

TREASON AT HOME.

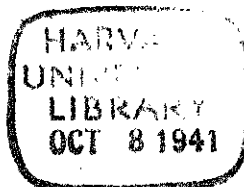
A NOVEL.

BY MRS. GREENOUGH.

"Treasure at Home" is a new novel, which exhibits various phases, from the highest to the lowest, of English society. Its distinguished authoress, Mrs. Greenough, being a fashionable as well as a literary lady, moving in the most aristocratic circles, describes scenes familiar to her, and characters, the types of which she has met. Moreover, she has a quick eye for the varying beauties of nature. Added to this, Mrs. Greenough possesses that "imagination all compact" which creates the highest constructive powers. The principal character in the story is Lady Tremys, a self-contained woman, dowered with intelligence, beauty, and wealth; with a compelling will which overthrows all obstacles, and a secretive mind which conceals the means she has employed. In short, she is a mystery, and the whole action of the story tends to raise the veil from her former life and to discover the motives which actuated her. With unusual skill, the dark secrets of her character and career remain concealed to the close. The *dénouement*, besides being unexpected, carries out that principle of poetical justice which is so grateful to every novel reader.

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"TREASON AT HOME" is the title of a book of rare merit. The plot is laid in England, and the characters are of people in the best circles of society. Miss Arden is the only daughter of a devoted father. Her health failing her, her father takes her for a few weeks to the residence of a widowed aunt, whose name is also Arden. She has one son, and at her house the most of the incidents related in the book takes place. Walter Arden grows very much attached to this girl, and but for the intermeddling of a Lady Tremyss, who figures conspicuously, there would not have been any trouble. This Lady Tremyss was married twice, and the first marriage causes considerable suspicion among her friends; in fact, her whole life is a mystery, which gives spice to the story. Isabel is her only child, and is at one time very much in love with Walter, although as he would make an eligible match for Isabel, Lady Tremyss resorts to strategy to secure him. Edith's father being informed of these proceedings of Lady Tremyss, he goes to Arden Court and takes her home with him. He was desirous that she should make a very brilliant match, in consequence of which he accepts an invitation to visit a friend at *Albansea*, and while there meets Ormanby Averil, who has immense fortune and falls in love with her; he proposes and is accepted; but a few weeks before they were to be married, Averil was thrown from a carriage and killed. At this time Edith Arden has found out the treachery of Lady Tremyss and the faithfulness of Walter, and the story finishes with their wedding. It is a good story, and admirably written. It is published complete in one large duodecimo volume, bound in morocco cloth, full gilt back. Price \$1.75. Copies of it will be sent to any one, to any place, postage pre-paid, on receipt of price by the Publishers, T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 306 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

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TREASON AT HOME.

CHAPTER I.

AT ARDEN HALL.

TWILIGHT was settling over the landscape, as a young man, tall and athletic, turned into the deeper shadow of the avenue which led to Arden Hall. A carriage which servants were busily engaged in unpacking, stood before the open door. Quickening his pace he crossed the dark hall, and pausing for an instant on the threshold of the drawing-room, cast a quick glance on the persons within.

In a low easy chair sat his aunt, Mrs. Arden. She was a small, spare woman, with insignificant features, and hair and complexion of a faded straw color ; but this physiognomy, which seemed intended by nature for the quietest of rôles, was accompanied by two startled-looking greenish-grey eyes, which had a habit of incessantly roving hither, thither, and everywhere. These eyes were placed beneath two scanty eyebrows, which, raised and permanently retained a full half inch above their natural level, communicated an expression of distrustful expectation to the rest of her face, an expression which in no wise belied the habitual state of her mind. For Mrs. Arden possessed an unbounded love of the marvellous, and was endowed with an insatiable appetite for all things melancholy and grievous in the reci-

tal. Nor was this propensity dwarfed by any want of proper sustenance. She breakfasted with the "Times" in her hand, and devoured muffins and manslaughter alternately. She lunched upon the last sensation novel, and supped, faithful to her ascending scale, on the ghostly literature of the present and the past. Nothing had proved too dry for her perseverance, did but the supernatural mingle largely enough with it. Works on necromancy, on astrology, on alchemy, crowded the shelves of her private bookcase, side by side with haunted legends of every country and every age.

