suddenly aware of a strange place, and Diavolo kneeling at her feet, clasping her left hand, and kissing it. She felt the touch of his lips distinctly; they were soft and warm. He was beseeching her to marry him, she understood, and she was going to laugh at him for being a ridiculous boy, but it was the steadfast dark blue eyes of Lord Dawne that met hers, and she was looking up at him, and not down at the fair-haired Diavolo kneeling before her. She caught the gloss on Lord Dawne's black hair, the curve of his slight moustache, and the gleam of his white teeth. He was grave, but his lips were parted, and he carried a little child in his arms, and the expression of his face was like the dear Lord's in a picture of the Good Shepherd which she had in her room. He held the little child out to her. She took it from him, smiling, raised its little velvet cheek to hers, and then drew back to look at it, but was horrified because it was not beautiful at all as it had been the moment before, but deformed, and its poor little body was covered with sores. The sight sickened her, and she tried to cover it with her own clothes. She tore at the skirt of her gown. She struggled to take

off a cloak she wore. She stripped herself in the endeavour and cried aloud in her shame, but she could not help herself, and Dawne could not help her, and in the agony of the attempt she awoke, and sprang up, clutching at the bedclothes, but was not able to find them at first, because they had fallen on the floor; and she fancied herself still in her horrible dream. Big drops of perspiration stood on her forehead, her eyes were dazzled by the sun, and she was all confused. She jumped out of bed and stood a moment, trying to collect herself; and the first thing she saw distinctly was the picture of the Saviour on the wall. A *Prie-dieu* stood beneath it, and she went and knelt there, her beautiful yellow hair streaming behind her, her eyes fixed on the wonderful sad sweet face.

"Dear Lord," she prayed passionately, "keep me from all knowledge of unholy things,"—by which she meant sights and circumstances that were unlovely, and horrified.

She knelt for some minutes longer, with all articulate thought suspended; but by degrees there came to her that glow in the chest, that expansion of it which is the accompaniment of the exalted sentiment known to us as adoration, or love; love purged of all earthly admixture of doubt and fear, which is the most delicious sensation human nature is capable of experiencing. And presently she arose, free from the painful impression made by the revolting details of her dream, put her hands under her hair at the back of her neck, and then raised them up above her head and her hair with them, stretching herself and yawning slightly. Then she brought her hair all round to the right in a mass, and let it hang down to her knees, and looked at it dreamily; and then began to twist it slowly, preparatory to coiling it round her head. She went to the dressing-table for hairpins to fasten it, holding up her long nightdress above her white feet with one hand that she might not trip, and, standing before the mirror, blushed at the beauty of her own reflection. When she had put her hair out of her way, she

glanced at her bed somewhat longingly, then at her watch. It was very early, and the morning was chilly, so she put on her white flannel dressing-gown, got a book, returned to her bed, and propped herself up in a comfortable position for reading; and so she spent the time happily until her maid came to call her. Her book that morning was *The Life of Frances Ridley Havergal*, and she found it absorbingly interesting.

CHAPTER XXII.

The ladies of an artist's family usually arrange and decorate their rooms in a way which recalls the manner called artistic, more especially when the artist is a figure or subject, as distinguished from a landscape painter, for the latter lives too much in the free fresh air to cultivate draperies, even if he does not absolutely detest them as being stuffy; and in the same way the bedroom of the only daughter of the Bishop of Morningquest would have made you think of matters ecclesiastical. The room itself, with its thick walls, high stone mantelpiece, small gothic windows, and plain ridged vault, was so in fact; and a sense of suitability as well as the natural inclination of the occupant had led her to choose the furniture and decoration as severely in keeping as possible. The pictures consisted of photographs or engravings of sacred subjects, all of Roman Catholic origin. There was a "Virgin and child" by Botticelli, and another by Perugini; "Our lady of the Cat," by Baroccio; the exquisite "Vision of St. Helena," by Paolo Veronese; Correggio's "Ecce Homo;" and others less well-known; with a ghastly Crucifixion too painful to be endured, especially by a young girl, had not custom dulled all genuine perception of the horror of it. The whole effect, however, was a delicious impression of freshness and serenity, which inspired something of the same respect for Edith's sanctum that one felt for Edith herself, as was evident on one occasion, when, the ladies of his family being absent, the Bishop of Morningquest had taken Mr. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe, a gentleman who had lately settled in that neighbourhood, over the Palace. When they came to Edith's room, he had opened the door absently, and then remembering whose it was, he said: "My daughter's room," and

they had both looked in without entering, and both becoming aware at the same moment that they had their hats on, removed them involuntarily.

Edith's dress too, was characteristic. All the ornamentation was out of sight, the lining of her gowns being often more costly than the materials of which they were made. In the same way, her simple unaffected manners were the plain garment which concealed the fine quality and cultivation of her mind. She might have done great good in the world had she known of the evil; she would have fought for the right in defiance of every prejudice, as women do. But she had never been allowed to see the enemy. She had been fitted by education to move in the society of saints and angels only, and so rendered as unsuited as she was unprepared to cope with the world she would have to meet in that state of life to which, as she herself would have phrased it, it had pleased God to call her.

When she left her room that morning she went to her mother's sitting-room, which was on the same floor.

Edith and her mother usually breakfasted here together. Sometimes the Bishop joined them and chatted over an extra cup of tea; but he was an early riser, and had generally breakfasted with his chaplain and private secretary, and done an hour's work or so before his wife appeared. For Mrs. Beale was delicate at that time, and obliged to forego the early breakfast with her husband which had hitherto been the habit and pleasure of her whole married life.

The Bishop did not come up to the sitting-room that morning, however, and when Edith and her mother had breakfasted they read the Psalms for the day together, and a chapter of the Bible, verse by verse. Then Edith wrote some notes for her mother, who was busy making a cushion for a bazaar; after which she went into the garden and gathered flowers in one of the conservatories, which she brought in to paint on a screen she was making, also for the bazaar.

Mother and daughter worked together without any conversation to speak of until lunch; they were too busy to talk. After lunch they drove out into the country and paid a call. On the way back Edith noticed a beggar, a young, slender, very delicate-looking girl, lying across the footpath with her feet towards the road. A tiny baby lay on her lap. Her head and shoulders were pillowed upon the high bank which flanked the path, her face was raised as if her last look had been up at the sky above her, her hands had slipped helplessly on to the ground on either side of her, releasing the child, which had rolled over on to its face and so continued inertly.

Edith caught only a passing glimpse of the group, and she made no remark until they had driven on some distance; but then she asked: "Did you notice that poor girl, mother?"

"No," Mrs. Beale answered. "Where was she?"

"Lying on the ground. She had a baby on her lap. I think she was ill.

They were in an open carriage, and Mrs. Beale looked round over the back of it. It was a straight road, but she could only see something lying on the footpath, which looked like a bundle at that distance.

"Are you sure it was a girl?" she said.

"Yes, quite, mother," Edith answered.

"Stop the carriage, then," said Mrs. Beale; "and we will turn back and see what we can do."

They found the girl in the same attitude. Edith was about to alight, but her mother stopped her.

"Let Edwards" (the footman, who was an old servant) "see what is the matter," she said.

Edith instantly sat down again, and the footman went and stood by the girl, looking down at her curiously. Then he stooped, took off his glove, and put the points of the four fingers of his right hand on her chest, like an amateur doctor afraid of soiling his hands, a perfunctory way of ascertaining if she still breathed.

"I know who it is, ma'am," he said, returning to the carriage. "She's French, and was a dressmaker in Morningquest. There were two of them, sisters, doing a very good business, but they got to know some of the gentry—— "

Mrs. Beale stopped him. She would not have heard the story for the world.

"She's not dead, is she?" Edith asked in a horrified tone.

The man looked at the girl again from where he stood; "No, miss," he answered, "I think not. She's dead beat after a long tramp. The soles are wore off her shoes. Or likely she's fainted. It's a pity of her," he added for the relief of his own feelings, looking at her again compassionately.

"Oh, mother! can't we do something?" Edith exclaimed.

"But what *can* we do?" Mrs. Beale responded helplessly, looking at Edwards for a suggestion.

"We're not very far from the workus," he said, looking down the road they had just retraversed. "We might call there as we pass, and leave a message for them to send and take her in."

"Let us go at once," said Mrs. Beale in a tone of relief.

Edith, whose face was pale, looked pityingly once more at the girl and her little child as they drove off. It had not occurred to either of the two ladies, gentle, tender, and good as they were, to take the poor dusty disgraced tramp up in their carriage, and restore her to "life and use and name and fame" as they might have done.

The incident, however, had naturally made a painful impression upon them both, and when they returned to the Palace they ordered tea in the drawing-room immediately, feeling that they must have something, and went there with their things still on, to wait for it. Neither of them could get the tramp and her baby out of their heads, but they had not mentioned her since they came in, until Mrs. Beale broke a long silence by exclaiming: "We will drive that way again to-morrow, and find out how they are."

Edith needed no explanation as to whom she was alluding.

"They would take her in at once, of course, mother? They could not put it off?" she said.

"Oh, no! not when we asked them," her mother answered.

The tea was brought in at this moment, and immediately afterwards the footman announced from the door: "Sir Mosley Menteith," and a tall, fair-haired man about thirty, with a small, fine, light-coloured moustache, the ends of which were waxed and turned up towards the corners of his eyes, entered and shook hands with Mrs. Beale, looking into her face intently as he did so, as if he particularly wanted to see what she was like; then he turned to Edith, shook hands, and looked at her intently also, and taking a seat near her he continued to scrutinize her in a way that brought the blood to her cheeks, and caused her to drop her eyes every time she looked at him. But they were old acquaintances, and she was not displeased.

He was a good-looking young man, although he had a face which some people called empty because of the singular immobility of every feature except his eyes; but whether the set expression was worn as a mask, or whether he really had nothing in him was a question which could only be decided on intimate acquaintance; for although some effect of personality continually suggested the presence in him of thoughts and feelings disguised or concealed by an affectation of impassivity, nothing he did or said at an ordinary interview ever either quite confirmed or destroyed the impression.

"I thought you had gone abroad with your regiment," said Mrs. Beale, who had received him cordially.

"No, not yet," he answered, looking away from Edith for a minute, in order to scrutinize her mother.

He always seemed to be inspecting the person he addressed, and never spoke of anyone without describing their charms or blemishes categorically. "Fact is, I've just come to say good-bye. I've been abroad on leave for two months. Took mine at the beginning of the season."

He looked intently at Edith again when he had said this.

"Mrs. Orton Beg," the servant announced.

Mrs. Orton Beg's ankle was strong enough now for her to walk from her little house in the Close to the Palace, but she had to use a stick. She was bleached by being so much indoors, and looked very fragile in the costly simplicity of her long black draperies as she entered.

Mrs. Beale and Edith received her affectionately, and Sir Mosley rose and transferred his scrutinizing gaze to her while they were so occupied. He inspected her dark glossy hair; eyes, nose, mouth, and figure, down to her feet; then looked into her eyes again, and bowed on being presented by Mrs. Beale.

"Sir Mosley is in the Colquhoun Highlanders," the latter explained to Mrs. Orton Beg. "He is just going out to Malta to join them."

Mrs. Orton Beg looked up at him with interest from the low chair into which she had subsided: "Then you know my niece, I suppose," she said—"Mrs. Colquhoun?"

"I have not yet the pleasure," he answered, smiling so that he showed his teeth. They were somewhat discoloured by tobacco, but the smile was a pleasant one, to which people instantly responded. He went to the tea-table when he had spoken, and stood there waiting to hand Mrs. Orton Beg a cup of tea which Mrs. Beale was pouring out for her. "But I have seen Mrs. Colquhoun," he added. "I was at the wedding—she looked remarkably well." He fixed his eyes on vacancy here, and turned his attention inwards in order to contemplate a vision of Evadne in her wedding dress. His first question about a strange woman was always: "Is she good-looking?" and his first thought when one whom he knew happened to be mentioned was always as to whether she was attractive in appearance or not. He was one of several of Colonel Colquhoun's brother officers who had graced the wedding. There was not much variety amongst them. They were all excessively clean and neat

in appearance, their manners in society were unexceptionable, the morals of most of them not worth describing because there was so little of them; and their commnets to each other on the occasion neither original nor refined; generations of them had made the same remarks under similar circumstances.

The Bishop came in during the little diversion caused by handing tea and cake to Mrs. Orton Beg.

"Ah, how do you do?" he said, shaking hands with the latter. "How is the foot? Better? That's right. Oh! is that you, Mosley? I beg your pardon, my dear boy"—here they shook hands—"I did not see you at first. Very glad you've come, I'm sure. How is your mother? Not with your regiment, eh?" He peered at Sir Mosley through a pair of very thick glasses he wore, and seemed to read an answer to each question as he put it, written on the latter's face.

"Will you have some tea, dear?" said Mrs. Beale.

"Eh, what did you say, my dear? Tea? Yes, if you please. That is what I came for."

He turned to the tea-table as he spoke, and stood over it rubbing his hands, and beaming about him blandly.

Sir Mosley Menteith had been a good deal at the Palace as a youngster. He and Edith still called each other by their Christian names. The Bishop had seen him grow up from a boy, and knew all about him—so he would have said—although he had not seen much of him and had heard absolutely nothing for several years.

"So you are not with your regiment?" he repeated interrogatively.

"I am just on my way to join it now," the young man answered, looking up at the Bishop from the chair near Edith on which he was again sitting, and giving the corners of his little light moustache a twirl on either side when he had spoken. All his features, except his eyes, preserved an imperturbable gravity; his lips moved, but without altering the expression of his face. His eyes, however,

inspected the Bishop intelligently; and always, when he spoke to him, they rested on some one point, his vest, his gaiters, his apron, the top of his bald head, the end of his nose.

"Dr. Galbraith," the footman announced, and the doctor entered in his easy unaffected but somewhat awkward way. He had his hat in his hand, and there was a shade of weariness or depression on his strong pale face; but his deep grey kindly eyes—the redeeming feature—were as sympathetically penetrating as usual.

He shook hands with them all, except Sir Mosley, at whom he just glanced sufficiently long to perceive that he was a stranger.

Mrs. Beale named them to each other, and they both bowed slightly, looking at the ground, and then they exchanged glances.

"Not much like a medico if you are one," thought Menteith.

"Not difficult to take your measure," thought the doctor; after which he turned at once to the tea-table, like one at home, and stood there waiting for a cup. His manner was quite unassuming, but he was one of those men of marked individuality who change the social atmosphere of a room when they enter it. People became aware of the presence of strength almost before they saw him or heard him speak. And he possessed that peculiar charm, common to Lord Dawne and others of their set, which came of giving the whole of their attention to the person with whom they were conversing for the moment. His eyes never wandered, and if his interest flagged he did not allow the fact to become apparent, so that he drew from everybody the best that was in them, and people not ordinarily brilliant were often surprised, on reflection, at the amount of information they had been displaying, and the number of ideas which had come crowding into their usually vacant minds while he talked with them.

He turned his attention to Mrs. Beale now. "I was afraid I should be late for tea," he said. "I had to turn back—about something. I was delayed."

"We were late ourselves this afternoon," said Mrs. Beale.

Curiously enough the same cause had delayed them both, for Dr. Galbraith, coming into Morningquest by the road Mrs. Beale had chosen for her drive that day, had noticed the insensible girl and her baby lying on the footpath, and had got down, lifted them into his carriage, and driven back some miles with them in order to leave them at the house of one of his tenants, a respectable widow whom he had trained as a nurse, and to whose kind care he now confided them with strict orders for their comfort, and the wherewithal to carry the orders out.

Dr. Galbraith took his tea now and sat down. He had come for a special purpose, and hastened to broach the subject at once.

"Have you decided where to go this winter?" he asked Mrs. Beale. "You will be having another attack of bronchitis, and then you will not be able to travel. It is not safe to put it off too long."

His orders were that she should winter abroad that year, and Edith was to accompany her, but they were both reluctant to go because of the Bishop, whose duties obliged him to remain behind alone. Mrs. Beale glanced at him now affectionately. He was leaning back in a low chair, paunch protuberant, and little legs crossed; and he answered the look with a smile which was meant to be encouraging, but was only disturbed. He was a perfect coward, this ruler of a great diocese, in matters which were of moment to the health and well-being of his own family; he hated to have to decide for them.

"Why not come to Malta?" Sir Mosley suggested.

"That would be nice for Evadne," Mrs. Orton Beg exclaimed, her mind taking in at a glance all the advantage for the latter of having a companion of her own age, and without quirks, like Edith, and the womanly restraining influence of a friend like dear old Mrs. Beale.

"What kind of a place is Malta?" the Bishop asked generally, tapping the edge of his saucer with his teaspoon; then, addressing Dr. Galbraith in particular, he added: "Would it be suitable?"

"Just the thing," the latter answered. "Picturesque, good society, and delightful climate at this time of the year. Accessible too; you can go direct by P. and O., and the little sea voyage would be good for Mrs. Beale."

"It would be nice to have Evadne there," said Edith, considering the proposition favourably. "I have hardly seen her at all since we were both in the nursery."

"She was such a quiet child," said Mrs. Beale. "Unnaturally so; but they used to say she was clever."

"She is," said Mrs. Orton Beg, "decidedly so, and original—or, rather, *advanced*. I believe that is the proper word now."

"Oh, dear!" said Mrs. Beale. "Is that nice?"

"Well," Mrs. Orton Beg answered, smiling, "I cannot say. It is not a matter of law, you know, but of opinion. Evadne is nice, however, so much I will venture to declare!"

"She used to be very good to the little Hamilton-Wells's," Mrs. Beale gave out as a point in her favour.

"Oh—*did* you hear about the Heavenly Twins yesterday?" Edith exclaimed, addressing Dr. Galbraith: "They came to call on papa, and he couldn't make out what they wanted. He did look so puzzled! and they sat down and endeavoured to draw him into a theological discussion, after having had a fight on the floor—the children, I mean, not papa, of course!"

"They always endeavour to adapt themselves to the people with whom they happen to be," said Dr. Galbraith. "When they call upon me, they come primed with medical matters, and discuss the present condition of surgical practice, and the future prospects of advance in that direction. And I rather suspect that my own books and papers are the sources from which they derive their information. I lock up my library and consulting rooms now as a rule when I go out, but sometimes I forget to shut the windows."

"They are very singular little people," said the Bishop, with his benign smile; "very singular!"

"They are very *naughty* little people, I think!" said Mrs. Beale.

Dr. Galbraith laughed as at some ludicrous reminiscence.

"But will you come to Malta?" said Sir Mosley. "Because if you will, and would allow me, I could see about making arrangements for your accommodation."

"You are very kind," said the Bishop.

"But when should we be obliged to go?" Mrs. Beale asked, meaning, 'How long may we stay at home?'

"You must go as soon as possible," Dr. Galbraith decided, inexorably.

And so the matter was settled after some little discussion of details, during which Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells and Mrs. Frayling came in. The latter was in Morningquest for the day doing some shopping. She had lunched with her sister, Mrs. Orton Beg, and had come to have tea with Mrs. Beale; and she and Lady Adeline had encountered each other at the door.

Mrs. Frayling looked very well. She was a wonderfully preserved woman, and being of an elastic temperament, a day away from home always sufficed to smooth out the wrinkles which her husband's peculiar method of loving and cherishing her tended to confirm. And she was especially buoyant just then, for it was immediately after the Battle of the Letters, and Mr. Frayling was so meek in his manner, and she felt altogether so free and independent, that she had actually ventured to come into Morningquest that day without first humbly asking his permission. She had just informed him of her intention, and walked out before he could recover himself sufficiently to oppose it.

Dr. Galbraith had taken his leave when they entered the room, and only waited a moment afterwards to exchange a word with Lady Adeline. When he had gone, Sir Mosley asked the latter, who had known him since he was a boy, but did not love him, "Is that ugly man a medical doctor?"

"Yes," she answered in her gentle but downright way, "he *is* a medical man, but not an 'ugly' man at all."

"Is Mosley calling Dr. Galbraith ugly?" Mrs. Beale exclaimed. "Now, *I* think he has the *nicest* face!"

"A most good-looking kind of ugliness," said Mrs. Orton Beg.

Menteith perceived that any attempt to disparage Dr. Galbraith in that set was a mistake, and retired from the position cleverly. "There is a kind of ugliness which is attractive in a man," he said with his infectious smile.

Edith responded, and then they drew apart from the rest, and began to talk to each other exclusively.

There was a bright tinge of colour on her transparent cheeks, her eyes sparkled, and a pleased perpetual smile hovered about her lips. The entrance of Sir Mosley Menteith had changed the unemotional feminine atmosphere. He was an eligible, and his near neighbourhood caused the girl's heart to swell with a sensation like enthusiasm. She felt as if she could be eloquent, but no suitable subject presented itself, and so she said little. She was very glad, however, and she looked so; and naturally she thought no more for the moment of the poor little French girl—who was just then awaking to a sense of pain, mental and physical, to horror of the past, and fear for the future, and the heavy sense of an existence marred, not by reason of her own weakness so much as by the possession of one of the most beautiful qualities in human nature—the power to love and trust.

"Is the old swing still on the elm?" said Sir Mosley.

"Yes," Edith answered. "Not exactly the same rope, you know; but we keep a swing there always."

"Who uses it now?"

"Children who come to see us," she said. "And sometimes I sit in it myself!" she added laughing.

"I should very much like to see it again," he said.

"Come and see it then," she answered, rising as she spoke.

"Mosley wants to see the old swing," she said to her mother, as they left the room together.

"What a nice looking young man," Mrs. Frayling observed.

"His head is too small," Lady Adeline said. "Has he anything in him?"

"Oh—yes. Well, good average abilities, I should say," Mrs. Beale rejoined. "Too much ability, you know, is rather dangerous. Men with many ideas so often get into mischief."

"That is true," said Mrs. Frayling; "and it is worse with women. When *they* have ideas, as my husband was saying only this morning, they become quite outrageous—*new* ideas, of course I mean, you know."

"He seems to admire Edith very much," Mrs. Orton Beg observed.

Mrs. Beale smiled complacently.

Edith sat long in her room that night on the seat of the window that faced the east. She had taken off her evening dress and put on her white flannel wrapper. The soft material draped itself to her figure, and fell in heavy folds to her feet. Her beautiful hair, which was arranged for the night in one great plait with the ends loose, hung down to the ground beside her.

The moon was high in the heavens, but not visible from where she sat. Its light, however, flooded the open spaces of the garden beneath her, and cast great shadows of the trees across the lawn. The sombre afternoon had cleared to a frosty night, and the deep indigo sky was sparsely sprinkled with brilliant stars.

Edith looked out. She saw the stars, and the earth with its heavy shadows, and the wavering outlines of the trees and shrubs, and felt a kinship with them.

She was very happy, but she did not think. She did not want to think. When any obtrusive thought presented itself she instantly strove to banish it, and at first she succeeded. She wanted to recall the pleasurable sensations of the day, and to prolong them.

The last sixteen hours seemed longer in the retrospect than any other measure of time with which she had been acquainted. She felt as if the terrible dream from which she had awakened that morning in affright had happened in some other state of being which ended abruptly while she was pacing the shady walks of the old Palace garden with Mosley Menteith in the afternoon, and was now only to be vaguely recalled. Some great change in herself had taken place since then; she would not define it; she imagined she could not; but she knew what it was all the same, and rejoiced.

They were going to Malta.

The feeling resolved itself into that clear idea inevitably; and after a little pause it was followed by the question: "Well, and what then?"

But either her mind refused to receive the reply, or else in the Book of Fate the answer was still unwritten, for none came to her consciousness.

Turning at last from the window, she found the eyes of the Good Shepherd in the picture fixed upon her, the beautiful benign eyes she loved so well; and looking up at Him responsively, she waited a moment for her heart to expand anew, and then set herself to meditate upon His life. It was a religious exercise she had taught herself, not knowing that the Roman Catholics practise it as a duty always. She thought of Him first as the dear Lord who died for her, and her heart awoke trembling with joy and fear at the realization of the glorious deed. His tenderness came upon her, and she bowed her head to receive it. Her ears were straining as it were to hear the sweetness of His voice. She sank on her knees before His image to be the nearer to Him while she dwelt on the mystery of His divine patience, and felt herself filled with the serene intensity of His holy love. She recalled the faultless grace and beauty of His person, and revelled in the thought of it, till suddenly a deep and sensuous glow of delight in Him flooded her being, and her very soul was faint for Him. She called Him by name caress-

ingly: "Dear Lord!" She confessed her passionate attachment to Him. She implored Him to look upon her lovingly. She offered Him the devotion of her life. And then she sank into a perfect stupor of ecstatic contemplation. This was the way she worshipped, dwelling on the charms of His person and character with the same senses that her delicate maiden mind still shrank from devoting to an earthly lover; calling Him what she would have had her husband be: "Master!"—the woman's ideal of perfect bliss: "A strong support!" "A sure refuge!"—praying Him to strengthen her, to make her wise, to keep her pure; to help, to guide, to comfort her! and finding in each repetition of familiar phrases the luxurious gladness of a great enthusiasm.

But these emotional excesses were not to be indulged in with impunity. When Edith arose from her knees, she had already begun to suffer the punishment of a chilling reaction. The love-light faded from her face. The glow of ecstatic passion was extinguished in her heart. The festal robes of enraptured feeling fell from her consciousness and were replaced by the rags of unwelcome recollections. She thought of the poor delicate little French girl lying by the wayside exhausted, and longed to know if she were at that moment sheltering in the workhouse, and rested and restored. She wondered what it was like to be in the workhouse—alone—without a single friend to speak kindly to her; but the bare thought of such a position made her shudder. If only she could have befriended that poor creature and her little child? The sweet maternal instinct of her own being set up a yearning which softened her heart the more tenderly towards the mother because of the child. She did so wish that she could have done something for both of them, and then she recollected her horrible dream, and began involuntarily to piece the vision of the morning to the incident of the afternoon in order to find some faint foreshadowing for her guidance of the one event in the other. Next day, she persuaded her mother to send to the workhouse directly after breakfast

to ask if the girl had been taken in, and how she was. Edwards, the old footman, could have told his mistress the girl's whole history, and she knew him also to be an honest man, of simple speech, not given to exaggerate; but she scented something "unpleasant" in the whole affair, and she would have looked coldly for the rest of her life on anyone as being a suspicious character, who had ventured to suggest that she should make herself acquainted with the details of such a case. She considered that any inquiries of that kind would have been improper to the last degree.

She sent Edwards to the workhouse, however, to know if the girl had been found; and when he brought back word that she had not, although the most careful search for her had been made in the neighbourhood, Mrs. Beale concluded that she had recovered sufficiently to continue her weary tramp, and very gladly dismissed the whole matter from her mind.

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

A MALTESE MISCELLANY.

DEATH itself to the reflecting mind is less serious than marriage. The elder plant is cut down that the younger may have room to flourish; a few tears drop into the loosened soil, and buds and blossoms spring over it. Death is not a blow, is not even a pulsation; it is a pause. But marriage unrolls the awful lot of numberless generations. Health, genius, honour are the words inscribed on some; on others are disease, fatuity and infamy.—*Walter Savage Landor.*

THE great leading idea is quite new to me, viz., that during late ages, the mind will have been modified more than the body; yet I had not got as far as to see with you, that the struggle between the races of man depended entirely on intellectual and *moral* qualities.—*Darwin: Letter to A. R. Wallace.*

CHAPTER I.

MEANWHILE the Colquhouns at Malta had been steadily making each other's acquaintance.

Colonel Colquhoun had met Evadne on board the steamer on her arrival, and had found her enchanted by her first glimpse of the place, and too girlishly glad in the excitement of change, the bustle and movement and novelty, to give a thought to anything else. The healthy young of the human race have a large capacity for enjoyment, and they have also the happy knack of banishing all thought which threatens to be an interruption to pleasurable sensation. When a thing was once settled it was Evadne's disposition to have done with it, and since she had come to satisfactory terms with Colonel Colquhoun and recovered from the immediate effects of the painful contest, the matter had not troubled her. She had perfect confidence in his word of honour as a gentleman, and was prepared to find it no more awkward to live in his house and have him for an occasional companion, than it would to be a guest of good position in any other establishment.

His own attitude was that of a kind of pleased curiosity. He considered their bargain a thing to be carried out to the letter so long as she held him to it, like a debt of honour, not legally binding but morally, and he was prepared, with gentlemanly tact, to keep faith without further discussion of the subject. The arrangement did not trouble him at all. It was original, and therefore somewhat piquant, and so was Evadne.

They met therefore without more than a momentary embarrassment, and his first glimpse of her fresh young face, flushed with

excitement, and full of intelligent interest and of unaffected pleasure in everything, was an unexpected revelation of yet another facet of her manifold nature, and a bright one too. What a pity she had "views"! But there was always a hope that the determination to live up to them was merely an infantile disease of which society would soon cure her. Society has views too. It believes all it hears in the churches without feeling at all bound to practise any inconvenient precept implied in the faith.

Colonel Colquhoun had gone out on a Government steam launch to meet the mail as soon as she was signalled, and finding Evadne on deck had remained there with her watching the wonderful panorama of the place gradually unfolding itself. He showed her the various points of interest as they came along, and she smiled silent acknowledgments of the courtesy.

The sun was just dispelling the diaphanous mists of early morning, making them hang luminous a moment and then disperse, like tinted gauze that flutters slowly upward in a breeze and vanishes. Great white clouds, foam-like and crisp, piled themselves up fantastically and floated off also, leaving the deep blue vault to mirror itself in the answering azure of the sea; the eternal calm above, awful in its intensity of stillness; the ceaseless movement below, a type of life, throbbing, murmurous, changeful, more interesting than awe-inspiring, more to be wondered at than revered.

Colonel Colquhoun pointed out the lighthouses of St. Elmo, patron saint of sailors, on the right, and Ricasoli on the left. Then they were met by a rainbow fleet of dghaisas, gorgeous in colour, and propelled by oarsmen who stood to their work, and were also brightly clad—both boats and boatmen, clothed by the sun, as it were, having blossomed into colour unconsciously as the flowers do in genial atmospheres. The boats, carrying fruits, flowers, tobacco, cheap jewellery, and coarse clothing for sailors, each cargo adding something of picturesqueness to the scene, formed a gay flotilla

about the steamer and accompanied her, she towering majestically above them, and appearing to attract them and hold them to her sides as a great cork in the water does a handful of chopped straw. The boatmen held up their wares, chattering and gesticulating, their sun-embrowned faces all animation and changeful as children's. One moment they would be smiling up and speaking in wheedling tones to the passengers, and the next they would be frowning round at each other, and resenting some offence with torrents of abuse. So the mail glided into the Grand Harbour, Evadne wondering at the fortifications, and straining her eyes to make out somewhat of the symbols, alternate eye and ear, carved on the old watch tower of St. Angelo; noticing, too, the sharp outline of everything in the pellucid atmosphere, and feeling herself suddenly aglow with warmth and colour, a part of the marvellous beauty and brightness, and uplifted in spirit out of the everyday world above all thought and care into regions of the purest pleasure.

"What a lovely place!" she exclaimed. "It looks like a great irregular enchanted palace!"

"It's very jolly," said Colonel Colquhoun, smiling upon the scene complacently, and looking as important as if he were himself responsible for the whole arrangement, but was too magnanimous to mention the fact! "I thought you'd like it. But wait till you see it by moonlight! We'll come off and dine with one of the naval fellows some night. I'm sure you'll be delighted. It's just like a photograph."

Evadne found that Colonel Colquhoun had secured a good house for her, and had bestowed much care upon the arrangement of it. It was the kind of occupation in which he delighted, and he did it well. He showed Evadne over the house himself as soon as she arrived, and what struck her as most delightful were the flowers and foliage plants which decorated every available corner, and nearly all growing, oranges and oleanders in great tubs, and palms and ferns on oriental china stands and in Majolica vases.

"One only sees it so for a ball at home," she said; "or some other special occasion."

He looked at her keenly a moment. Her face was serenely content.

"Well, this is a kind of a special occasion with me," he said, rather gloomily.

He went on as he spoke, Evadne following him from room to room, pleased with everything, and looking it, which is a much more convincing token of appreciation than the best chosen words.

But when they came to the rooms which were to be hers, she was quite overcome. For Colonel Colquhoun had chosen two opening into each other, as nearly as possible like those which she had occupied at Fraylingay, and had filled them with all the beloved possessions, books, pictures, and ornaments, which she had left behind her.

"How good you are! How very good you are!" she exclaimed impulsively. "I hope we shall be friends."

"Oh, we shall be friends," he answered with affected carelessness, but really well pleased. "I thought you would settle better if you had your own pet things to begin with. I had a great fight with your father about the books. He said you'd got all your nonsense out of them, but I suggested that it might be a case of a little learning being a dangerous thing, so I captured all the old ones, and I've got a lot more for you: see, here's Zola and Daudet complete, and George Sand. You'll like them better, I fancy, when you get into them than Herbert Spencer and Francis Galton. But I've got you some more of their books as well—all that you hadn't got."

"You are really *too* good," said Evadne.

Getting her the books was like putting butter on the paws of a strange cat to make it settle. She sat down beside them and began to take off her gloves at once. Colonel Colquhoun smiled beneath his blond moustache, then, pleading regimental duty, left

her to her treasures, assuring himself as he went that he really did know women, exceptional or otherwise.

He had arranged the books himself, placing Zola and Daudet in prominent positions, and anticipating much entertainment from the observation of their effect upon her. He expected she would end by making love to him; in which case he promised himself the pleasure of paying her off by acting for a time after the manner proposed by the Barber's Fifth Brother.

When they met again, Evadne had read her mother's letter, and she at once took him into her confidence about it.

"What would you do if you were me?" she asked.

"I should write to the papers," he answered gravely, as if he meant it.

He did not at all understand the strong simple earnest nature, incapable of flippancy, with which he had to deal, nor appreciate the danger of playing with it; and he never dreamt that she would seriously consider the suggestion.

"I cannot understand why my father should continue to feel vexed about this arrangement of ours," she said seriously. "We do not interfere with his domestic affairs, why should he meddle with ours? It is not at all his business; do you think it is?" This taking it for granted that the arrangement was as satisfactory to him as it was to her, and appealing to him in good faith against himself and his own interests as it were, touched Colonel Colquhoun's sense of the ludicrous pleasurably. It was always the unexpected apparently that was likely to happen with Evadne, and he appreciated the charm of the unexpected, and began to believe he should find more entertainment at home than he had thought possible even at the outset of his matrimonial venture, when all appeared most promising. He got on very well with her father, but, nevertheless, when it had at last dawned upon him that she was taking his suggestion about writing to the papers seriously, it jumped with his peculiar sense of humour—which had never

developed beyond the stage into which it had blossomed in his subaltern days—to egg her on "to draw" the testy old gentleman by threats of publicity. It was his masculine mind therefore that was really responsible for her "unnatural" action in that matter. In bygone days when there was any mischief afoot the principle used to be, *chercher la femme*, and when she was found the investigation stopped there; but modern methods of inquiry are unsatisfied with this imperfect search, and insist upon looking behind the woman, when lo, invariably, there appears a skulking creature of the opposite sex who is not ashamed to be concealed by the petticoats generously spread out to screen him. While the world approves man struts and crows, taking all the credit; but, when there is blame about, he whines, street-arab fashion: "It wasn't me. *Chercher la femme.*"

CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Beale and Edith arrived in Malta almost immediately after Evadne herself, and it so happened that the latter, when she went with Colonel Colquhoun to call upon them, met for the first time in their drawing-room most of the people to whom she was to become really attached during her sojourn in Malta. There were Mrs. Sillenger, wife of the Colonel of one of the other regiments stationed on the island, Mrs. Malcomson, also the wife of a military man; the Rev. Basil St. John, a man of good family, pronounced refinement, and ultra-ritualistic practices; and Mr. Austin B. Price, a distinguished American diplomatist and man of letters, to whom she became specially attached. Mrs. Beale and Edith also were from that time forward two of her dearest and most valued friends. She looked very charming on the occasion of that first visit.

Mrs. Beale received her with quite effusive kindliness. She had promised Mrs. Orton Beg to be a mother to her, and had been building a little aerial castle wherein she saw herself installed as principal adviser, comforter, confidential friend, and invaluable help generally under certain circumstances of peculiar trial and happy interest to which young wives are subject.

Evadne and Edith looked at each other with a kind of pleased surprise.

"How tall you have grown!" said Evadne.

"And how young you are to be married!" Edith rejoined. "I was so glad when Mrs. Orton Beg told us you were here. That was one of the reasons which decided us to come, I think."

"I hope we shall see a good deal of each other," said Evadne.

"That would be delightful," Edith answered. Then suddenly, she blushed. She had recognized someone who had just entered the room, and Evadne, narrowing her eyes to see who it was, recognized him as Sir Mosley Menteith, a captain in the Colquhoun Highlanders, whose acquaintance she had made the day before, when he called upon her for the first time. He shook hands with Mrs. Beale and stood talking to her, looking down at her intently, until someone else claimed her attention. Then he turned away, rested the back of his left hand, in which he was holding his hat, on his haunch, fixed an eyeglass in his eye, and looked round with an expression of great gravity, twirling first one end and then the other of his little light moustache slowly as he did so. He was extremely spic-and-span in appearance, and wore light-coloured kid gloves. The room was pretty full by that time, and he seemed to have some little difficulty in finding the person whom he sought, but at last he made out Edith and Evadne sitting together, and going over to them, greeted them both, and then took a vacant chair beside them. He began by inspecting first one and then the other carefully in turn, as if he were comparing them point by point, uttering little remarks the while of so thin and weak a nature that Evadne had to make quite an effort to grasp them. She had thawed under the influence of Edith's warm frank cordiality, but now she froze again suddenly, and began to have disagreeable thoughts. She noticed something repellent about the expression of Sir Mosley's mouth. She acknowledged that his nose was good, but his eyes were small, peery, and too close together, and his head shelved backwards like an ape's. She could not have kept up a conversation with him had she wished to, but she preferred to withdraw herself and let him monopolize Edith.