Mrs. Arden, at this present time, though constantly on the *qui vive* for apparitions and visitations, had nevertheless been left to maintain her faith solely on the experiences of others. A good soul she was, kindly hearted, affectionate, and charitable; her foibles in no wise diminishing the activity of her naturally amiable qualities, though occasionally prompting somewhat peculiar and obtrusive manifestations of the same.

At the moment of her nephew's appearance, activity did not seem to be at all Mrs. Arden's mood. Her head inclined slightly on one side, she was contemplating with an expression of compassionate melancholy a young girl who sat leaning back upon the sofa, beside a man a little past the prime of life. Her scrutiny appeared to annoy her visitor, if one might judge by her resolutely down-cast eyes and constrained attitude. The young man was not at that moment able to pursue his investigation further, for as, after his momentary pause, he advanced, the gentleman beside her rose and held out his hand.

A bald-headed, stately man was John Arden, with ample forehead, aquiline nose, and compressed lips. As his cold eye rested upon the young man, it took a colder gleam; as he smiled an answer to his greeting, a concealed sneer vibrated around his mouth. He was weighing him by his own standard, and noting how much he was wanting.

"Edith, my dear, your cousin Walter," said Mrs. Arden, as her nephew turned towards the girl.

She rose, curtsied frigidly, without raising her eyes, then resumed her seat.

The girl's small, pale features were framed in a mass of half-curved golden hair, the long lashes that rested on her colorless cheeks but partly concealed the dark circles beneath her eyes. The delicacy of her appearance was heightened by the richness of her attire. Her dress was trimmed with a profusion of ornament, manifestly unsuitable to her age. She looked like some old portrait of a childish Infanta, which had lost its way, from some ancient palace, into life.

But a few words had been exchanged between the two men, when a strange maid presented herself at the door.

Edith rose, and, raising her eyes for the first time, looked wistfully in her father's face,—they were large, crystalline eyes, dark, but by the lamplight one could not see of what color.

"I must bid you good-night and good-bye at once, my pet," he said, "for I start early, to take the train, you know."

"Come to my door to-morrow morning," she said, in a low voice.

Her father hesitated.

"Indeed, Miss—" the maid began.

"Brenton knows best; I'm afraid," replied Mr. Arden.

"Pray come," Edith repeated.

Her father yielded to the urgency of her tone. As he kissed her, she trembled visibly, but immediately recovering herself, with a reverence to Mrs. Arden, withdrew.

Silence followed her departure.

Her father seemed absorbed in painful thought. Walter sat recalling her singular appearance and wondering what sort of inmate she would prove,—the prospect was not

promising, he was compelled to confess,—while Mrs. Arden's face worked in a way that betokened with her the advent of some new idea. At length, as if they could be withheld no longer, the words broke from her:

"It's Lady Pettigrew's Panacea, that she wants," said Mrs. Arden, with the air of a Napoleon espying a weak point in the enemy's centre. "There never was anything like it. It works wonders. There's nothing that it won't do. If you had only seen Walter when he first came here ten years ago! He was almost as tall as he is now, and so thin and so pale that it was dreadful to look at him, positively dreadful. I thought he wouldn't live, and I told his uncle so; but, I said, there's one thing that may save him, and that's Lady Pettigrew's Panacea, and I mean to try it. But, the time twelve bottles were finished he looked like another creature. I never can be grateful enough to Lady Pettigrew's Panacea, never!"

"Lady Pettigrew's Panacea," said Mr. Arden. "No, I don't think she has tried that."

"Then she had better begin it to-morrow," rejoined Mrs. Arden, her eyes shining with anticipated triumph. "Oh, it will make quite a different creature of her, you will see."

The precipitation which his sister-in-law carried into her good intentions, appeared to discompose Mr. Arden, and he took advantage of the next pause in her record of miraculous cures to state that the physicians had expressly ordered that his daughter should try no more remedies, but depend solely upon country air and quiet for her restoration.