"I like you best in blue," Sir Mosley was saying. "Will you wear blue at our dance?"

"Oh, no!" Edith rejoined, archly, smiling up at him with lips and eyes. "I have worn nothing but blue lately. I shall soon

be known as the blue girl! I must have a change. Gray and pink are evidently *your* colours, Evadne!"

Evadne looked down at her draperies as a polite intimation that she had heard. But just then her attention was diverted by the conversation of two ladies and a gentleman, who were sitting together in a window on her right. The gentleman was Mr. St. John, the ritualistic divine, whose clean-shaven face, with its firm, well-disciplined mouth, finely-formed nose with sensitive nostrils, and deep-set kindly dark eyes, attracted her at once. He was very fragile in appearance, and had a troublesome cough.

"Ah, Mrs. Malcomson!" he was saying, "I should be very sorry to see the old exquisite ideal of womanhood disturbed by these new notions. What can be more admirable, more elevating to contemplate, more powerful as an example, than her beautiful submission to the hardships of her lot?"

"Or less effectual—seeing that no great good, but rather the contrary, has come of it all!" Mrs. Malcomson answered. "That is the poetry of the pulpit; and the logic too, I may add," she said, leaning back in her chair luxuriously. "For what could be less effectual for good than the influence has been of those women, poor wingless creatures of the 'Sphere,' whose ideal of duty rises no higher than silent abject submission to all the worst vices we know to be inseparable from the unchecked habitual possession of despotic authority? What do you say, Mrs. Sillenger?"

The other lady smiled agreement. She was older than Mrs. Malcomson, and otherwise presented a contrast to the latter, being taller, slighter, with a prettier, sweeter, and altogether more womanly face, as some people said. A stranger might have thought that she had less character too, but that was not the case. She suffered neither from weakness nor want of decision; but her manner was more diffident, and she said less.

Mrs. Malcomson belonged to a somewhat different order of being.

She had a strong and handsome face with regular features; a proud mouth, slightly sarcastic in expression; and dark grey eyes given to glow with fiery enthusiasm. Her hair was dark brown, but showed those shades of red in certain lights which betoken an energetic temperament, and good staying power. It was crisp, and broke into little natural curls on her forehead and neck, or wherever it could escape from bondage; but she had not much of it, and it was usually rather picturesque than tidy. Mrs. Sillenger's on the contrary, was straight and luxuriant, and always neat. It had been light golden-brown in her youth, but was somewhat faded. Mrs. Malcomson spoke as well as she looked, the resonant tones of her rich contralto voice pleasing the ear more than her opinions startled the understanding. She owed half her success in life to the careful management of her voice. By simple modulations of it she could always differ from an opponent without giving personal offence, and she seldom provoked bitter opposition because nothing she said ever sounded aggressive. If she had not been a good woman she would have been a dangerous one, since she could please eye and ear at will, a knack which obtains more concessions from the average man than the best chosen arguments.

"It seems to me that your poetry of the pulpit is very mischievous," she pursued. "You have pleased our senses with it for ages. You have flattered us into inaction by it, and used it as a means to stimulate our vanity and indolence by extolling a helpless condition under the pompous title of 'beautiful patient submission.' You have administered soothing sedatives of 'spiritual consolation,' as you call it, under the baleful influence of which we have existed with all our highest faculties dulled and drugged. You have curtailed our grand power to resist evil by narrowing us down to what you call the 'Woman's Sphere,' wherein you insist that we shall be the unconditional slaves of man, doing always and only such things as shall suit his pleasure and convenience."

"Ah, but when you remember that the law which man delivers

to woman he receives direct from God, you must confess that that alters the whole aspect of the argument," Mr. St. John deprecated.

"I confess that it would alter it if it were true," Mrs. Malcomson replied. "But it is not true. Man does not deliver the law of God to us, but the law of his own inclinations. And by assuming to himself the right, among other things, of undisputed authority over us, he has held the best half of the conscience of the race in abeyance until now, and so checked the general progress; he has confirmed himself in his own worst vices, arrogance, egotism, injustice, and greed, and has developed the worst in us also, among which I class that tendency to sycophantic adulation, which is an effort of nature to secure the necessaries of life for ourselves."

"But women generally do not think that any change for the better is necessary in their position. They are satisfied," Mr. St. John observed, smiling.

"Women generally are fools," Mrs. Malcomson ruefully confessed. "And the 'women generally' to whom you allude as being satisfied are the women well off in this world's goods themselves, who don't think for others. The first symptom of deep thought in a woman is dissatisfaction."

"I wonder men like yourself, Mr. St. John," Mrs. Sillenger began in her quiet diffident way, "continue so prejudiced on this subject. How you could help on the moral progress of the world, if only you would forget the sweet soporific 'poetry of the pulpit,' as Mrs. Malcomson calls it, and learn to think of us women, not as angels or beasts of burden—the two extremes between which you wander—but as human beings——"

"Oh!" he protested, interrupting her, "I hope I have not made you imagine that I do not recognize certain grave injustices to which women are at present subject. Those I as earnestly hope to see remedied as you do. But what I do think objectionable is the way in which women are putting themselves forward——"

"You are right there," said Mrs. Sillenger. "I think myself

that men might be allowed to continue to monopolize the right of impudent self-assertion."

"But do not lend yourself to the silencing system any longer, Mr. St. John," Mrs. Malcomson implored. "The silent acquiescence of women in an iniquitous state of things is merely an indication of the sensual apathy to which your ruinous poetry of the pulpit has reduced the greater number of us."

"I quite agree with you!" Evadne exclaimed; then stopped, colouring crimson. She had forgotten in her interest that she was a stranger to these people; and only remembered it when they all looked at her—rather blankly, as she imagined. "I beg your pardon," she said, addressing Mrs. Malcomson. "I could not help overhearing the discussion, and I am deeply interested. I am—Mrs. Colquhoun," she broke off, covered with confusion.

"Oh, I am very glad to make your acquaintance," Mrs. Malcomson said warmly. "I called on you to-day on my way here, but you were out."

"And so did I," said Mrs. Sillenger.

"And I hope to have the pleasure very soon," Mr. St. John added, bowing.

Mrs. Beale joined the group just then.

"You have been talking so merrily in this corner," she said, sitting down on a high chair as she spoke, "I have been wondering what it was all about!"

"*Woman's Rights!*" Mrs. Malcomson uttered in deeply tragic tones.

"Woman's Rights! Oh, dear me, how dreadful!" Mrs. Beale exclaimed, comfortably. "I won't hear a word on the subject.

"Not on the subject of cooking?" said Mrs. Malcomson.

"What has cooking to do with it?" Mrs. Beale asked.

"Why, everything!" Mrs. Malcomson answered, smiling. "If only Mr. St. John and a few other very good men would stand up in their pulpits boldly and assure those who dread innovation

that their food will be the better cooked, and the 'Sphere' itself will roll along all the more smoothly for the changes we find necessary; there would be an end of their opposition. I would not promise women cooks, for I really think myself that the men are superior, they put so much more feeling into it. And I can never understand why they do not quarrel with us for the possession of that department. I am sure we are quite ready to resign it! and really, when one comes to think of it, it is obvious that the kitchen is much more the man's sphere than the woman's, for it is there that his heart is!"

"You beguile me, my dear," Mrs. Beale said, smiling; "but I will not listen to your wicked railleries." She looked at Mrs. Sillenger. "I came to ask you if you would be so kind as to play us something," she said.

Mrs. Sillinger was a perfect musician, and as Evadne listened, her heart expanded. When the music ceased, she looked up and about her blankly like one who is bewildered by the sudden discovery of an unexpected loss; and with that expression still upon her face she met the bright penetrating, kindly eye of a small thin elderly gentleman with refined features, a wrinkled forehead, and thick grey hair, who was looking at her so fixedly from the other side of the room that at first her own glance fell; but the next moment she felt an irresistible impulse to look at him again. The attraction was mutual. He got up at once from the low ottoman on which he was sitting, and came across to her; and she welcomed his approach with a smile.

"Excuse the liberty of an old man who has not been introduced," he said. "You are Mrs. Colquhoun, I know, and my name is Price. I am an American, and I came to Europe on official business for my country first of all; but I am now travelling for my own pleasure."

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance," Evadne answered.

Before they could say another word to each other, however, there was a general move of guests departing, and Colonel Colquhoun came to carry her off. She held out her hand to Mr. Price. "We shall meet again?" she said.

"With your permission, I will call," he answered.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. St. John and Mr. Price were staying at the same hotel, and they walked back to it together. They had only just made each other's acquaintance, and were feeling the attraction which there is in a common object pursued by the most dissimilar means. They were both humanitarians, Mr. Price by choice and of set purpose, Mr. St. John of necessity—seeing that he was a good man, but unconsciously, the consequence being much confusion of mind on the subject, and a wide difference between his words and his deeds. He preached, for instance, the degrading doctrine that we ought to be miserable in this world, that all our wonderful powers of enjoyment were only given to us to be suppressed; and further blasphemed our sacred humanity by maintaining that we are born in sin, and sinners we must remain, fight as we will to release ourselves from that bondage, but yet his whole life was spent in trying to make his fellow creatures better, and the world itself a pleasanter place to live in. The means which he employed, however, was the old anodyne: "Believe the best"—that is to say, "Cultivate agreeable feelings." Mr. Price's motto, on the other hand, was: "Know the worst." The foe must be known, must be recognized, must be met and fought in the open if he is to be subdued at all.

This was the difference which drew the two together; each felt the deepest interest in the point where the other diverged, and yearned to convert him to his own way of thought. Mr. Price would have had the clergyman know the world; Mr. St. John would have taught Mr. Price to ignore it, "to look up!" as he called it, or, in other

words, to sit and sigh for heaven while the heathen raged, and the wicked went their way here undisturbed—although he had not realized up to the present that that was practically what his system amounted to. He belonged by birth to the caste which is vowed to the policy of ignoring, and was as sensitive as a woman about delicate matters. Nationally, Mr. Price was the Englishman's son, and had advanced a generation. Men are what women choose to make them. Mr. St. John's mother was the best kind of woman of the old order, Mr. Price was the product of the new ; and the two were typical representatives of the chivalry of the past, high-minded, ill-informed, unforeseeing—and the chivalry of the present, which reaches on always into futurity with the long arm of knowledge, not deceiving itself with romantic misrepresentations of things by the way, but fully recognizing what is wrong from the outset, and making direct for the root of the evil instead of contenting itself by lopping a branch here and there.

"I think you said you were going to winter here?" Mr. Price remarked, as they stepped into the street.

"Yes—if the place suits me," Mr. St. John answered; "and so far—that is to say for the last month—it has done so very well. Are you a resident?"

"Well, no, not exactly," the old gentleman answered; "but I have been in the habit of coming here for years."

"It is an interesting place," said Mr. St. John, "teeming with historical associations."

"Yes, it is an interesting place," Mr. Price agreed, making a little pause before he added—"full of food for reflection. Life at large is represented at Malta during the winter season, and in a little place like this humanity is under the microscope as it were, which makes it a happy hunting ground for those who have to know the world."

"Ah!" Mr. St. John ejaculated deliberately. "I should think there are some very nice people here."

"Yes—and some very nasty ones," Mr. Price rejoined. "But, of course, one must know both."

"Oh, I differ from you there!" Mr. St. John answered, smiling. "Walk not in sinners' way, you know!"

"On the contrary, I should say," Mr. Price rejoined, smiling responsively, and twitching his nose as if a gnat had tickled it; "but I allow you've got to have a good excuse when you do."

Mr. St. John smiled again slightly, but said nothing.

"There were elephants once in Malta, I am told," he began after a little pause, changing the subject adroitly, "but they dwindled down from the size which makes them so useful by way of comparison, till they were no bigger than Shetland ponies, before they finally became extinct."

"And there is a set in Society on the island now," Mr. Price pursued, "formed of representatives of old English houses that once brought men of notable size and virile into the world, but are now only equal to the production of curious survivals, tending surely to extinction like the elephant, and by an analogous process."

"Here we are," said Mr. St. John, as they arrived at their place of abode. "Will you come to my room, and smoke a cigarette with me?"

"Thank you, I don't smoke, but I'll go to your room, and see *you* smoke one, with pleasure," Mr. Price responded.

When they got to Mr. St. John's room, the latter took off his clerical coat and waistcoat, and put on a coloured smoking jacket, which had the curious effect of transforming him from an ascetic looking High Churchman into what, from his refined, intellectual, clean-shaven face, and rather long straight hair, most people would have mistaken for an actor suffering from overwork.

Having provided Mr. Price with a comfortable seat in the window, which was open, he lighted a cigarette, drew up another

easy chair, and stretched himself out in it luxuriously. He was easily fatigued at that time, and the rest and quiet were grateful after the talk and crowd at Mrs. Beale's. There was a little wooden balcony outside his window, full of flowers and foliage plants; and, from where he sat, he saw the people passing on the opposite side of the street below, and could also obtain a glimpse of the Mediterranean, appearing between the yellow houses at the end of the street, intensely blue, and sparkling in the rays of the afternoon sun. It was altogether a soothing scene, and had he been alone, he would soon have sunk into that state of intellectual apathy which is so often miscalled contemplative. The homely duties of hospitality, however, compelled him to exert himself for the entertainment of his guest. Several of the people they had just met at Mrs. Beale's went past together, laughing and talking, and *à propos* of this he remarked, "It's a bright little world."

"Yes, on the smoothly smiling surface of Society, I allow it's bright," Mr. Price rejoined. "The surface, however, is but a small part of it."

Mr. St. John took a whiff of his cigarette.

"Do you see that man?" Mr. Price pursued, indicating a man below the middle height, with broad shoulders, a black beard and moustache streaked with brown, a ruddy complexion, and obtrusively blue eyes, who was passing at the moment.

"Captain Belliot, of H.M.S. *Abomination*," Mr. St. John answered, using the ship's nick-name, and holding out his cigarette between his finger and thumb as he spoke, his fluent patrician English losing in significance what it gained in melody compared with the slow dry *staccato* intonation of the American.

"Yes, sir," Mr. Price rejoined. "Now, he is one of the survivals I just now mentioned—a typical specimen."

"I rather like the man," Mr. St. John answered. "He isn't a friend of mine, but he's pleasant enough to meet."

"Just so," Mr. Price rejoined. "The manners of the kind are

agreeable—on the surface. One must give the devil his due. But on closer acquaintance you won't find that their general characteristics are exactly pleasant. Their minds are hopelessly tainted with exhalations from the literary sewer which streams from France throughout the world, and their habits are not nicer than their books."

"Ah, well," said Mr. St. John, whose sensitive lip had curled in dislike of the subject, "it is never too late to mend. I believe, too, that the evil is exaggerated. But at all events they repent and marry, and become respectable men eventually."

"Well, yes, sir, they marry as a rule," Mr. Price rejoined; "and that's the worst of it."

Mr. St. John held his cigarette poised in the air on the way to his mouth, and looked at him interrogatively.

"Will what you call repentance restore a rotten constitution?" Mr. Price responded. "Will it prevent a drunkard's children from being weakly vicious? or the daughters of a licentious man from being foredoomed to destruction by an inherited appetite for the vices which you seem to flatter yourself end in effect when they are repented of? You do not take into consideration the fact that the once vicious man becomes the father of vicious children and the grandfather of criminals. You persuade women to marry these men. The arrangement is perfect. Man's safety, and man's pleasure; if there is any sin in it, *damn the woman.* She's weak; she can't retaliate."

Mr. St. John's cigarette went out. He had begun to think.

"These are horrors!" he ejaculated. "But I know, thank heaven, that the right feeling of the community is against the perpetration of them."

"That's so," said the American. "Unfortunately, it is not with the right feeling of the community, but with the wrong feeling of individuals, that women have to deal.

"Heaven forbid that women should ever know anything about it!"

'I say so too," said Mr. Price. "At present, however, heaven permits them by the thousand to make painful personal acquaintance with the subject. And I assure you, sir, that the indignation which has long been simmering in whispers over tea tables in the seclusion of scented boudoirs amongst those same delicate dames whom you have it in your mind to keep in ignorance of the source of most of their sufferings, mental and physical, is fast approaching the boiling point of rebellion."

"Do you know this for a fact?"

"I do. And the time is at hand, I think, for a thorough ventilation of the subject, It is the question of all others which must either be ignored until society is disintegrated by the licence that attitude allows, or considered openly and seriously. That is why I mentioned it. I see in you every inclination to help and defend the suffering sex, and every quality except the habit of handling facts. The subject's repulsive enough, I allow. Right-minded people shrink in disgust even from what is their obvious duty in the matter, and shirk it upon various pretexts, visiting their own pain—like Betsy Trotwood, when she boxed the ears of the doctor's boy—upon the most boxable person they can reach, and that is generally the one who has forced their attention to it."

There was a pause after this, then the clergyman observed: "One knows that there are sores which must be exposed to view if they are to be prescribed for at all or treated with any chance of success."

"Yes, yes, that is just it," Mr. Price exclaimed. "You will perceive, if you reflect for a moment, that there must have been a good deal that was disagreeable in the cleansing of the Augean stables to which people in the neighbourhood would certainly and very naturally object at the time; but it has since been pretty generally conceded that the undertaking was a very good sanitary measure nevertheless; and had Hercules lived in our day, and

survived the shower of stones with which he was sure to have been encouraged during his conduct of the business, we should doubtless have given him a dinner, or in the other case, an epitaph at least. But there is work for the strong man still. The Augean stable of our modern civilization must be cleansed, and it is a more difficult task than the other was, and one to put him on his mettle and win him great renown because it is held to be impossible."

He rose as he spoke, and looked at Mr. St. John with concern, as the latter struggled with a bad fit of coughing.

"I am afraid I have talked too much for your strength," he added.

"Oh, no," Mr. St. John answered as soon as he could speak. "On the contrary, I assure you. You have taken me out of myself, and that is always good. Must you go?"

"I must, thank you. Don't rise."

But Mr. St. John had risen, and was surprised to find himself towering over the little gentleman as they shook hands—a feeling which recurred to him always afterwards when they met, there being about Mr. Price the something that makes the impression of size and strength and courage which is usually only associated with physical force.

CHAPTER IV.

Next day there was an afternoon dance on board Captain Belliot's ship, H.M.S. *Abomination*—facetiously so-called for no particular reason; and Evadne was there with Colonel Colquhoun. She was dressed in white, heavily trimmed with gold, and, being a bride, was an object of special attention and interest. It was the first entertainment of the kind she had appeared at since her arrival, and, not having a scrap of morbid sentiment about her, she was prepared to enjoy it thoroughly, but in her own way, of course, which, as she was new to the place and the people, would naturally be a very quiet observant way.

Captain Belliot received her when she came on board, and they shook hands.

She was taller than he was, and looking down at him while in the act, noticed the streaks of brown in his black beard, his brick-red skin, tight as a gooseberry's, and his obtrusively blue eyes.

"Queen's weather!" he remarked.

"Yes," she answered, looking out at the sparkling water.

"It's a pretty place," he continued.

"Yes," she agreed, glancing towards the shore, but seeing only with the mind's eye. Her pupils dilated, however, as she recalled the way she had come, the narrow picturesque steep streets, almost all stone-steps, well worn; with high irregular houses on either side, yellow, with green wooden verandahs jutting out; the wharf on which they had waited a moment for the man-of-war's boat to take them off, and the Maltese ruffians with their brown faces and brightly coloured clothing, lying idly about in the sun, or chattering together at the top of their voices in little groups. They

had seemed to look at her, too, with friendly eyes. And she saw the sapphire sea which parted in dazzling white foam from the prow of the boat as they came along, saw the steady sweep of the oars rising and falling rhythmically, the flash of the blades in the sunshine, the well-disciplined faces of the men who looked at her shyly, but with the same look which she took to be friendly; and their smart uniform. She would like to have shaken hands with them all. And there was more still in her mind when Captain Belliot asked her if she thought the place "pretty," yet all she found for answer was the one word, "Yes;" and he, being no physiognomist, rashly concluded that was all she had in her.

"Do you dance?" he proceeded, making one more effort to induce her to entertain him.

"Not in the afternoon," she said.

Sir Mosley Menteith tried next.

"You come from Morningquest, do you not?" he asked, looking into her eyes.

"My people live near Morningquest," she answered.

"Ah! then I suppose you know everybody there," he observed, looking hard at her brooch.

She reflected a moment, then answered deliberately: "Not by any means, I should think. It is a large neighbourhood."

He twisted each side of his little light moustache, and changed the subject, inspecting her figure as he did so.

"Do you ride?" he asked.

"Yes," she said.

There was a pause during which she noticed a suspicion of powder on his face, and he felt dissatisfied because she didn't seem to be going to entertain him.

The band struck up a waltz.

"Do you dance?" he said, looking down from her face to her feet.

"Not in the afternoon," she answered.

The dance had begun, and a pair came whirling down towards them.

Evadne moved back to be out of the way, and Menteith, looking round for a partner, saw Mrs. Guthrie Brimston opposite smiling at him.

He went over to her.

"Well, what do you make of the bride?" she said.

"Her conversation is not exactly animated," he answered, looking into Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's face intently.

She was a round, flat-faced, high-hipped, high-shouldered woman, short in the body, and tight-laced; and she had a trick of wagging her skirts and perking at a man when talking to him.

She did so now, nodding and smiling in a way that made her speech piquant with the suggestion that she thought or knew a great deal more than she meant to say.

"You have made her acquaintance, I suppose?" Menteith added.

"Oh, yes," she answered. "Her husband is an old friend of ours, you know, so Bobbie thought we ought to call at once."

The tone in which she spoke suggested that she and "Bobbie" merely meant to tolerate Mrs. Colquhoun for her husband's sake. "Bobbie" was Major Guthrie Brimston, a very useful little man to his wife by way of reference. When she wanted to say a smart thing which might or might not be considered objectionable, according to the taste of the person she addressed—and she very often did—she always presented it as a quotation from him. "Bobbie thinks," she added now, "that if there were an Order of the Silent Sewing Machine, Mrs. Colquhoun would be sure to be a distinguished member of it."

A Royal personage whom Evadne had met at home recognized her at this moment, and shook hands with her with somewhat effusive cordiality, making a remark to which she responded quietly.

"She seems to be a pretty self-possessed young woman, too," Menteith observed. "Her composure is perfect."

"Ah!" Mrs. Guthrie Brimston ejaculated; "those stupid people have no nerves! Now, *I* should shake all over in such a position!"

The band played the next few bars hard and fast, the dancers whirled like teetotums, then stopped with the final crash of the instruments, and separated, scattering the groups of onlookers, who re-arranged themselves into new combinations immediately. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston leant against the bulwarks. Colonel Beston, of the Artillery, and Colonel Colquhoun joined her, also her Bobbie, and Menteith remained. The conversation was animated. Evadne, having moved, could now hear every word of it, and thought it extremely stupid. It was all what "he said" and "she said;" what they ought to have said, and what they really meant. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston made some cutting remarks. She talked to all the men at once, and they appeared to appreciate her sallies; but their own replies were vapid. She seemed to be the only one of the party with any wit. Mrs. Beston joined her. She was a little dark woman with a patient anxious face, and eyes that wandered incessantly till she discovered her husband with Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. Evadne surprised the glance—entreating, reproachful, loving, helpless—what was it? The look of a woman who finds it a relief to know the worst. Evadne's heart began to contract; the girlish gladness went out of her eyes.

Mrs. Beale and Edith arrived and joined her, and Menteith came and attached himself to them at once.

"You *have* put on the blue frock," he said softly to Edith, looking down at her with animal eyes and a flush partly of gratified vanity on his face.

Edith smiled and blushed. She could not reason about him. Her wits had forsaken her.

"That's a case, I think," said Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. Several more men had joined her by this time, and they all looked across at Edith and Menteith. Half the men on the island took their opinions, especially of the women, from Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. She was forever lowering her own sex in their estimation, and they, with sheep-like docility, bowed to her dictates, and never dreamt of judging for themselves.

Mr. Price had persuaded Mr. St. John to come and look on at the dance. They were leaning now against the bulwarks beside Mrs. Guthrie Brimston, who tried to absorb them into her circle, but found them heavy. Mr. Price despised her, and Mr. St. John was occupied with his own thoughts. He had passed the night in painful reflection, and when he arose in the morning he was more than half convinced that Mr. Price had not exaggerated; but now, with the smiling surface of society under observation, and his senses both soothed and exhilarated by the animated scene and the lively music, he could not believe it. He had thought for the moment that the old American minister was a strong and disinterested philanthropist, but now he saw in him only the victim of a diseased imagination. The habit of seeing society through a haze of feeling as it should be was older than the American's entreaties that he should learn to know it as it is, and he deliberately chose to be unconvinced.

"The parson is casting covetous eyes at the Bishop's pretty ewe lamb," Colonel Beston observed to Mrs. Guthrie Brimston *sotto voce*.

A kind of bower had been made of the stern-sheets by screening them off from the main deck with an awning, and from out of this a lady, a young widow, stepped just at this moment, followed by a young man. They had been out of sight together, innocently occupied leaning over, watching the fish darting about down in the depths of the transparent water. The moment they appeared, however, the men about Mrs. Guthrie Brimston

exchanged glances of unmistakable significance, and the young widow, perceiving this, flushed crimson with indignation.

"Guilty conscience!" Major Guthrie Brimston remarked upon this, with a chuckle.

Mr. St. John had witnessed the incident and overheard the remark, and the import of both forced itself upon his attention. Mr. Price's words recurred to him: "You are right," he remarked. "They are gross of nature, these people. The animal in them predominates—at present. But the spiritual, the immortal part, is there too. It must be. It has not been cultivated, and therefore it is undeveloped. We should direct our whole energies to the cultivation of it. It is a serious subject for thought and prayer."

Mr. Price twitched his nose, and studied the physiognomies about him: "I doubt myself if the spiritual nature has been as generally diffused as you seem to imagine," he remarked in his crisp, dry way. "But if the germ of it is anywhere it is in the women. Help them out of their difficulties, and you will help the world at large. Now, there is one"—indicating Evadne, who was sitting in the same place still, quietly observant.

"I was looking at her," Mr. St. John broke in. "She seems to me to be one of those sensitive creatures, affected by sun, and wind, and rain, and all atmospheric influences, to their joy or sorrow, who will suffer a martyrdom in secret with beautiful womanly endurance."

"And be very much to blame for it!" Mr. Price interrupted. "That is your idea of her character? Now mine is different. I should say that she is a being so nicely balanced, so human, that either senses or intellect might be tipped up by the fraction of an ounce. Which is right, surely? since the senses are instrumental in sustaining nature, while the intellect helps it to perfection. And as to her beautiful womanly endurance"—he shrugged his shoulders, and turned the palms of his hands upwards—"I don't know, of course; but I am no judge of character if she

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does not prove to be one of the new women, who are just appearing among us, with a higher ideal of duty than any which men have constructed for women. I expect she will be ready to resent as an insult every attempt to impose unnecessary suffering either upon herself or her sex at large."

"Well, I hope she will not become a contentious woman," Mr. St. John said. "The way in which women are putting themselves forward just now on any subject which happens to attract their attention is quite deplorable, I think; and pushing themselves into the professions, too, and entering into rivalry with men generally; you must confess that all that is unwomanly."

"It seems to me to depend entirely upon how it is done," Mr. Price answered, judicially. "And I deny the rivalry. All that women ask is to be allowed to earn their bread honestly; but there is no doubt that the majority of men would rather see them on the streets." The old gentleman stopped, and compressed his lips into a sort of smile. "I can see," he said, "that you are dissenting from every word I say; but I am not disheartened. I feel sure that the scales will fall from your eyes some day, and then you will look back, and see clearly for yourself the way in which all moral progress has been checked for ages by the criminal repression of women."

"Repression of women!" exclaimed Captain Belliot, who caught the words just as the band stopped—"Good Lord! I beg your pardon, St. John—but it's a subject I feel very strongly upon. It's impossible to tell what the devil women will be at next. Why, I went into a hotel in Devonport for a brandy and soda just before I sailed, and I happened to remark to a fellow that was with me that something was 'a damned nuisance'; and the barmaid leant over the counter: 'A shilling, sir,' she said, with the coolest cheek in the world. 'What for?' I demanded. 'A fine, sir, for swearing,' she answered, with the most perfect assurance. 'Now, look here, young woman,' I said, 'you just shut up, for I'm not

going to stand any of your damned nonsense.' 'Two shillings, sir,' she said, in just the same tone. I wanted to argue the question, but she wouldn't say a word more. She just sent for the proprietor, and he said it was his wife's orders. She wouldn't have any female in her service insulted by bad language, and that fellow, the proprietor, actually supported his wife. What do you think of that for petticoat government? He made me pay up too, by jove! I was obliged to do it to save a row. Now, what do you think of that for a sign of the times?"

Mr. Price twitched his nose, and looked at Mr. St. John.

"Some signs of the times are hopeful, certainly," the latter said enigmatically.

"What! talking seriously in these our hours of ease?" Mrs. Guthrie Brimston broke in. "What is it all about?"

"I was just about to remark that I like a woman to *be* a woman," Captain Belliot rejoined, ogling the lady, and with the general air of being sure that she at least could have no higher ambition than to attain to his ideal. "These bold creatures who put themselves forward, as so many of them do now-a-days, are highly antipathetic to me; and if you saw them! the most awful old harridans—with voices!—'Shrieking sisterhood' doesn't half come up to it!"

Mrs. Malcomson passed at that moment.

"Should you call *her* an old harridan?" Mr. St. John asked, smiling involuntarily.

"No," the naval man was obliged to confess; "she's deuced handsome; but she presumes on her good looks, and doesn't trouble herself to be agreeable. I took her in to dinner the other night, and could hardly get a word out of her—not that she can't talk, mind you; she just wouldn't—to pique my interest, you know. You may take your oath that was it. There's no being up to women. But she'll find herself stranded, if she doesn't take care. *I* shan't bother myself to pay her any more attention; and I'm a

bad prophet if the other men in the place go out of their way to be civil to her much longer either. Besides," he said to Mr. Price, lowering his voice, but not enough to prevent Mr. St. John hearing —"her husband's jealous!" He turned up his eyes—"Game's not worth—you know!"

Again Mr. Price looked at Mr. St. John. The band struck up; another waltz began; scarcely anything else had been danced.

"Oh, this eternal one, two, three!" Mr. Price ejaculated; "how it wearies the mind! Society has sacrificed its most varied, wholesome, and graceful recreation—dancing—to this monotonous one, two, three!"

He passed on, leaving Mr. St. John to his reflections.

Captain Belliot bent before Mrs. Guthrie Brimston; "Our dance, I think," he said, offering her his arm.

She took it, perking and preening herself, and began to say something about Mrs. Malcomson in agreement with his last remark: "You are quite right about her," Mr. St. John overheard. "She is always jeering at men. She abuses you wholesale. I've heard her, often."

Captain Belliot's face darkened; but he put his arm round his partner, and they glided off together slowly.

When next they passed Mr. St. John, their faces wore a similar expression of drowsy sensuous delight, which gave them for the moment a curious likeness to each other. They looked incapable of speech or thought, or anything but the slow measure of their interwoven paces, and inarticulate emotion.

The scene made a painful impression on Mr. St. John, and he began to feel as much out of place as he looked.

"We churchmen are a failure," he thought. "We have done no good, and are barely tolerated. Poetry of the pulpit—spiritual anodyne—what is it? Something I cannot grasp; but something wrong somewhere. Is Mrs. Malcomson right? Is Mr. Price? Where are they?"

He looked about, but the dancers with parted lips and drowsy dreamy eyes, intoxicated with music and motion, floated past him in endless, regular succession, hemming him in, so that he could not move till the music stopped.

CHAPTER V.

Mrs. Malcomson had made her way over to where Evadne and Mrs. Beale were sitting. Both welcomed her cordially, and Evadne, in particular, brightened visibly when she saw her approach. She was wearied by these vapid men, who had all said the same thing, and looked at her with the same expression one after the other the whole afternoon. Mrs. Sillenger and Mr. Price were also of the party, and Mrs. Malcomson, in a merry mood, was holding forth brightly when Mr. St. John joined them.

"O yes, we have our reward, we Englishwomen," she was saying. "We religiously obey our men. We do nothing of which they disapprove. We are the meekest sheep in the world. We scorn your independent, out-spoken American women, Mr. Price; we think them bold and unwomanly, and do all we can to be as unlike them as possible. And what happens? Do our men adore us? Well, they continue to say so. But it is the Americans they marry."

Mr. Price twitched his nose and smiled.

"But, tell me, Mr. Price," Mrs. Malcomson rattled on—"The fate of nations has hung upon your opinion, and your decisions are matter of history; so kindly condescend, of your goodness and of your wisdom, to tell us if you think that '*true* womanliness' is endangered by our occupations, or the cut of our clothes—I have it!" she broke off, clasping her hands. "Make us a speech! *Do!!*"

"O, yes, *do!*" the rest exclaimed, simultaneously.

Mr. Price's mobile countenance twitched all over. He looked from one to the other, then, entering good humouredly into the jest, he struck an attitude:—"If true womanliness has been en-

dangered by occupation or the fashion of a frock in the past, it will not be so much longer, or the signs of the times are most misleading," he began, with the ease of an orator. "The old ideals are changing, and we regret them—not for their value, for they were often mischievous enough; but as a sign of change, to which, in itself, mankind has an ineradicable objection—yet these changes must take place if we are ever to progress. For myself," he continued—"I should be very sorry to say that anything which honourable women of the day consider a reform, and propose to adopt, is 'unwomanly' or 'unsexing,' until it has been thoroughly tried, and proved to be so. It sounds mere idiotcy, the thing is so obvious, when one reduces it to words, but yet neither men nor women themselves—for the most part—seem to recognize the fact that womanliness is a matter of sex, not of circumstances, occupation, or clothing; and each sex has instincts and proclivities which are peculiar to it, and do not differ to any remarkable extent even in the most diverse characters; from which we may be sure that those instincts are safe whatever happens. And as to the value of cherished 'ideals of womankind'—well, we have only to look back at many of the old ones, which had to be abandoned, and have been held up to the laughter and contempt of succeeding ages—although doubtless they were dear enough to the heart of man in their own day—to appreciate the worth of such. That little incident of Jane Austin, hiding away the precious manuscript she was engaged upon, under her plain sewing, when visitors arrived, ashamed to be caught at the 'unwomanly' occupation of writing romances, and shrinking with positive pain from the remarks which such poor foolish people as those she feared would have made about her—that little incident alone, which I remarked very early in life, has saved me from braying with the rest of the world upon this subject. If those brave women, sure of themselves and of their message, who have written in the face of all opposition, had not dared to do so, how much the poorer, and meaner, and worse we should all, men and

Jane Aust

women alike, have been to-day for want of the nourishment of strength and goodness with which they have kept us provided. And you will find it so in these questions of our day. Women are bringing a storm about their ears, but they are prepared for that, and it will not deter them; for they have an infallible prescience in these matters which men have not, and they know what they are doing and why, and could make their motives plain to us if it were not for our own stupid prejudices and density. Ah! these are critical times, but I believe what a fellow countryman of mine has already written—I believe that the women will save us. I do not fear the fate of the older peoples. I am sure that we shall not fall into nothingness from the present height of our civilization, by reason of our sensuality and vice, as all the great nations have done heretofore. The women will rebel. The women will not allow it. But"—he added with his benign smile, dropping into a lighter tone, as if he felt that he had been more serious than the occasion warranted, and addressing Mrs. Malcomson specially—"but you must not despise your personal appearance. Beauty is a great power, and it may be used for good as well as for evil. Beauty is beneficent as well as malign. Angels are always allowed to be beautiful, and our highest ideal of manhood is associated with physical as well as moral perfection. Yes! Be sure that beauty is a legitimate means of grace;—and I will venture to suggest that you who have it should use it as such." Here he was interrupted by applause. "True beauty, I mean, of course," he added, descending from the rostrum, as it were, and speaking colloquially—"not the fashionable travesty of it."

"Well, that is a piece of servility I have never been so degraded as to practise," Mrs. Malcomson exclaimed.

"Ah, my dear, it does not do to be singular," Mrs. Beale mildly remonstrated.

A dance concluded just at this moment, and Edith joined the group, followed by Sir Mosley Menteith.

The ladies looked at her as she approached with affectionate interest and admiration.

"I am always conscious of their presence," she was saying.

"Whose presence, dear?" her mother asked.