Mrs. Arden made no reply. She was easily silenced, for she was, as we have said, a timid woman; but she sat revolving in her mind the bigotry of London physicians, the hard hearted folly of her brother-in-law, and the cruel fate of Edith, who in the very house with seven bottles of Lady Pettigrew's Panacea, was not to be permitted a single drop of that elixir.

* The current of her reflections was interrupted by Mr. Arden, who was becoming apprehensive lest his declining to submit Edith to a course of domestic treatment had seriously offended his sister-in-law.

"The physicians assure me that with entire change of air and scene she will probably in time regain her health without the aid of medicine. Nothing short of the absolute necessity of the case would have induced me to make the call upon your kindness that I have done, and, believe me, I am deeply grateful."

Mr. Arden, though not prone to be embarrassed, spoke these words awkwardly; for there was sufficient cause for embarrassment. He had broken off all intercourse with his elder brother's widow from the time of that brother's death. William Arden having regained, by his own exertions, the family estate which, being unentailed, had slipped from the impoverished grasp of his father, had considered himself entitled to leave it to his wife, and after her death to her orphan nephew, his son by adoption. John Arden, the rich banker, though possessing a much finer place of his own, considered himself aggrieved thereby, and had testified his displeasure by dropping all intercourse with the Hall. But when Edith fell ill, and change of place and society seemed to be the one thing needful, John Arden bethought himself of the Hall, and of his sister-in-law. Accordingly, he had indited a letter, requesting leave to send Edith to Arden Hall for a visit, alleging the extreme delicacy of her health as the reason for the request. Mrs. Arden had received that letter with as much indignation as her yielding disposition would allow, at the circumstance that the intercourse so long dropped was now renewed from so palpably selfish a motive. But affectionate remembrance of Edith's mother, and compassion for the young invalid whom she only remembered as a shy, but rosy child, prevailed over her annoyance, and she dispatched a cordial invitation to her niece.

"I am deeply grateful," Mr. John Arden had said.

"Oh, dear me, there's no occasion for you to be grateful at all, not the least. I do it for Maria's sake. She was a sweet woman, very," responded Mrs. Arden, with that appalling frankness into which easily fluttered persons are sometimes inadvertently impelled.

Reply to such a statement would have been difficult. Mr. John Arden did not attempt it. Perhaps he cared little on what ground Edith was received, so long as received she was. His next remark was addressed to Walter.

"Are there any young people in the neighborhood whom she would be likely to know?"

"There are men enough," said Walter, slightly arching his eyebrows. "But there's a great dearth of girls in this part of the country. Lady Tremyss's daughter is the only one within three miles."

"Is she near Edith's age?"

"About the same, I fancy, though Miss Isabel looks much older."

"And Lady Tremyss, does she keep her good looks? I remember her as one of the handsomest women in London."

"As handsome as ever, though Miss Isabel's face is more to my taste."

"Strangely reserved Lady Tremyss was. I used to think it was owing to Sir Ralph's jealous temper."

"I should rather think it natural. It has grown on her since his death. That was a great shock to her. You remember the circumstances?"

"Perfectly."

And Mr. John Arden, who shared the repugnance to any mention of death, which is characteristic of men of his stamp, exchanged the subject for the more welcome one of the improvements he had planned and was executing at Arden Court, and a list of the distinguished guests who

were about to honor it with their presence,—a theme on which and on whose ramifications he complacently dilated till bed-time.

CHAPTER II.

GOLIATH, THE BUTLER AT ILTON PARK.

THE sun was shining brightly, the next morning, as young Arden, returning from an early walk, passed beneath the breakfast-room window. A pleasant fellow he was, this Walter Arden, with his tall figure, his broad shoulders, his open eye, and his manly, well-cut features. He was, moreover, the best rider, wrestler, and runner in the county; and though, to his shame be it spoken, but an indifferent billiard player, his game of chess was so masterly as to vindicate the assertion of his tutor when at Cambridge, that if he had given half the time to mathematics that he devoted to boat racing, he would have been sure of taking a first in Science.