"The presence of those who love us, mother, in the other life," she said, looking out into space with great serious eyes, as if she saw something grand and beautiful, and also love-inspiring. The words and her presence changed the whole mental attitude of the group. The intellectual element subsided, the spiritual, which trenches on sensation and is warm, began to glow in their breasts. Edith was the actor now, and Mrs. Malcomson became a mere spectator. Mr. St. John was the first to appreciate the change. Edith's presence, more than her words, was enough in itself to relax the tension of pained reflection which had possessed him the whole afternoon. It was as if a draught of the sacred anodyne to which he had been so long accustomed were being held out to him, and he had drained it eagerly, to excite feeling, and to drown thought.

"Mosley does not think they are so near us as I know them to be," Edith pursued; "but I tell him, if only he would allow himself, he would perceive their presence just as I do. He says this scene is so worldly it would frighten them; but I answer that they cannot be frightened; they are incorruptible, so that there is nothing for them to fear for themselves—but they may fear for us, and when they do, we know that it is then that they are nearest to us. They come to guard us."

Menteith's glance wandered over her person as she spoke, and returned again to meet her eyes. He quite enjoyed a thrill of superstitious awe; it was an excellent *sauce piquante* to what he called his "sentiments"—by which he meant the state of his senses at the moment. He recognized in Edith no higher quality than that of innocence, which is so appetizing.

But a gentle thrill, as of an electric shock, had passed through them all, silencing them. Mrs. Beale, with a sigh, released herself

from the uneasy impression Mrs. Malcomson's words had made upon her, and felt the peace of mind, which she managed to preserve by refusing to know of anything that might disturb it and rouse her soul from its apathetic calm to the harassing point of action, restored. Mrs. Sillenger gave herself up for the moment also. Her fine nature, although highly tempered and exceedingly sensitive, was too broad to allow her to delude herself by imagining that it is right to countenance evil by ignoring it. She shrank from knowledge, but still she had the courage to possess herself of it; and, fortunately, her very sensitiveness enabled her to turn with ease from the consideration of terrible facts to the enjoyment of a fine idea.

Mrs. Malcomson and Mr. Austin Price looked at each other involuntarily. The new element was not congenial to either of them. But Mr. St. John was satisfied. His heart had expanded to the full: "Mr. Price is wrong, Mrs. Malcomson is wrong," was the new measure to which he set his thoughts. "They exaggerated the evil; they have never perceived in what the good consists. And what do they do with all their wondrous clever talk? They withdraw our attention from the contemplation of holy things only to pain and excite us; for sin must continue, and suffering must continue, and we can do no more than we have done. Example—a good example! We have only each to set one, and say nothing. Talk, talk, talk; I will listen no more to such tattle! It is mere pride of intellect, which is put to shame by the first gentle innocent girl who comes, strong in purity and faith, and simply bids us all look up! Did not our heart burn within us? Was not the worst amongst us and the most worldly moved to repent?" He looked across at Menteith, but suddenly the exaltation ceased, and his soul shot with a pang to another extreme. "He is not worthy of her—he is not worthy of her—no! no! Heaven help me to save her from such a fate!" His mind had been nourished upon inconsistencies, and he was as unconscious of any now as he was when

he preached—as he had been taught—that God orders all things for the best, and at the same time prayed Him to avert some special catastrophe.

Menteith was bending over Edith.

"I want to lunch with you to-morrow," he said. "Do let me. I love to hear you talk. Just to be near you makes a better man of me. But you can make anything you like of me; you know you can. May I come?"

Edith glanced up at him and smiled, and the young man, taking this for acquiescence, bowed and withdrew in triumph, making way for Colonel Colquhoun.

Evadne looked up at the latter and smiled too. "Shall we go?" she said.

"I came to see if you were ready," he answered, and then she rose, took leave of the friends about her, crossed the deck to where Captain Belliot, her host, was standing, shook hands with him, and left the ship. Many eyes had followed her with curiosity and interest; and many tongues made remarks about her when she was gone, expressing positive opinions with the confident conceit of mediocrity, although she had not at that time made any sign of what manner of person she really was. She had only been a week amongst them, and her mind had been in a state of passive receptivity the whole time, subject to the impressions which might be made upon it, but not itself producing any. It was her appearance that they presumed to judge her by. But her intellect had been both nourished and stimulated that afternoon, and when she went to her room at night she hunted up a manuscript book suitable for the purpose, and resumed her old habit of noting everything of interest which she had seen and heard. There were blank pages still in the old *Commonplace Book*, and she had it with her, but she never dreamt of making another note in it. She had written her last there once for all the night before her wedding, expecting to enter upon a new phase of existence; and she had indeed entered upon a

new phase, although not at all in the way she had expected; and now she felt that only a new volume would be appropriate to contain the record of it.

She ended her notes that night with a maxim which probably contained all the wisdom she had been able to extract from her late experiences:—"Just do a thing, and don't talk about it," she wrote, expressing herself colloquially. "This is the great secret of success in all enterprises. Talk means discussion, discussion means irritation, irritation means opposition; and opposition means hindrance always, whether you are right or wrong."

blem of discussion

CHAPTER VI.

Evadne settled down into her new position at once. She took charge of the household and managed it well. Colonel Colquhoun was scrupulous in matters of etiquette, and Evadne's love of order and exactitude made her punctilious too, so that there was one subject which they agreed upon perfectly, and it very soon came to be said of them that they always did the right thing. They appeared together everywhere, at the Palace receptions, the opera, entertainments on naval vessels, dinners and dances, polo and picnics, and at church. If there was one thing that Colonel Colquhoun was more particular about than another it was, in the language of his own profession, church parade. Watching Evadne to detect the first symptom of new tactics on her part, became one of the interests of his life. It wouldn't have been good form to take another man into his confidence for betting purposes, seeing that the lady was "Mrs. Colquhoun;" but a wager laid upon the chances of change in her "views" was the only zest lacking to the pleasure he took in the study of this new specimen of her sex. He used to dance a good deal himself, and danced well too, but after Evadne joined him he gave it up to a great extent, and might often have been seen leaning against a pillar in a ball-room gravely observing her. It was a kind of curiosity he suffered from, a sort of rage to make her out. He was very attentive to her at that period, treating her always with the deference due to a young lady, and for that reason she accepted his attentions gratefully, because they were delicately paid and he was really kind, but also as a matter of course. They had begun well together from the very first day, and she was soon satisfied that her position at Malta was the happiest possible. The beautiful place, the bright clear atmosphere, the lively society, all

suited her. She had none of the trials peculiar to married life to injure her health and break her spirit, none of the restrictions imposed upon a girl to limit her pleasures, and she enjoyed her independence thoroughly. But of course there were drawbacks, and the thing of all others she disliked most was being toadied. There was one pair of inveterate toadies in the garrison, Major and Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. They belonged to a species well-known in the Service, and tolerated on the principle of *Damne-toi, pourvu que tu nous amuses* Major Guthrie Brimston claimed to be one of the Morningquest family, and he had a portrait of the duke, as the head of the house, in his dressing room. It was balanced on the right by *Ecce Homo*, and on the left by the *Sistine Madonna*, but it was popularly supposed that he worshipped the duke. The pair acted the rôle of devoted husband and wife successfully, being in fact sincere in their habit of playing into each other's hands for their own selfish purposes; and people who wished for an excuse to tolerate them because they were amusing, might say of them quite truly: "Well, whatever their faults, they are certainly devoted to each other." But it was a partnership of self-interest, enhanced by a little sentimentality, and they understood it themselves, for Mrs. Guthrie Brimston confessed in a moment of expansion that she knew "Bobbie" would marry again directly if she died, and certainly she would do the same if she lost him; why shouldn't she?

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston was a nasty-minded woman, of extremely coarse conversation, and, without compromising herself, she was a fecund source of corruption in others. No younger woman of undecided character could come under her influence without being tainted in mind if not in manners. She delighted in objectionable stories, and her husband fed her fancy from the clubs liberally. Her stock-in-trade consisted for the most part of these stories, which she would retail to her lady-friends at afternoon teas. She told them remarkably well too, and knew exactly how to suit them

to palates which were only just beginning to acquire a taste for such fare, and were still fastidious. Wherever she came there was laughter among the ladies, of the high hysteric bacchante kind, not true mirth, but a loud laxity, into which they were beguiled for the moment, and which was the cause of self-distrust, disgust, and regret, upon reflection, to the better kind. If the question of motive is to be taken into account in considering the words and deeds of people, it may be confidently asserted that the Guthrie Brimstons never said a good-natured thing nor did a kind one. "I say, Minnie, if I give that sergeant of mine a goose at Christmas, I think I'll get more work out of the fellow next year," Major Guthrie Brimston said to his wife at breakfast one morning.

"Yes, do," his wife answered sympathetically. "And I say, Bobbie, I'm going to work Captain Askew a bedspread. He's an awfully useful little man."

One form of pleasantry the Gutherie Brimstons greatly affected was nick-naming. They nick-named everybody, always opprobriously, often happily in the way of hitting off a salient peculiarity; but they were not in the least aware that they were themselves the best nick-named people in the service. And they would not have liked it had they known it, for they were both exceedingly touchy. They held no feelings of another sacred, but their own supreme. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston was known among her acquaintances as "The Brimston Woman."

Her conversation bristled with vain repetitions. She was always "a worm" when asked after her health, and everything that pleased her was "pucka." She knew no language but her own, and that she spoke indifferently, her command of it being limited for the most part to slang expressions, which are the scum of language; and a few stock phrases of polite quality for special occasions. But she used the latter awkwardly, as workmen wear their Sunday clothes.

Of th Guthrie Brimston morals it is safe to say that they would

neither of them have broken either the sixth, seventh, or eighth commandments; but they bore false witness freely—not in open assertion, however, for that could be easily refuted, and fair fight was not at all in their line. But when false witness could be meanly conveyed by implication and innuendo, it formed the staple of their conversation.

"Those Guthrie Brimstons should be public prosecutors," Evadne said to Colonel Colquhoun at breakfast one morning, commenting upon some story of theirs which he had just retailed to her. "I notice when anybody's character is brought forward to be judged by society they are always Counsel for the Prosecution."

These were the people whom Colonel Colquhoun first introduced to Evadne. They amused him, and therefore he encouraged them to come to the house. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston suited him exactly. To use their own choice language, he would have given her away at any time, and she him; but that did not prevent them enjoying each other's society thoroughly.

True to her determination to make things pleasant for Colonel Colquhoun if possible, and seeing that he found these people congenial, Evadne did her best to cultivate their acquaintance for his sake. Never successfully, however. A mere tolerance was as far as she got; but even that was intermittent; and the undercurrent of criticism which streamed through her mind in their presence could never be checked. But she was slow to read character. Her impulse was always to believe in people, and to like them; and she had to acquire a knowledge of their faults painfully, bit by bit. But Colonel Colquhoun helped her here. He was an inveterate gossip, very much in the manner of Mrs. Guthrie Brimston herself, only that he was more refined when he talked to Evadne; and at breakfast, their one *tête-à-tête* meal in the day, it was his habit to tell her such club stories as were sufficiently decent, and what "he said" and "she said" of each other, upon which he would strike an average to arrive at the probable truth.

"Do you happen to know what is at the bottom of the feud between Mrs. Guthrie Brimston and Mrs. Malcomson?" he asked her one morning at breakfast.

"Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's defects of character obviously!" said Evadne, sententiously.

"Then you prefer Mrs. Malcomson?" he suggested. "Now, *I* can't get on with her a bit. She always appears to me so cold and censorious."

"Does she?" said Evadne, thoughtfully. "But she is not really so at all. She is judicial though, and sincere, which gives one a sense of security in her presence."

"But she is deadly dull," said Colonel Colquhoun.

"Oh, no!" Evadne exclaimed, smiling. "You mistake her entirely. She made me laugh immoderately only yesterday."

"I should like to see you laugh immoderately," said Colonel Colquhoun.

Major Guthrie Brimston surprised Evadne more, perhaps, than his wife did. She began by overlooking the little man somehow without in the least intending it, and as he seemed to himself to fill the horizon when in society and block out all view of anybody else, he could only believe that she did it on purpose.

He was by way of being an amateur actor, a low comedy man; but he was not sincere enough to personate any character, or be anything either on the stage or off it but his own small inartistic self; and no amount of bawling could make him an actor, though he bawled himself hoarse as a rule, mistaking sound for the science of expression. Still, it was the fashion to consider him funny. People called him "Grigsby" and "Kickleberry Brown," and laughed when he twiddled his thumbs. He was forever buffooning, and if he sat on a high stool with his toes just touching the floor, his head on one side, a sad expression of countenance, and the tips of his fingers touching, he was supposed to be doing something amusing, and the effort would be rewarded with laughter, in which,

however, Evadne could not join. These performances outraged her sense of the dignity of poor human nature, which it is easy enough to discount, but very difficult to maintain; and made her sorry for him.

His hands were another offence to her. They were fat and podgy, with short pointed fingers, indicative of animalism and ill-nature, the opposite of all that is refined and beautiful—truly of necessity an offence to her.

It was at first that she had overlooked him, but after a time, when she began to know him better, the little fat funny man magnetized her attention. She could not help gravely considering him wherever she met him, and wondering about him—wondering about them both in fact. She wondered, for one thing, why they were so fond of eating and drinking, her own taste in those matters being of the simplest description.

"I never deny myself anything," said Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. And she looked like it.

Evadne wondered also at their meanness when she saw them saving money by borrowing the carriages of people whom she had heard them class as "Nothing but shopkeepers, you know. We shouldn't speak to them anywhere else." And whom they ridiculed habitually for the mispronunciation of words, and for accents unmistakably provincial.

What could Evadne have in common with these flippant people—scum themselves, for ever on the surface, incapable even of seeing beneath, their every idea and motive a falsification of something divine in life or thought? They did not even speak the same language. To their insidious slang she opposed a smooth current of perfect English, which seemed to reflect upon the inferior quality of their own expressions and led to mutual embarrassment. Evadne meant every word she uttered, and was careful to choose the one which should best express her meaning. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's meanings, on the other hand, told best when half

concealed. Another difficulty was, too, that Evadne's clear decided speech had the effect of exposing innuendo and insincerity, and making both "bad form," which, socially speaking, is a much more terrible stigma to bear than an accusation of dishonesty, however well authenticated. And even their very manner of expressing legitimate mirth was not the same, for Mrs. Guthrie Brimston laughed aloud, while Evadne's laugh was soundless.

Evadne suffered when she found herself being toadied by these people. She said nothing, however. They were Colonel Colquhoun's friends, and she felt herself forced to be civil to them so long as he chose to bring them to the house. And they were besides an evil out of which good came to her quickly. For as soon as she understood their manners and their modes of thought, she felt her heart fill with earnest self-congratulation: "If these are the kind of people whom Colonel Colquhoun prefers," was her mental ejaculation, "what an escape I have had! Thank heaven, he is nothing to me!"

CHAPTER VII.

Society in Malta during the sunny winter is very much like the society of a London season, only that it is more representative because there are fewer specimens of each class, and those who do go out are like delegates charged with a concentrated extract of the peculiarities and prejudices of their own set. When Evadne arrived, at the beginning of the winter, the rest of the party had already assembled. There were naval people, military, commercial, landed gentry, clerical, Royalty, and beer. The principal representative of this latter interest was a lady whom Mrs. Guthrie Brimston called the Queen of Beer-sheba because of her splendid habiliments, and this is a fair specimen of Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's wit.

Evadne was received in silence, as it were, for abroad the question is not so generally "Who are you?" as at home, but "What are you like?" or "How much can you do for us?" and people were waiting till she showed her colours. She never did show any decided colours of the usual kind, however. She was not "a beauty beyond doubt"—some people did not admire her in the least. She was not "the same" or "nice" to everybody, for she had strong objections to certain people, and showed that she had; and she was not "by way of entertaining" at all, although she did "as much of that kind of thing" as other ladies of her station. But yet, with all these negatives, she made a distinct impression on the place as soon as she appeared. It sounds paradoxical, but she was celebrated at once for her silence and for what she had said. The weight of her occasional utterances told. And if it were fair to call Mrs. Guthrie Brimston Counsel for the Prosecution, Evadne might

have been set up as Counsel for the Defence, for it so happened that when she did speak in those early days it was usually in defence of something or somebody—people, principles, absent friends, *or* enemies; anything unfairly attacked. Generally, when she said anything cutting, it was so cleanly incisive you hardly knew for a moment where you were injured. She did it like the executioner of that Eastern potentate who decapitated a criminal with such skill and with so sharp an instrument that the latter did not know when he was executed and went on talking, his head remaining *in situ* until he sneezed. There was one old gentleman, Lord Groome, whom she had to dispose of several times in that way without, however, being able to get rid of him quite, because his stupidity was a hardy perennial which came up again all the fresher and stronger for having been lopped. He was a degenerated ridiculous-looking old object, a man with the most touching confidence in his tailor, which the latter invariably betrayed by never making him a garment that fitted him. He had begun by admiring Evadne, and had endeavoured to pay his senile court to her with fulsome flatteries in the manner approved of his kind;—but he ended by being afraid of her.

His first collision with Evadne was on the subject of "those low Radicals," against whom he had been launching out in unmeasured terms. "Why low, because Radical?" she asked. "I should have thought, among so many, that some must be honest men, and nothing honest can be low."

"I tell you, my dear young lady," he replied, his temper tried by her words, but controlled by her appearance, "I tell you, the Radicals are a low lot, the whole of them."

"Ah. Then I suppose you know them all," she said, looking at him thoughtfully.

The want of intelligence in the community at large was made painfully apparent by the stories of her peculiar opinions which were freely circulated and seldom suspected. The Queen of Beer-

sheba declared that Evadne approved of the frightful cruelties which the people inflicted on the nobles during the Reign of Terror, that she had heard her say so herself.

What Evadne did say was: "The revolutionary excesses were inevitable. They came at the swing of the pendulum which the nobles themselves had set in motion; and if you consider the sufferings that had been inflicted on the people, and their long endurance of them, you will be more surprised to think that they kept their reason so long than that they should have lost it at last. '*Pour la populace ce n'est jamais par envié d'attaquer qu'elle se soulève, mais par impatience de souffrir.*' "

But the French Revolution is an abstract subject of impersonal interest compared with the Irish question at the present time, and the commotion which was caused by the misrepresentation of Evadne's remarks about the Reign of Terror was insignificant compared with what followed when her feeling for Ireland had been misinterpreted. She gave out the text which called forth the second series of imbecilities during a dinner party at her own house one night, her old friend, Lord Groome, supplying her with a peg upon which to hang her conclusions, by making an intemperate attack upon the Irish.

CHAPTER VIII.

Captain Belliot was not one of the guests at that dinner-party of Evadne's, but he happened to call on Mrs. Guthrie Brimston next day, and finding her alone, had tea with her *tête-à-tête*; and of course she entertained him with her own version of what had occurred the night before.

"The dinner itself was very good," she said. "All their dinners are, you know. But Mrs. Colquhoun was"—she raised her hands, and nodded her head—"well, just *too* awful!" she concluded.

"Indeed!" he observed, leaning back in his chair, crossing his legs, and settling himself for a treat generally. "You surprise me, because she has never struck me as being the kind of person who would set the Thames on fire in any way."

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston smiled enigmatically: "Do you admire her very much?" she asked with the utmost suavity.

"Well," he answered, warily, "she is rather peculiar in appearance, don't you know."

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston drew her own conclusions, not from the words, but from the wariness, and proceeded: "It is not in appearance only that she is peculiar, then. She astonished us all last night, I can assure you."

"How?" he asked, to fill up an artistic pause.

"By the things she said!" Mrs. Guthrie Brimston answered, with an affectation of reserve.

"Now you do surprise me!" Captain Belliot declared. "Because I cannot imagine her saying anything but 'How do you do?' and 'Good-bye,' 'Yes' and 'No,' 'Indeed!' 'Please,'

'Thank you,' and 'Do you think so?' On my honour, those words are all I have ever heard her utter, and I have met her as often as anybody on the island. Now, *I* like a woman with something in her," he concluded, ogling Mrs. Guthrie Brimston.

"Well, then, she must have been hibernating, or something, when she first came out, for she has begun to talk now with a vengeance," Mrs. Guthrie Brimston answered smartly.

"But what has she been saying?" he asked, with great curiosity.

"I simply cannot tell you!" she answered, pointedly.

"So bad as that?" he said, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes. Things that *no* woman should have said," she subjoined with emphasis.

There was, of course, only one conclusion to be drawn from this, and it would have been drawn at the club later in the day inevitably even if other ladies had not also declared that Mrs. Colquhoun had said such dreadful things that they really could not repeat them. It is true that some of the men of the party mentioned the matter in a different way, and one, when asked what it was exactly that Mrs. Colquhoun had said, even answered, casually: "Oh, some rot about the Irish question!" But the explanation made no impression, and was immediately forgotten. Captain Belliot himself was so excited by the news that he hurried away from Mrs. Guthrie Brimston as soon as he could possibly excuse himself without giving offence, and went at once to call upon Evadne in order to inspect her from this unexpected point of view.

He found her talking tranquilly to Mr. St. John, Edith, and Mrs. Beale; and although he sat for half an hour, she never said a word of the slightest significance. That, however, proved nothing either one way or the other, and he left her with his confidence in Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's insinuations quite unshaken, his theory being that the women whose minds are in reality the most corrupt are as a rule very carefully guarded in their conversation, although,

of course, they always betray themselves sooner or later by some such slip as that with which he credited Evadne—an idea which he proceeded to expand at the club with great effect.

Evadne's reputation was in danger after that, and she risked it still further, by acting in defiance of the public opinion of the island generally, in order to do what she conceived to be an act of justice.

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston went to her one morning, brimming over with news.

"My husband has just received a letter from a friend of his in India, Major Lopside, telling him to warn us all not to call on Mrs. Clarence, who has just joined your regiment," she burst out. "I thought I ought to let you know at once. She met her husband in India, Major Lopside says, and it was a run-away match. But that is not all. For he says he knows for a fact that they travelled together for three hundred miles down country, sleeping at all the dak bungalows by the way, before they *were* married!"

"Waiting until they came to some place where they could be married, I suppose?" Evadne suggested.

Mrs. Guthrie Brimston laughed. "Taking a sort of trial trip, I should say!" she ventured. "But it was very good of Major Lopside to let us know. I should certainly have called if he hadn't.

"You make me feel sick——" Evadne began.

"I knew I should!" Mrs. Guthrie Brimston interposed, triumphantly.

"Sick at heart," Evadne pursued, "to think of an Englishman being capable of writing a letter for the express purpose of ruining a woman's reputation."

Mrs. Brimston changed countenance: "*We* think it was awfully kind of Major Lopside to let us know," she repeated, perking.

"Well, *I* think," said Evadne, her slow utterance giving double weight to each word—"*I* think he must be an exceedingly low

person himself, and one probably whom Mrs. Clarence has had to snub. He could only have been actuated by animus when he wrote that letter. One may be quite sure that a man is never disinterested when he does a low thing."

"It was a private letter written for our *private* information," Mrs. Guthrie Brimston asserted. She was ruffled, considerably, by this time.

"No, not written for your private information," Evadne rejoined, "or if it were, you are making a strange use of it. I have no doubt, however, that it was designed for the very purpose to which you are putting it—the purpose of spoiling the Clarences' chance of happiness in a new place. And it is precisely to the 'private' character of the document that I take exception. If this Major Lopside has any accusation to bring against Captain Clarence, he should have done it publicly, and not in this underhand manner. He should have written to Colonel Colquhoun."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Guthrie Brimston, her native rudeness getting the better of her habitual caution at this provocation. "Major Lopside would not be fool enough to report a man to his own chief. Why, he might get the worst of it himself if there were an inquiry."

"Exactly," Evadne answered. "He thinks it safer to stab in the dark. Will you kindly excuse me? I am very busy this morning, writing my letters for the mail. But many thanks for letting me know about this malicious story."

There was nothing for it but to retire after this, which Mrs. Guthrie Brimston did, discomfited, and with an uneasy feeling, which had been growing upon her lately, that Evadne was not quite the nonentity for which she had mistaken her.

Colonel Colquhoun had lunched at mess that day, and Evadne did not see him until quite late when she met him on the Barraca with the Guthrie Brimstons.

It was the hour when the Barraca is thronged, and Evadne had gone with a purpose, expecting to find him there.

He left the Guthrie Brimstons and joined her as soon as she appeared.

"I have been home to look for you," he said, "but I found that you had gone out without an escort, no one knew where."

"I have been making calls," Evadne answered—"and making Mrs. Clarence's acquaintance also. Oh, there she is, leaning against that arch with her husband. Have you met her yet? Let me introduce you. She is charmingly pretty, but very timid."

Colonel Colquhoun's brow contracted.

"I thought Mrs. Guthrie Brimston had warned you——"

"*Warned* me?" Evadne quietly interposed. "Mrs. Guthrie Brimston brought me a scandalous story which had the effect of making me call on Mrs. Clarence at once. I suppose you have seen this precious Major Lopside's letter?"

"Yes," he answered. "And I am sorry you called without consulting me. You really ought to have consulted me. It will make it doubly awkward for you, having called. But we'll rush the fellow. I'll make him send in his papers at once."

"Why is it awkward for me—what is awkward for me?" Evadne asked.

"Why, having a lady in the regiment you can't know, to begin with, and having to cut her after calling upon her," he answered. "If you would only condescend to consult me occasionally, I could save you from this kind of thing."

"But why may I not countenance Mrs. Clarence?"

"You cannot countenance a woman there is a story about," he responded, decidedly.

"But where is the proof of the story?" she asked.

Colonel Colquhoun reflected: "A man wouldn't write a letter of that kind without some grounds for it," he said.

"We must find out what the exact grounds were," said Evadne.

"Well, you see none of the other ladies are speaking to her,"

Colonel Colquhoun observed, with the air of one whose argument is unanswerable.

"They are sheep," said Evadne, "but they can be led aright as well as astray, I suppose. We'll see, at all events. But don't let me keep you from your friends. I want to speak to Mrs. Malcomson."

There was a quiet sense of power about Evadne when she chose to act which checked opposition at the outset, and put an end to argument. Colonel Colquhoun looked disheartened, but like a gentleman he acted at once on the hint to go. He did not rejoin the Guthrie Brimstons, however, but sat alone under one of the arches of the Barraca, turning his back on the entrancing view of the Grand Harbour, a jewel of beauty, set in silence.

Colonel Colquhoun was watching. He saw Mrs. Clarence turn from the strange Christian women who eyed her coldly, and lean over the parapet; he saw the influence of the scene upon her mind in the sweet and tranquil expression which gradually replaced the half-pained, half-puzzled look her face had been wearing. He saw her husband standing beside her, but with his back to the parapet, looking at the people gloomily, and with resentment, but also half-puzzled, perceiving that his wife was being slighted, and wondering why.

Colonel Colquhoun saw Mrs. Guthrie Brimston also, going from one group to another with the peculiar ducking-forward gait of a high-hipped, high-shouldered woman, followed by her little fat "Bobbie," smiling herself, and met with smiles which were followed by noisy laughter; and he noticed, too, that invariably the eyes of those she addressed turned upon Mrs. Clarence, and their faces grew hard and unfriendly; and not one person to whom she spoke looked the happier or the better for the attention when she left them. Colonel Colquhoun, with a set countenance, slowly curled his blond moustache. Only his eyes moved, following Mrs. Guthrie Brimston for awhile, and then returning to Evadne. She

was speaking to Mrs. Malcomson, and the latter looked, as she listened, at Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. Then Evadne took her arm, and the two sauntered over to Mrs. Beale—an important person, who always adopted the last charitable opinion she heard expressed positively, and acted upon it.

It was Mrs. Malcomson who spoke to her, and the effect of what she said was instantaneous, for the old lady bridled visibly, and then set out, accompanied by Edith, with the obvious intention of heading the relief party herself that very minute. She stationed herself beside Mrs. Clarence, and stood, patting the poor girl's hand with motherly tenderness; smiling at her, and saying conventional nothings in a most cordial manner.

Colonel Colquhoun had watched these proceedings, understanding them perfectly, but remaining impassive as at first. And Mrs. Guthrie Brimston had also seen signs of the re-action the moment it set in, and shown her astonishment. She was not accustomed to be checked in full career when it pleased her to be down upon another woman, and she didn't quite know what to do. She looked first at Colonel Colquhoun, inviting him to rejoin her, but he ignored the glance; and she therefore found herself obliged either to give him up or to go to him. She decided to go to him, and set out, attended by her own "Bobbie." By the time she had reached him, however, the last act of the little play had begun. Evadne was standing apart with Captain Clarence, looking up at him and speaking—with her usual unimpassioned calm, to judge by the expression of her face, but Mrs. Guthrie Brimston had begun to realize that when Evadne did speak it was to some purpose, and she watched now and awaited the event in evident trepidation.

"She's not telling him! She never would dare to!" slipped from her unawares.

"They are coming this way," Colonel Colquhoun observed, significantly.

"I shall go!" cried Mrs. Guthrie Brimston. "Come, Bobbie!"

It was too late, however; they were surrounded.

"Be good enough to remain a moment," Captain Clarence exclaimed authoritatively. Then turning to Colonel Colquhoun, he said: "I understand that these people have in their possession a letter containing a foul slander against my wife and myself, and that they have been using it to injure us in the estimation of everybody here. If it be possible, sir, I should like to have an official inquiry instituted into the circumstances of my marriage at once."

"Very well, Captain Clarence," Colonel Colquhoun answered ceremoniously.

"I'll apologise," Major Guthrie Brimston gasped.

But Captain Clarence turned on his heel, and walked back to his wife as if he had not heard.

How the inquiry was conducted was not made public. But when it was *said* that the Clarences had been cleared, and *seen* that the Guthrie Brimstons had not suffered, Society declared it to have been a case of six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, which left matters exactly where they were before. Those who chose to believe in the calumny continued to do so, and *vice versâ*, the only difference being that Evadne's generous action in the matter brought blame upon herself from one set, and also—what was worse—brought her into a kind of vogue with another which would have caused her to rage had she understood it. For the story that she had "said things which no woman could repeat," added to the fact that she was seen everywhere with a lady whose reputation had been attacked, made men of a certain class feel a sudden interest in her. "Birds of a feather," they maintained; then spoke of her slightingly in public places, and sent her bouquets innumerable.

Her next decided action, however, put an effectual stop to this nuisance.

CHAPTER IX.

Colonel Colquhoun came to Evadne one day, and asked her if she would not go out.

She put down her work, rose at once, smiling, and declared that she should be delighted.

There had been a big regimental guest night the day before, and Colonel Colquhoun had dined at mess, and was consequently irritable. Acquiescence is as provoking as opposition to a man in that mood, and he chose to take offence at Evadne's evident anxiety to please him.

"She makes quite a business of being agreeable to me," he reflected while he was waiting for her to put her hat on. "She requires me to be on my good behaviour as if I were a schoolboy out for a half-holiday, and thinks it her duty to entertain me by way of reward, I suppose."

And thereupon he set himself determinedly against being entertained, and accordingly, when Evadne rejoined him and made some cheerful remark, he responded to it with a sullen grunt which did small credit to his manners either as a man or a gentleman, and naturally checked the endeavour for the moment so far as she was concerned.

As he did not seem inclined to converse, she showed her respect for his mood by being silent herself. But this was too much for him. He stood it as long as he could, and then he burst out: "Do you never talk?"

"I don't know!" she said, surprised. "Do you like talkative women?"

"I like a woman to have something to say for herself."

While Evadne was trying in her slow way to see precisely what he meant by this little outbreak, they met one of the officers of the Regiment escorting a very showy young woman, and as everybody in Malta knows everybody else in society, and this was a stranger, Evadne asked—more, however, to oblige Colonel Colquhoun by making a remark than because she felt the slightest curiosity on the subject: "Who is that with Mr. Finchley? A new arrival, I suppose?"

"Oh, only a girl he brought out from England with him," Colonel Colquhoun answered, coarsely, staring hard at the girl as he spoke, and forgetting himself for once in his extreme irritability. "He ought not to bring her here, though," he added carelessly.

Mr. Finchley had passed them, hanging his head, and pretending not to see them. Evadne flushed crimson.

"Do you mean that he brought out a girl he is not married to, and is living with her here?" she asked.

"That is the position exactly," Colonel Colquhoun rejoined, "and I'll see him in the orderly room to-morrow and interview him on the subject. He has no business to parade her publicly where the other fellows' wives may meet her; and I'll not have it."

Evadne said no more. But there was a ball that evening, and during an interval between the dances, when she was standing beside Colonel Colquhoun and several ladies in a prominent position and much observed, for it was just at the time when she was at the height of her unenviable vogue—Mr. Finchley came up and asked her to dance.

She had drawn herself up proudly as he approached, and having looked at him deliberately, she turned her back upon him.

There was no mistaking her intention, Colonel Colquhoun's hand paused on its way to twirl his blond moustache, and there was a perceptible sensation in the room.

Captain Belliot shook his head with the air of a man who has

been deceived in an honest endeavour to make the best of a bad lot, and is disheartened.

"She took me in completely," he said. "I should never have guessed she was that kind of woman. What is society coming to?"

"She must be deuced nasty-minded herself, you know, or she wouldn't have known Finchley had a woman out with him," said Major Livingston, whom Mrs. Guthrie Brimston called "Lady Betty" because of his nice precise little ways with ladies.

"Oh, trust a prude!" said Captain Brown. "They spy out all the beastliness that's going."

Colonel Colquhoun did not take this last proof of Evadne's peculiar views at all well. He was becoming even more sensitive as he grew older to what fellows say or think, and he was therefore considerably annoyed by her conduct, so much so, indeed, that he actually spoke to her upon the subject himself.

"People will say that I have married Mrs. Grundy," he grumbled.

"I suppose so," she answered tranquilly. "You see I do not feel at all about these things as you do. I wish you *could* feel as I do, but seeing that you cannot, it is fortunate, is it not, that we are not really married?"

"It sounds as if you were congratulating yourself upon the fact of our position," he said.

"But don't *you* congratulate yourself?" she answered in surprise. "Surely, you have had as narrow an escape as I had? you would have been miserable too?"

He made no answer. It is perhaps easier to resign an inferior husband than a superior wife.

But he let the subject drop then for the moment; only for the moment, however, for later in the day he had a conversation with Mrs. Guthrie Brimston.

That little business about the Clarences had not interrupted the

intimacy between Colonel Colquhoun and the Guthrie Brimstons. How could it? Mrs. Guthrie Brimston was as amusing as ever, and Colonel Colquhoun remained in command of a crack regiment, and was a handsome man, well set-up and soldier-like into the bargain. It was Evadne who had caused all the annoyance, and consequently there was really no excuse for a rupture—especially as Evadne met the Guthrie Brimstons herself with as much complacency as ever. Colonel Colquhoun had gone to Mrs. Guthrie Brimston's that afternoon for the purpose of discussing the advisability of getting some experienced woman of the world to speak to Evadne with a view to putting a stop to her nonsense, and the consultation ended with an offer from Mrs. Guthrie Brimston to undertake the task herself. Her interference, however, produced not the slightest effect on Evadne.

CHAPTER X.

Those who can contemplate certain phases of life and still believe that there is a Divine Providence ordering all things for the best, will see its action in the combination of circumstances which placed Evadne in the midst of a community where she must meet the spirit of evil face to face continually, and, since acquiescence was impossible, forced her to develop her own strength by steady and determined resistance. But her position was more than difficult; it was desperate. There was scarcely one, even amongst the most indulgent of her friends, who did not misunderstand her and blame her at times. She kept the pendulum of public opinion swaying vehemently during the whole of her first season in Malta. Major Livingston shook his head about her from the first.

"I can't get on with her," he said, as if the fact were not at all to her credit. He was a survival himself, one of the old fashioned kind of military men who were all formed on the same plan; they got their uniform, their politics, their vices, and their code of honour cut and dried, upon entering the Service, and occasionally left the latter with their agents to be taken care of for them while they served.

Evadne gave offence to representatives of the next generation also. Seeing that she was young and attractive, it was clearly her duty to think only of meriting their attention, and when she was discovered time after time during a ball hanging quite affectionately on the arm of Mr. Austin B. Price, "a dried up old American," and pacing the balcony to and fro with him in the moonlight by the hour together when there were plenty of young fellows who wanted to dance with her; and when, worse still, it was observed

that she was serenely happy on these occasions, listening to Mr. Austin B. Price with a smile on her lips, or even and actually talking herself, why, they declared she wasn't womanly—she couldn't be !

Mr. St. John was one of the friends who very much deprecated Evadne's attitude at this time. He did not speak to her himself, being diffident and delicate, but he went to Mr. Price, who was, he knew, quite in her confidence.

"You have influence with her, *do* restrain her;" he said. "No good is done by making herself the subject of common gossip."

"My dear fellow," Mr. Price replied, "she is quite irresponsible. Certain powers of perception have developed in her to a point beyond that which has been reached by the people about her, and she is forced to act up to what she perceives to be right. They blame her because they cannot see so far in advance of themselves, and she has small patience with them for not at once recognizing the use and propriety of what comes so easily and naturally to her. So far, it is easy enough to understand her, surely? But further than that it is impossible to go, because she is as yet an incomplete creature in a state of progression. With fair play, she should continue on, but, on the other hand, her development may be entirely arrested. It is curious that priesthoods, while preaching perfection, invariably do their best to stop progress. You will never believe that any change is for the better until it is accomplished, and there is no denying it, and so you hinder for ever when you should be the first to help and encourage; and you are bringing yourselves into disrepute by it. Just try and realize the difference between the position and powers of judgment of women now and that which obtained among them at the beginning of the century! And think, too, of the hard battles they have had to fight for every inch of the way they have made, and of the desperate resolution with which they have stood their ground, always advancing, never receding, and with supernumeraries ready, whenever one falls out exhausted,

to step in and take her place, however dangerous it may be. Oh, I tell you, man, women are grand!—grand!"