Looking up as he advanced, he saw Edith, her gaze fixed absently upon the sunny sweep of the lawn. He stopped and called up a cordial good-morning. She lowered her eyes to where he stood, bowed slightly, and turned away.

"You are up early," he said, gaily, as he entered the breakfast-room. "Your aunt is not yet down."

"Papa went at six," she answered, coldly, but with a regretful cadence in her voice.

"By the time he comes again, we will have you quite a different person, as rosy as a milkmaid."

"I think I shall like to stay here," she said, slowly, as if making up her mind aloud.

"Of course you will. We shall make you like it so much, that you will never wish to go away," replied her cousin, overshooting the mark.

Edith shook her head, and silently returned to her post by the window.

"What's the matter with her, I wonder?" thought Walter. "I have vexed her, that's plain enough, but I'll be shot if I know why."

As he stood, palpably annoyed, Edith turned, looked up, and smiled. The change was marvelous; the girl's face became flooded with beauty.

"You meant kindly," she said; "don't mind when I'm cross."

At this moment Mrs. Arden rustled into the room. There were traces of vexation on her face, though she was doing her best to conceal them. Before long, however, the cause of disturbance came out.

"So I hear your maid has gone back, my dear," she said, as they took their places at the breakfast table.

"Yes," replied Edith, briefly.

Mrs. Arden coughed uneasily.

"I hope nothing has gone wrong to make her unwilling to remain at the Hall; I should be quite distressed if I thought so."

"It was only because I didn't want her. I told papa that you would very likely know of some one—a quiet little country girl is what I would like."

Mrs. Arden turned her eyes upon the daintily arranged curls and careful toilette of her niece, with a look of dismay.

"Oh, but I'm afraid you couldn't find any one here to do your hair that way, and to make you look as you do now. I don't know of any one, except little Letty Prast, and she is a good, quiet, tidy little thing, and it would be such a nice place for her. But she was never in service, except once, as one of the under-housemaids at the Park," said Mrs. Arden, recollecting herself; "she wouldn't know the names of half the things you wear."

"How old is she?"

"I think she must be twenty. Yes, just about twenty, now."

"If you please, I should like you to engage her for me; I think she is what I want," Edith quietly replied.

Walter took advantage of the opportunity afforded him by Edith's attention being directed to his aunt, to study her appearance more closely than he had hitherto been able to do. She appeared about fifteen, though she was, in fact, two years older. She was of the average height, but extremely slender. Her eyebrows and lashes were of a much darker tint than her hair, increasing the apparent depth of her eyes. There was something very peculiar in those eyes. When seen fronting the light, you would have said they were of the exact azure hue of harebells; when seen in shadow you would have sworn them to be black. The rest of the features were delicate and regular, but one's look did not rest long on them; it was irresistibly drawn back to those deep, shadowy eyes, so full of thought and sentiment, so strangely contradicting the cold and somewhat haughty expression of the rest of her face.

She looked as if there might be a great deal in her to study, if one only could get at it. He would try to make her talk.

The attempt proved unsuccessful; Edith either would not or could not talk. Nothing but monosyllables were to be obtained from her, and Walter was completely baffled and somewhat disgusted.

For the next few days he paid Edith as small attention as politeness would allow, but little by little he found himself watching and studying her. It was long before he could make her out at all. She was constantly surprising and perplexing him. She would endure being fidgeted and fussed over by her aunt with unchanging resignation, never betraying vexation by look or sign. She underwent, with the patience of a martyr, all the annoyances inflicted upon her by the awkwardness of her new maid.

The explanation was simple enough. From the time of her mother's death, Edith had been bullied by her maid, and tyrannized over by her governess, both, in their way, equally clever and unprincipled women, who had managed to secure Mr. Arden's confidence. Under their joint oppression, Edith's spirits and health had broken down. Little by little, the quiet of the Hall, the affectionate care of her aunt, and the healthy moral atmosphere about her, toned both body and mind to a more natural key. She grew stronger week by week, so that, before long, her rides on the little white pony which Mrs. Arden had bought for her, extended their limits from half-an-hour's pacing round the Close to excursions of two or three miles. Walter was her attendant on these excursions, Mrs. Arden being afraid to entrust her to the care of any servant.