"But I don't see how we have imposed upon women," Mr. St. John objected.

"I can show you in a minute," Mr. Price rejoined, twitching his face. "It was the submission business, you know, to begin with. Not so many years ago we men had only to insist that a thing was either right or necessary, and women believed it, and meekly acquiesced in it. We told them they were fools to us, and they believed it; and we told them they were angels of light and purity and goodness whose mission it was to marry and reform us, and above all pity and sympathize with us when we defiled ourselves, because we couldn't help it, and they believed it. We told them they didn't really care for moral probity in a man, and they believed it. We told them they had no brains, that they were illogical, unreasoning, and incapable of thought in the true sense of the word, and, by jove! they took all that for granted, such was their beautiful confidence in us, and never even *tried* to think—until one day, when, quite by accident, I feel sure, one of them found herself arriving at logical conclusions involuntarily. Her brain was a rich soil, although untilled, which began to teem of its own accord; and that, my dear fellow, was the beginning of the end of the old state of things. But I believe myself that all this unrest and rebellion against the old established abuses amongst women is simply an effort of nature to improve the race. The men of the present day will have a bad time if they resist the onward impulse; but, in any case, the men of the future will have good reason to arise and call their mothers blessed. Good day to you. Don't interfere with Evadne, and don't think. Just watch—and—and pray if you like!" The old gentleman smiled and twitched his face when he had spoken, and they shook hands and parted in complete disagreement, as was usually the case.

CHAPTER XI.

When any difference of opinion arose between Evadne and Colonel Colquhoun they discussed it tranquilly as a rule, and with much forbearance upon either side, and having done so, the subject was allowed to drop. They each generally remained of the same opinion still, but neither would interfere with the other afterwards. Had he had anything in him; could he have made her feel him to be superior in any way, she must have grown to love him with passion once more; but as it was, he remained only an erring fellow creature in her estimation, for whom she grew gradually to feel both pity and affection, it is true; but towards whom her attitude generally speaking was that of a most polite indifference.

She had her moments of rage, however. There were whole days when her patient tolerance of the position gave way, and one wild longing to be free pursued her; but she made no sign on such occasions, only sat

> "With lips severely placid, felt the knot
> Climb in her throat, and with her foot unseen,
> Crushed the wild passion out against the floor
> Beneath the banquet, where the meats become
> As wormwood"—

and uttered not a word. Yet there was nothing in Colonel Colquhoun's manner, nothing in his treatment of her, in the least objectionable; what she suffered from was simply contact with an inferior moral body, and the intellectual starvation inevitable in constant association with a mind too shallow to contain any sort of mental sustenance for the sharing.

The pleasing fact that he and Evadne were getting on very well

together dawned on him quite suddenly one day; but it was she who perceived that the absence of friction was entirely due to the restriction which polite society imposes upon the manners of a gentleman and a lady in ordinary everyday intercourse when their bond is not the bond of man and wife.

"I should say we are very good friends, Evadne, shouldn't you?" he remarked, in a cheerful tone.

"Yes," she responded cordially.

They were both in evening dress when this occurred—she sitting beside a table with one bare arm resting upon it, toying with the tassel of her fan; he standing with his back to the fireplace, looking down upon her. It was after dinner, and they were lingering over their coffee until it should be time to stroll in for an hour or so to the opera.

"By-the-way," he said after a pause, "have you read any of those books I got for you—any of the French ones?"

Her face set somewhat, but she looked up at him, and answered without hesitation: "Yes. I have read the *Nana*, *La Terre*, *Madame Bovary*, and *Sapho*."

She stopped there, and he waited in vain for her to express an opinion.

"Well," he said at last, "what has struck you most in them?"

"The suffering, George," she exclaimed—"*the awful, needless suffering!*"

It was a veritable cry of anguish, and as she spoke, she threw her arms forward upon the table beside which she was sitting, laid her face down on them, and burst into passionate sobs.

Colonel Colquhoun bit his lip. He had not meant to hurt the girl—in that way, at all events. He took a step towards her, hesitated, not knowing quite what to do; and finally left the room.

When next Evadne went to her bookshelves she discovered a great gap. The whole of those dangerous works of fiction had disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

Colonel Colquhoun had gradually fallen into the habit of riding out or walking alone with Mrs. Guthrie Brimston continually, and of course people began to make much of the intimacy, and to talk of the way he neglected his poor young wife; but the only part of the arrangement which was not agreeable to the latter was having to entertain Major Guthrie Brimston sometimes during his lady's absence, and the lady herself when she stayed to tea. For there was really no harm in the flirtation, as Evadne was acute enough to perceive. Mrs. Guthrie Brimston was one of those women who pride themselves upon having a train of admirers, and are not above robbing other women of the companionship of their husbands in order to swell their own following; while many men rather affect the society of these ladies because "They are not a bit stiff, you know," and allow a certain laxity of language which is particularly piquant to the masculine mind when the complacent lady is no relative and is really "all right herself, you know."

Mrs. Gutherie Brimston was "really quite right, you know." She and her husband understood each other perfectly, while Evadne, on her part, was content to know that Colonel Colquhoun was so innocently occupied. For she was beginning to think of him as a kind of big child, of weak moral purpose, for whose good behaviour she would be held responsible, and it was a relief when Mrs. Guthrie Brimston took him off her hands.

No healthy-minded human being likes to dwell on the misery which another is suffering or has suffered, and it is, therefore, a comfort to know that upon the whole, at this period of her life, Evadne was not at all unhappy. She had her friends, her pleasures,

and her occupations; the latter being multifarious. The climate of Malta, at that time of the year, suited her to perfection, and the picturesque place, with its romantic history, and strange traditions, was in itself an unfailing source of interest and delight to her.

Dear old Mrs. Beale had kept her heart from hardening into bitterness just by loving her, and giving her a good motherly hug now and then. When Evadne was inclined to rail she would say: "Pity the wicked people, my dear, pity them. Pity does more good in the world than blame, however well deserved. You may soften a sinner by pitying him, but never by hard words; and once you melt into the mood of pity yourself, you will be able to endure things which would otherwise drive you mad."

Mrs. Malcomson helped her too. During that first burst of unpopularity which she brought upon herself by daring to act upon her own perception of right and wrong in defiance of the old established injustices of society, when even the most kindly disposed hung back suspiciously, not knowing what dangerous sort of a new creature she might eventually prove herself to be—at the earliest mutter of that storm, Mrs. Malcomson came forward boldly to support Evadne; and so also did Mrs. Sillinger.

Mr. St. John was another of Evadne's particular friends. He had injured his health by excessive devotion to his duties, and been sent to Malta in the hope that the warm bright climate might strengthen his chest, which was his weak point, and restore him; but it was not really the right place for him, and he had continued delicate throughout the winter, and required little attentions which Evadne was happily able to pay him; and in this way their early acquaintance had rapidly ripened into intimacy. He was a clever man in his own profession, of exceptional piety, but narrow, which did not, however, prevent him from being congenial to one side of Evadne's nature. She had never doubted her religion. It was a thing apart from all her knowledge and opinions, something to be *felt*, essentially, not

known as anything but a pleasurable and elevating sensation, or considered except in the way of referring all that is noble in thought and action to the divine nature of its origin and influence; and she preserved her deep reverence for the priesthood intact, and found both comfort and spiritual sustenance in their ministrations. She still leant to Ritual, and Mr. St. John was a Ritualist, so that they had much in common; and while she was able to pay him many attentions and show him great kindness, for the want of which, as a bachelor and an invalid in a foreign place, he must have suffered in his feeble state of health, he had it in his power to take her out of herself. She said she was always the better for a talk with him; and certainly the delicate dishes and wines and care generally which she lavished upon him, had as much to do as the climate with the benefit he derived from his sojourn in Malta. They remained firm friends always; and many years afterwards, when he had become one of the most distinguished bishops on the bench, he was able, from the knowledge and appreciation of her character which he had gained in these early days, to do her signal service, and save her from much stupid misrepresentation.

And last, among her friends, although one of the greatest, was Mr. Austin B. Price. Evadne owed this kind, large-hearted, chivalrous gentleman much gratitude, and repaid him with much affection. He was really the first to discover that there was anything remarkable about her; and it was to him she also owed a considerable further development of her originally feeble sense of humour.

Mr. Price's first impression that she was an uncommon character had been confirmed by one of those rapid phrases of hers which contained in a few words the embodiment of feelings familiar to a multitude of people who have no power to express them. She delivered it the third time they met, which happened to be at another of those afternoon dances, held on board the Flag Ship on that occasion. Colonel Colquhoun liked her to show herself

although she did not dance in the afternoon, so she was there, sitting out, and Mr. Price was courteously endeavouring to entertain her.

"It surprises me," he said, "as an American, to find so little inclination in your free and enlightened country to do away with your—politically speaking—useless and extremely expensive Royal House."

"Well, you see," said Evadne, "we are deeply attached to our Royal House, and we can well afford to keep it up."

It was this glimpse of the heart of the proud and patriotic little aristocrat, true daughter of a nation great enough to disdain small economies, and not accustomed to do without any luxury to which it is attached, that appealed to Mr. Price, pleasing the pride of race with which we contemplate any evidence of strength in our fellow-creatures, whether it be strength of purpose or strength of passion, more than it shocked his utilitarian prejudices.

When it was evident that Evadne had brought a good deal that was disagreeable upon herself by her action in the matter of the Clarences, old Mrs. Beale came to her one day in all kindliness to tell her the private opinion of the friends who had stood by her loyally in public.

"I am sure you did it with the best motive, my dear, and it was bravely done," the old lady said, patting her hand; "but be advised by those who know the world, and have had more experience than you have had. Don't interfere again. Interference does no good; and people will say such things if you do! They will make you pay for your disinterestedness."

"But it seems to me that the question is not *Shall I have to pay?* but *Am I not bound to pay?*" Evadne rejoined. "Neglecting to do what is, to me, obviously the right thing, and making no endeavour but such as is sure to be applauded—working in the hope of a reward, in fact, seems to me to be a terribly old-fashioned idea, a miserable remnant of the bribery and corruption of the

earthly? for heavenly?

Dark Ages, when the people were kept in such dense ignorance that they could be treated like children, and told if they were good they should have this for a prize, but if they were bad they should be punished."

"You are quite right, I am sure, my dear," rejoined Mrs. Beale; "but all the same, I don't think I should interfere again, if I were you."

"It seems that I have not done the Clarences any good," Evadne murmured one day to Mr. Price.

"Well, that was hardly to be expected," he answered—at which she raised her eyebrows interrogatively. "Calumnies which attach themselves to a name in a moment take a lifetime to remove, because such a large majority of people prefer to think the worst of each other. The Clarences will have to live down their own little difficulty. And what you have to consider now is, not how little benefit they have derived from your brave defence of them, but how many other people you may have saved from similar attacks. I fancy it will be some time before people will venture to spread scandals of the kind here in Malta again. You have taught them a lesson; you may be sure of that; so don't be disheartened and lose sight of the final result in consideration of immediate consequences. The hard part of teaching is that the teacher himself seldom sees anything of the good he has done."

It was very evident at this time that Evadne's view of life was becoming much too serious for her own good; and, perceiving this, Mr. Price let fall some words one day in the course of conversation which she afterwards treasured in her heart to great advantage. "It is our duty to be happy," he said. "Every human being is entitled to a certain amount of pleasure in life. But, in order to be happy, you must think of the world as a mischievous big child; let your attitude be one of amused contempt so long as you detect no vice in the mischief; once you do, however, if you have the gift of language, use it, lash out unmercifully! And don't desist because

the creature howls at you. The louder it howls the more you may congratulate yourself that you have touched it on the right spot, which is sure to be tender."

But he did not limit his kindly attentions to the giving of good advice; in fact, he very seldom gave advice at all; what he chiefly did was to devise distractions for her which should take her out of herself; and one of these was a children's party which he induced her to give at Christmas.

The party was to take place on Christmas Eve, and the whole of the day before and far into the night the Colquhoun-house was thronged with actors rehearsing charades and *tableaux*, and officers painting and preparing decorations, and putting them up. All were in the highest spirits; the talk and laughter were incessant; the work was being done with a will, and none of them looked as if they had ever had a sorrowful thought in their lives—least of all Evadne, whose gaiety seemed the most spontaneous of all.

Late at night she had come to the hall with nails for the decorators, and was handing them up as they were wanted by those on the ladders. The men were in their shirt sleeves, the most becoming dress that a gentleman ever appears in; and during a pause she happened to notice Colonel Colquhoun, who had stepped back to judge the effect of some drapery he was putting up. Mr. Price was a little behind him, and two of the younger men, the three making an excellent foil to Colonel Colquhoun. Evadne was struck by the contrast. The outside aspect of the man still pleased her. There was no doubt that he was a fine specimen of his species, a splendid animal to look at; what a pity he should have had a regrettable past, the kind of past, too, which can never be over and done with! A returned convict is always a returned convict, and a vicious man reformed is not repaired by the process. The stigma is in his blood.

Evadne sighed. She was too highly tempered, well-balanced a creature to be the victim of any one passion, and least of all of that

transient state of feeling miscalled "Love." Physical attraction, moral repulsion: that was what she was suffering from; and now involuntarily she sighed—a sigh of rage for what might have been; and just at that moment, Colonel Colquhoun, happening to look at her, found her eyes fixed on him with a strange expression. Was there going to be a chance for him after all?

He did not understand Evadne. He had no conception of the human possibility of anything so perfect as her self-control; and when she showed no feeling, he took it for granted that it was because she had none. But during the games next day he obtained a glimpse of her heart which surprised him. She had paid a forfeit, and in order to redeem it, she was requested to state her favourite names, gentlemen's and ladies'.

"Barbara, Evelyn, Julia, Elizabeth, Pauline, Mary, Bertram and Evrard," she answered instantly. "I do not know if I think them the most beautiful names, but they are the ones that I love the best, and have always in my mind."

Colonel Colquhoun's countenance set upon this. They were the names of her brothers and sisters whom she never mentioned to him by any chance, and whom he had not imagined that she ever thought of; yet it seemed that they were always in her mind! He had so little conception of the depth and tenderness of her nature, or of her fidelity, that had he been required to put his feelings on the subject into words before this revelation, he would, without a moment's hesitation, have declared her to be cold, and wanting in natural affection, a girl with "views," and no heart. But after this, a few questions and a very little observation served to convince him that she not only cared for her friends, especially her brothers and sisters, but fretted for their companionship continually in secret, and felt the separation all the more because her father's harsh prohibition was still in force, and none of them were allowed to write to her, her mother excepted, whose letters, however, came but rarely now, and were always unsatisfactory. The truth was that

the poor lady had relapsed into slavery, and been nagged into an outward show of acquiescence in her husband's original mandate which forbade her to correspond with her recalcitrant daughter; and in her attempts to conceal her relapse from the latter, and at the same time to keep Mr. Frayling quiet under the conviction that her submission was genuine, the style of her letters suffered considerably, and their numbers tended always to diminish. But the thing that touched Colonel Colquhoun was the care which Evadne had taken to conceal her trouble from him, the fact that she had not allowed a single complaint to escape her, or made a sign that might have worried him by implying a reproach. He had his moments of good feeling, however, and his kindly impulses too, being, as already asserted, anything but a monster; and under the influence of one of them, he sat down and wrote a sharp remonstrance to Mr. Frayling, which, however, only drew from that gentleman an expression of his sincere admiration for his son-in-law's generous disposition, and of his regret that a daughter of his should behave so badly to one who could show himself so nobly forgiving, with a reiteration of his determination, however, not to countenance her until she should "come to her senses"—so that no actual good was done, although doubtless Colonel Colquhoun himself was the better for acting on the impulse.

It was about this time that he became aware of the fact that Evadne had gradually formed a party of her own, and was making his house a centre of attraction to all the best people in the place. He knew that such support was an evidence of her strength, and would only confirm her in her "views," especially when even those who had opposed her most bitterly at first were caught intriguing to get into the Colquhoun-house clique; but naturally he was gratified by a position which reflected credit upon himself; his respect for Evadne increased, and consequently they became, if possible, better friends than ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

On the day following her children's party, Evadne went to see Edith. She always went there when she felt brain-fagged and world-weary, and came away refreshed. Edith's ignorance of life amazed and perplexed her. She thought it foolish, and she thought it unsafe for a mature young woman to know no more of the world than a child does, but still she shrank from sharing the pain of her own knowledge with her, and had never had the heart to say a word that might disturb her beautiful serenity. She showed some selfishness in that. She could be a child in mind again with Edith, and only with Edith, and it was really for her own pleasure that she avoided all serious discussion with the latter, although she firmly persuaded herself that it was entirely out of deference to Mrs. Beale's wishes and prejudices.

She owed a great deal, as has already been said, to Mrs. Beale. When her attitude began to attract attention and provoked criticism, the old lady declined emphatically to hear a word against her from anybody, and so supported her in public; while in private the influence of her sweet old-fashioned womanliness was restraining in the way that Mrs. Orton Beg had foreseen; it was a check upon Evadne, and prevented her from going too far and fast at a time. Argument would not have hindered her; but when Mrs. Beale was present, she often suppressed a fire-brand of a phrase, because it would have wounded her.

As she went out that afternoon she met old Lord Groome on the door step, just coming to call on her, and hesitated a moment between asking him in or allowing him to accompany her as far as Mrs. Beale's, but decided on the latter because she would get rid of him

so much the sooner. Her attitude towards him, however, was kindly and tolerant as a rule, and she was even amused by his curious conceit. He was always ready to express what he called an opinion on any subject, but more especially when it bore reference to legislation and the government of peoples generally, for he was comfortably confident that he had inherited the brain-power necessary for a legislator as well as a seat in the House of Lords and the position of one—a pardonable error, surely, since it is so very common. Socially he lived in a comfortable conception of the fitness of things that were agreeable to him, morally he did not exist at all, religiously he supported the Established Church, and politically he believed in every antiquated error still extant, in which respect most of his friends resembled him.

"Ah, and so you are going to see Miss Beale? That's right," he observed, patronisingly. "I like to see one young lady with her work in her hand tripping in to sit and chat with another, and while away the long hours till the gentlemen return. One can imagine all their little jests and confidences. Young ladyhood is charming to contemplate."

The implication that a young lady has no great interest in life but in "the return of the gentlemen," and that, while awaiting them, her pursuits must of necessity be petty and trivial, both amused and provoked Evadne, and she answered with a dry enigmatical, "Yes-s-s."