From looking upon these walks beside his cousin's pony as a nuisance, Walter came by degrees to consider them pleasures. Edith's reserve wore insensibly away. One day she told him something of her past miseries, in listening to which, Walter used expressions more energetic than elegant. Edith was not shocked, as she ought to have been; on the contrary, from that time she began to treat him as a friend.

When she had been a little more than a month at the Hall, Walter proposed to take her as far as the gates of Ilton Park, closed for the time by the absence of the family.

"I'm sure I don't know what to say," said Mrs. Arden, on the afternoon of the projected excursion, looking dubiously up at the threatening sky, and then, equally dubiously contemplating Edith.

"Then we're off," said Walter, turning to place Edith in the saddle.

Winding through pleasant lanes bordered by fragrant hedge-rows, they reached at length the road which led by Ilton Park. On one side rose the dark stone-wall enclosing

the heavy woodland, on the other a low hedge, and a narrow strip of green alone separated the way from the river, which flowed in gleaming eddies between its sloping banks. A few steps brought them to the pine-shadowed gates of the park. On either side of the iron gateway, upon a massy pedestal of red sandstone, a sphynx lay couched, looking with stony gaze upon the river. The lodge was concealed from sight; the eye, passing between the sphinxes, met but the shadows of the long avenue within. Walter stopped the pony, while Edith's eyes settled, as if fascinated, upon the faces of the sphinxes.

"It was an odd idea to put a woman's head on such a body," said Walter. "Beauty, strength, and ferocity; that's what the compound means, I suppose."

"They look as if they knew something," said Edith, glancing by them. "I wish they would say what it is."

As they came to a corner of the road, which still skirted the park, Walter, who was walking with his eyes on the ground, was startled by a faint cry from Edith. He hastily looked up.

Before them was a gigantic, black-coated negro, his face traversed by a ghastly scar. Respectfully touching his hat, he passed them, and disappeared through a small door in the park wall, which he opened with a private key.

"What, afraid of Goliath!" said Walter. "He's the best creature in the world. He is the butler at Ilton Park. Old Lady Tremyss, Sir Ralph's mother, to whom the park belonged, had estates in Jamaica, and that's the way Goliath came to be here. She brought him."

"But he is so tall, and that dreadful scar!"

"I said he is the best creature in the world, and that scar proves it. Not long before Sir Ralph's death he got into one of his rages with Goliath, and threw a decanter in his face, and cut him as you saw, and for all that, Goliath risked his life to get him out of the river, the night he fell in."

"And did he save him?"

"No. The river is deep, and dangerous. Goliath was alone. He did all he could, but he couldn't manage it."

"How did Sir Ralph get in?" pursued Edith, with a glance at the silent river.

"He was riding home late from a dinner party, and chose to swim the river instead of going round by the bridge. He was always a dare-devil on horseback."

"Why did not the groom help?"

"As ill-luck would have it, the groom got dead drunk that night, and Sir Ralph came home alone."

"What a terrible thing," said Edith, "to die in the cold and darkness so close to one's home." She shivered.

"Yes, but don't think of that; think what a good fellow Goliath showed himself."

"Yes, it was noble of him—to forgive Sir Ralph would have been much, but to risk his life for him—" She paused.

"I wish I had thought to ask him when the family is coming back," Walter resumed, after they had gone on a few steps. "If you don't mind, I'll run back and ask at the lodge."

He returned in a moment, his face glowing. Edith looked attentively at him.

"They will be here on Saturday evening. I am glad they're coming. Isabel will be a capital companion for you."

"Thank you; I don't care for any companions," Edith coolly answered, and Walter obtained only curt replies during the rest of her ride.

CHAPTER III.

ISABEL'S GOVERNESSES. THE GROOM'S STORY.

"Do you think Lady Tremyss will be at church to-day?" asked Edith, on the next Sunday morning.

"Of course, my dear. She and Isabel are always at morning service, though, I'm sorry to say, when the sermon is long, Isabel fidgets dreadfully."

Edith had not until that day been considered strong enough to undergo the fatigue of sitting through the service, and it was with an observant eye that she noted all around her.

The walls of a yellowish brown tint, the time worn and blackened oaken wood work, the high square pews with their curtains of crimson moreen, the curiously carved pulpit with its alternating lion's and angel's heads, the subdued and reverential faces of the cottagers who filled the benches; all these she saw through the vague and misty light that fell through the window at the extremity of the aisle, whose small and dusty panes seemed to esteem it their sole duty to guard against the entrance of the sun-light. All was dim, sombre, and hushed.

Edith placed herself where her eye could command the entrance. Never before had she been so anxious to see anyone now to see Isabel. She had been seated but a few moments, when a lady, richly dressed in black, accompanied by a young girl, appeared on the threshold, and passing up the aisle, entered a pew a little beyond Mrs. Arden's. Edith instinctively recognized Lady Tremyss. She looked but at her. She had forgotten Isabel.

Features of faultless regularity, over which was spread an even tint of pale olive relieved by touches of red on the lips, and at the corners of the long black eyes; straight black hair smoothly parted on the low, compact forehead; a

figure of the medium height, though, in its stateliness, appearing somewhat taller, — such was the presence that glided past Edith, riveting her attention with a painful fascination.

Lady Tremyss took her place, and sat motionless during the rest of the service, save that she rose when others rose, and knelt when others knelt. This immobility suggested no thought of lassitude or weariness; it was not the indifference of ennui nor the nonchalance of indolence; it seemed the stillness of concentration, the visible expression and bodying forth of will. Had an acute observer been asked to analyze Lady Tremyss' emotionless face, to read the expression of her stirless figure, the result of his study would be given in one word, — Intensity.

Acute observers are few; and had the vast majority of her acquaintance been questioned as to Lady Tremyss, they would have considered that they had made an exhaustive statement, in answering that she was a remarkably beautiful, quiet sort of woman, with distinguished manners, and a fine fortune; those who most frequently visited the Park, adding, *par parenthèse*, that she was extraordinarily fond of her daughter, her only child.

As the effect produced on Edith's imagination by Lady Tremyss' strange and striking beauty began to lose its novelty, she turned her eyes on the figure by her side. That must be Isabel. Edith could only discover that she was graceful, and her dress elegant.

When Edith descended to the dinner table, after a long siesta, she was met by the information that Lady Tremyss and Isabel had called, and that Isabel had seemed very sorry not to have seen her; which, although a truthful, was still not a literal statement, Isabel having impetuously inquired for Edith as soon as she entered the drawing-room, and having testified exceeding disappointment when told that she was lying down.

"I think she is the sweetest creature I ever saw in my life. I never took my eyes off her as I came up the aisle. She looked just like a seraph, with her great eyes and golden hair streaming out, only that seraphs are not all done up in lace and muslin, I suppose. It is too bad that I can't see her."

"Isabel was quite charmed," said Lady Tremyss, in her calm, still voice.

"Pray how old is she?" interposed Isabel.

"How old is she? my dear, why she's seventeen."

"What, is she actually older than I am? I should never have thought it. And how long has she been here? and how long is she going to stay? and you mean to have me a great deal with her, don't you? there's a darling."

Isabel stopped the long answer which she saw impending, by enquiring for Walter.

"Oh no, don't send. I'll go and find him."

She darted through the window, and finding Walter, descanted upon Edith's loveliness until it was time to return.

"Now do bring her early, there's a dear, and let her stay all the afternoon, do," said Isabel, as Mrs. Arden consented to Lady Tremyss' request that Edith should come the next day to call at the Park.

"I'm sorry, but I'm really afraid I can't," replied Mrs. Arden. "I must first go to see Mrs. Moultrie, and she isn't strong enough to drive so far."

"Couldn't you leave her at the Park on the way?" suggested Walter, glancing at Isabel's disappointed face.

"I'll put her on the top shelf of my wardrobe, and cover her over with satin paper, if you like," urged Isabel, "only do please let her come."

And Mrs. Arden, who hated to say no, consented.