A few steps further on, they overtook that soft-voiced person of "singular views," Mrs. Malcomson, from whom Lord Groome would have fled had he seen her in time, for they detested each other cordially, and she never spared him. She was strolling along alone with her eyes cast down, humming a little tune to herself, and thinking. There was a tinge of colour in her cheeks, for the air was fresh for Malta; her eyes were bright, her hair as usual had broken from bondage into little brown curls, all crisp and shining, on her forehead and neck, and her lips were parted as if they only

waited for an excuse to break into a smile. A healthier, pleasanter, happier, handsomer young woman Lord Groome could not have wished to encounter, and consequently his disapproval of those "absurd new-fangled notions of hers" which were "an effectual bar, sir," as he said himself, "the kind of thing that destroys a woman's charm, and makes it impossible to get on with her," mounted to his forehead in a frown of perplexity.

"What are you so busy about ?" Evadne asked her.

"My profession," she answered laconically.

"And what is that?" Lord Groome inquired, with that ponderous affectation of playfulness which he believed to be acceptable to women.

"The Higher Education of Man," she rejoined, then darted down a side street, laughing.

"I am afraid you are too intimate with that lady," Lord Groome observed severely. "You must not allow yourself to be bitten by her revolutionary ideas. She is a dangerous person."

"Not 'revo'—but evolutionary," Evadne answered smiling. "Yes. Mrs. Malcomson has taught me a great deal. She is a very remarkable person. The world will hear more of her, I am sure, and be all the better for her passage through it. But here we are. Thank you for accompanying me. What a hot afternoon! Good-bye!"

She shook hands with him, then opened the door and walked in, leaving him outside.

He felt the dismissal somewhat summary, but shrugged his shoulders philosophically and walked on, reflecting, *à propos* of Mrs. Malcomson: "That's just the way with women! When they begin to have ideas they spread them everywhere, and all the other women in the neighbourhood catch them, and are spoiled by them."

Evadne's spirits had risen in the open air, but the moment she found herself alone a reaction set in.

The hall was dark and cool, and she stopped there, thinking—Oh, the dissatisfaction of it all!

There were no servants about, and the house seemed curiously still. She heard the ripple of running water from an unseen fountain somewhere, and the intermittent murmur of voices in a room close by, but there is a silence that broods above such sounds, and this it was that Evadne felt.

Close to where she stood was a divan with some tall foliage plants behind it, and she sat down there, and, leaning forward with her arms resting on her knees, began listlessly to trace out the pattern of the pavement with the point of her parasol. She had no notion why she was lingering there alone, when she had come out for the sole purpose of not being alone; but the will to do anything else had suddenly forsaken her. Her mind, however, had become curiously active all at once, in a jerky, disconnected sort of way.

"Lord Groome—thank heaven for having got rid of him so easily! I was afraid it would be more difficult. Poor foolish old man! Yes. It is ridiculous that the destinies of nations should hang on the size of one man's liver. Where did I hear that now? It seems as old—old—as the iniquity itself. Subjects get into the air—I heard someone say that too, by-the-way—here—soon after I came out. Who was it? Oh—the dance on the *Abomination*. Mrs. Malcomson and Mr. Price. *He* said subjects were diseases which got into the air; *she* said they were more like perfumes. Now, *I* should not have compared them with either——"

The door of the room where the voices had been murmuring intermittently opened at that moment, and Edith came out, followed by Menteith.

It was a vision which Evadne never forgot.

Edith was dressed in ivory white, and wore a brooch of turquoise and diamonds at her throat, a buckle of the same at her waist, and a very handsome ring, also of turquoise and diamonds, on the third

finger of her left hand. Evadne took the ornaments in at a glance. She had seen all that Edith had hitherto possessed, and these were new; but she did not for a moment attach any significance to the fact. It was Edith's radiant face that riveted her attention. A bright flush flickered on her delicate cheek, deepening or fading at every breath; her large eyes floated in light; even the bright strands of her yellow hair shone wlth unusual lustre; her step was so buoyant, she scarcely seemed to touch the ground at all; she was all shy smiles; and as she came, with her slender white right hand she played with the new ring she wore on her left, fingering it nervously. But anyone more ecstatically happy than she seemed it is impossible to imagine. Menteith could not take his eyes off her. He seemed to gloat over every item of her appearance.

"Oh! here is Evadne!" she exclaimed in a voice of welcome, running up to the latter and kissing her with peculiar tenderness. Then she turned and looked up at Menteith, then back again at Evadne, wanting to say something, but not liking to.

With a start of surprise, Evadne awoke to the significance of all this, and she knew, too, what was expected of her; but she could not say, "I congratulate you!" try as she would. "I will wait for you in the drawing-room," was all she was able to gasp, and she hastened off in that direction as she spoke.

"How can you care so much for that cold, unsympathetic woman?" Menteith exclaimed.

"She is not cold and unsympathetic," Edith rejoined emphatically. "I am afraid there is something wrong. I must go and see what it is. Oh, Mosley! I feel all chilled! It is a bad omen!"

"This is a bad damp hall," he answered, laughing at her, "and you are too sensitive to changes of temperature."

It seemed so really, for her colour had faded, and she had not recovered it when she appeared in the drawing-room.

Evadne was standing in the middle of the room alone, waiting for her.

"Edith! You are not going to marry that dreadful man?" she exclaimed.

Edith stopped short, astonished.

"*Dreadful man!*" she gasped. "You must be mad, Evadne!"

Mrs. Beale came into the room just as Edith uttered these words, and overheard them. She had been on the point of happy smiles and tears, expecting kind congratulations, but at the tone of Edith's voice almost more than at what she had said, and at the sight of the two girls standing a little apart looking into each other's faces in alarm and horror, her own countenance changed, and an expression of blank inquiry succeeded the smiles, and dried the tears.

"Oh, Mrs. Beale!" Evadne entreated, "You are not going to let Edith marry that dreadful man!"

"Mother! she will keep saying that!" Edith exclaimed.

"My dear child, what *do* you mean?" Mrs. Beale said gently to Evadne, taking her hand.

"I mean that he is bad—thoroughly bad," said Evadne.

"Why! Now tell me, what do you know about him?" the old lady asked, leading Evadne to a sofa, and making her sit down beside her upon it. Her manner was always excessively soothing, and the first heat of Evadne's indignation began to subside as she came under the influence of it.

"I don't know anything about him," she answered confusedly; "but I don't like the way he looks at me!"

"Oh, come, now! that is childish!" Mrs. Beale said, smiling.

"No, it is not! I am sure it is not!" Evadne rejoined, knitting her brows in a fruitless endeavour to grasp some idea that evaded her, some item of information that had slipped from her mind. "I feel—I have a consciousness which informs me of things my intellect cannot grasp. And I *do* know!" she exclaimed, her mental

vision clearing as she proceeded. "I have heard Colonel Colquhoun drop hints."

"And you would condemn him upon hints?" Edith interjected contemptuously.

"I know that if Colonel Colquhoun hints that there is something objectionable about a man it must be something very objectionable indeed," Evadne answered, cooling suddenly.

Edith turned crimson.

"Evadne—*dear*," Mrs. Beale remonstrated, patting her hand emphatically to restrain her. "Edith has accepted him because she loves him, and that is enough."

"If it were love it would be," Evadne answered. "But it is not love she feels. Prove to her that this man is not a fit companion for her, and she will droop for awhile, and then recover. The same thing would happen if you separated them for years without breaking off the engagement. Love which lasts is a condition of the mature mind; it is a fine compound of inclination and knowledge, controlled by reason, which makes the object of it, not a thing of haphazard, but a matter of choice. Mrs. Beale," she reiterated, "you will not let Edith marry that dreadful man!"

"My dear child," Mrs. Beale replied, speaking with angelic mildness, "your mind is quite perverted on this subject, and how it comes to be so I cannot imagine, for your mother is one of the sweetest, truest, most long suffering, *womanly* women I ever knew. And so is Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells—and Mrs. Orton Beg. You have been brought up among womanly women, none of whom ever even *thought* such things as you do not hesitate to utter, I am sure."

"I once heard a discussion between Lady Adeline and Aunt Olive," Evadne rejoined. "It was about a lady who had a very bad husband, and had patiently endured a great deal. 'It is beautiful—pathetic—pitiful to see a woman making the best of a bad bargain in that way,' Aunt Olive said. 'It may be all that,'

Lady Adeline answered ; '*but is it right*? If this generation would object to bad bargains, the next would have fewer to make the best of.' "

"Ah, that is so like dear Adeline!" Mrs. Beale observed. "But what a memory you have, my dear, to be able to give the exact words!"

Evadne's countenance fell. She was disheartened, but still she persisted.

"It is you good women," she said clasping Mrs. Beale's hand in both of hers, and holding it to her breast: "It is you good women who make marriage a lottery for us. You, for instance. Because you drew a prize yourself, you see no reason why every other woman should not be equally fortunate."

"I think, when people make *quite* sure beforehand that they love each other, they are safe—even when the man has *not* been all that he ought to have been. Love is a great purifier, and love for a good woman has saved many a man," Mrs. Beale declared with the fervour of full conviction.

"That is presuming that a man 'who has not been all that he ought to have been' is still able to love," said Evadne, "which is not the case. We are all endowed with the power to begin with; but love is a delicate essence, as volatile as it is delicious; and when a man's moral fibre is loosened, his share of love escapes. But this is not the point," she broke off, dropping Mrs. Beale's hand, and gathering herself together. "The trouble now is that you are going to let Edith throw herself away on a man you know nothing about——"

"Ah, my dear, *there* you are mistaken," Mrs. Beale interrupted, comfortably triumphant. "They have known each other all their lives. They used to play together as children; and when I wrote to ask her father's consent to the engagement, he replied that the one thing which could reconcile him to parting with Edith was her choice of a man who had grown up under our own eyes. I can

assure you that we know his faults quite as well as his good qualities."

"I thought you would like to have me in the regiment, Evadne," Edith ventured with timid reproach.

"I would not like to have you anywhere as that man's wife," Evadne answered.

"Well, if he is," said Edith, with a flash of enthusiasm, "if he is *bad*, I will make him good; if he is lost, I will save him!"

"Spoken like a true woman, dearest!" her mother said, rising to kiss her, and then standing back to look up at her with yearning love and admiration.

Evadne rose also with a heavy sigh. "I know how you feel," she said to Edith, drearily. "You glow and are glad from morning till night. You have a great yearning here," she clasped her hands to her breast. "You find a new delight in music, a new beauty in flowers; unaccountable joy in the warmth and brightness of the sun, and rapture not to be contained in the quiet moonlight. You despise yourself, and think your lover worthy of adoration. The consciousness of him never leaves you even in your sleep. He is your last thought at night, your first in the morning. Even when he is away from you, you do not feel separated from him as you do from other people, for a sense of his presence remains with you, and you flatter yourself that your spirits mingle when your bodies are apart. You think, too, that the source of all this ecstacy is holy because it is pleasurable; you imagine it will last for ever!"

Edith stared at her. That Evadne should know the entrancement of love herself so exactly, and not reverence it as holy, amazed her.

"And you call it love." Evadne added, as if she had read her thought; "but it is not love. The thresholds of love and hate adjoin, and it—this feeling—stands midway between them, an introduction to either. It is always a question, as marriages are now made, whether, when passion has had time to cool, husband

and wife will love or detest each other. But what is the use of talking?" she exclaimed. "You will not heed me. It is too late now." She turned and walked towards the door; but Edith caught her by the arm and stopped her.

"Evadne! Do not go like this!" she entreated, with a sob in her voice. "Wish me well at least!"

"I *do* wish you well," said Evadne. "With what other motive could I have said so much? But I ask again, what is the use? Your parents are content to let you marry a man of whose private life they have no knowledge whatever——"

Mrs. Beale interrupted her: "That is not quite the case," she confessed. "We *do* know that there have been errors; but all that is over now, and it would be wicked of us not to believe the best, and hope for the best. A young man in his position has great temptations——"

"And if he succumbs, he is pardoned because of his position!"

"Oh, come, now, Evadne!" Mrs. Beale remonstrated. "You cannot think that such a consideration affects our decision. His position and property are very nice in themselves, and indeed all that we care about in that way for Edith, but we were not thinking about either when we gave our consent. It is the dear fellow himself that we want——"

"I can make him all that he ought to be! I know I can!" Edith exclaimed fervently, clasping her hands, and looking up, with bright eyes full of confidence and passion.

Evadne said not another word, but kissed them both, and left the house.

"Mother! how strange Evadne is!" Edith ejaculated.

Mrs. Beale shook her head several times. "I heard that she had some trouble at the outset of her own married life," she said. "I don't know what it was; but doubtless it accounts for her manner to-day. Don't think about it, however. She will recover her right-mindedness as she grows older. A little shock upsets a girl's

judgment very often ; but she is so clever and conscientious, she will certainly get over it. But you are quite agitated yourself, dear. Come! think no more about what she said! Her own marriage quite disproves all her arguments, for Colonel Colquhoun was notoriously just the kind of man she would have us believe Mosley is, and see what she has done for him, and how well they get on together! Think no more about it, dear child, but come out with me. The air will tranquillize us both."

On her way home, Evadne overtook Mr. St. John. He was walking slowly with his chin on his chest, looking down, and his whole demeanour was expressive of deep dejection.

He looked up with a start when Evadne overtook him, and their eyes met.

"You have heard?" she said.

He made an affirmative gesture.

"I never—never dreamt of such a thing," she went on. "I thought—I hoped—pardon me, but I hoped it would be you. She liked you so much. I know she did."

"But not enough, for she refused me," he answered gently. "But doubtless it is all for the best. *His* ways are not our ways, you know, and we suffer because we are too proud to resign ourselves to manifestations of His wisdom, which are beyond our comprehension. When you came up, I was feeling as if I could never say 'Thy will be done' with my whole heart, fervently, in this matter, but since you spoke to me, I think I can."

Evadne took his arm, and the gentle pressure of her hand upon it expressed her heartfelt sympathy eloquently.

"If it had been anyone else, I thought at first—but, doubtless, doubtless, it is all for the best!" he added; and then he raised his head, and changed the subject bravely.

But Evadne did not hear what he was saying, for suddenly she found herself on the cliffs at home, and it was a scented summer morning; the air was balmy, the sun was shining, the little waves

rippled up over the sand, the birds were singing, and the dew-drops hung on the yellow gorse; but that joy in her own being which lent a charm to these was wanting, and the songs seemed tuneless, the scent oppressive, the sea all sameness, the land a waste, and the sun itself a glaring garish baldness of light, that accentuated her own disconsolation, the length of a life that is not worth living, and the size of a world which contains no corner of comfort in all its pitiless expanse. And it was the same story too. She was witnessing the same mystery of love rejected—the same worthiness for the same unworthiness; the same fine discipline of resignation, which made the pain of it endurable; listening to the same old pulpit platitudes even, which have such force of soothing when reverently expressed. She and Edith were very different types of girlhood, and it seemed a strange coincidence that their opportunities should have been identical nevertheless; but not singular that their action should have been the same, because the force of nature which controlled them is a matter of constitution more than of character, and subject only to a training which neither of them had received, and without which, instead of ruling, they are ruled erratically.

Evadne had quite forgotten by this time all her first fine feelings on the subject of a celibate priesthood. She now held that the laws of nature are the laws of God, and marriage is a law of nature which there is no evidence that God has ever rescinded.

Evadne had not heard what Mr. St. John was saying, and she did not care to hear; she knew that it was not relevant to anything which either of them had in their minds; but she still held his arm, and looked up at him sympathetically when he paused for a reply, and at that moment Colonel Colquhoun, accompanied by Sir Mosley Menteith, turned out of a side street just behind them, and followed on in the same direction. When Menteith saw the two walking so familiarly arm in arm, he glanced at Colonel Colquhoun out of the corners of his eyes to see how he took it. But Colonel Colquhoun's face remained serenely impassive.

"Easy!" he said. "We won't overtake them till we arrive at the house. I expect he is seeing her home, and as Mrs. Colquhoun is only at her best *tête-à-tête*, it would be a shame to deprive him of the small recompense he will get for his trouble." He twisted his moustache and continued to look at the pair thoughtfully when he had spoken, and Menteith glanced at him again to see if he might not perchance be concealing some secret annoyance under an affectation of easy indifference, but there was not a trace of anything of the kind apparent.

"There is no doubt that women *do* cling to the clergy," was the outcome of Colonel Colquhoun's reflections—"I mean metaphorically speaking, of course," he hastened to add with a laugh, perceiving the double construction that might be put on the remark in view of the situation. "Now, there is only one fellow on the Island that Evadne cares for as much as she does for her friend there. I think she likes the other better though."

"You mean yourself, of course," said Menteith.

"No, I don't mean myself, of course," Colonel Colquhoun answered. "Putting myself out of the question. It is Price, I mean."

"That dried-up old chap?" Menteith exclaimed. "Well, he's pretty safe, I should say! And I should never be jealous of a parson myself. Women always treat them *de haut en bas*."

"I believe, sir, that Mrs. Colquhoun is perfectly 'safe' with anyone whom she may choose for a friend," Colonel Colquhoun said with an emphasis which made Menteith apologize immediately.

Colonel Colquhoun asked Evadne that evening what she thought of the projected marriage.

"I think it detestable," she answered.

"Well, I think it a pity myself," he said. "She's such a nice looking girl too."

Evadne turned to him with a flash of hope. "Can't you do something?" she exclaimed. "Can't you prevent it?"

"Absolutely impossible," he answered. "And I beg as a favour to myself that you won't try."

"I have done my best already," she said.

"Then you have made your friends enemies for life," he declared. "A girl like that won't give up a man she loves even for such considerations as have made you indifferent to my happiness—and welfare."

Evadne perceived the contradiction involved in commending Edith for doing what he considered it a pity that she *should* do; but she recognized her own impotence also, and was silent. It was the system, the horrid system that was to blame, and neither he, nor she, nor any of them.

Colonel Colquhoun ruminated for a little.

"It is rather curious," he finally observed, "that you should both have shied at the parsons, seeing how very particular you are."

"Who told you we had both—refused a clergyman?" Evadne asked.

"Everybody in Malta knows that St. John proposed to Miss Beale," he answered, "and your father told me about the offer you had. He remarked at the time that girls will only have manly men, and that therefore we soldiers get the pick of them."

Evadne was silent. She was thinking of something her father had once remarked in her presence on the same subject: "I have observed," he had said, in his pompous way, "that the clergy carry off all the nicest girls. You will see some of the finest, who have money of their own too, marry quite commonplace parsons. But the reason is obvious. It is their faith in the superior moral probity of Churchmen which weighs with them."

The Beales went home the following week to prepare for the wedding, which was to take place immediately. They both wrote to Evadne kindly before they left, and she replied in the same tone, but she could not persuade herself to see them again, nor did they wish it.

END OF BOOK II.—VOL. I.

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