* * * * *

"You don't feel shy at being left here all alone, do you,

my dear?" asked Mrs. Arden, as the carriage passed between the couchant sphinxes, and entered the long, dark avenue of pines.

"No, I never feel shy," replied Edith. "I am so used to company, you know."

"I never feel shy," Edith had answered. She would rather have been seared with hot irons than have confessed to her aunt that the vision of Goliath had haunted her dreams all night, and that she was at that instant internally trembling with the dread of seeing him again, good though he was.

Isabel met them in the hall. Hurriedly greeting Mrs. Arden, she seized Edith by the hand.

"I am so glad you are come! I so wanted to know you!"

Following Mrs. Arden, she led Edith into the drawing-room.

It was a long, low, dark apartment, the prevailing colors crimson and black. The old pictures on the dark, polished walls glowed duskily from their frames of carved ebony; the antique bronzes in the corners looked down from high pedestals of *rosso antico*; an air of sombre luxury reigned throughout.

Lady Tremyss rose from her tapestry frame as they entered, courteously welcoming her guests. Edith knew that she had taken her hand and spoken a few sentences, but, to save her life, she could not an instant after have recalled a single word her hostess had said. Her whole attention had been absorbed by that strange, still face: those long, black eyes had held her as by a charm.

As Lady Tremyss turned again to Mrs. Arden, Isabel drew Edith to the other end of the room and seated herself by her side.

"I've been expecting you, I don't know how long. I wanted to see you again."

The two girls fixed their eyes reciprocally on each other's face.

No stronger contrast than they presented could have been imagined. Isabel, tall, brilliant, sparkling, glowing with life; her brown eyes smiling as if in rivalry with her mouth, an air of petulant gaiety, of mischievous playfulness glancing over her face; and Edith, her deep eyes gazing earnestly forth from her transparent countenance, her serious lips gently but firmly closed, her golden curls falling over her delicate figure.

Isabel's mirthful eyes took a shade of gravity as they dwelt on her companion.

"I hope you mean to like me," she said, half imploringly, as if becoming aware that Edith's liking was mainly dependent on her will to like.

"I think I shall," Edith replied tranquilly, returning her companion's gaze. In that brief question and reply their mutual standing was tacitly agreed upon.

"Mamma," said Isabel, when Mrs. Arden had taken her leave, "Miss Arden says she likes flowers. I am going to take her to see my garden."

She led Edith to the terrace which skirted the southern side of the house.

Edith paused to look at the architecture of the mansion. It was a long, irregular structure, which had apparently remained intact since the time of its erection. The projecting gables, the oriel windows, with their small, lozenge-shaped panes, the high stacks of chimneys ornamented with grinning heads, all proclaimed the date "1520," as plainly as did the little black and yellow tiles set into the grey stone wall over the hall door. Tall pines of still greater antiquity bordered the quiet terrace, stretching out their many tiered branches as if pointing at the house.

As Edith's eye passed slowly down the façade, it caught through one of the drawing-room windows, Lady Tremyss'

black-robed figure, bending over her embroidery frame. Edith moved on.

A few steps brought her to a glass door of great width, to which two or three steps gave access. The upper panes were of stained glass, and represented various heraldic devices. That in the centre was larger than the rest. It bore a mailed hand grasping a blood-red rose. A heavy creeper hung its festoons around, its dark green wreaths contrasting with the rich tints of the pictured panes.

"How pretty that is," said Edith, stopping.

"What? Oh, that stained glass. Yes, I suppose it is pretty. I never look at it. They're the different coats of arms that married the Tremyss coat of arms. Sir Ralph had them put there when he came here to live."

"Then he didn't always live here?"

"Oh, no; when he was a bachelor he lived chiefly at the family place, Tremyss Hough, but mamma liked this best, so after he was married the other place was shut up, and now it has gone to the heir, of course. But don't stop now. I want you to see my garden."

She drew Edith to the extremity of the terrace, which opened on a small, but exquisitely arranged flower garden.

"This is beautiful," said Edith. "I am glad you brought me. What lovely azaleas, what beautiful fuchsias, and what a fine orange tree!"

"Yes, that's Madame Ripetti," replied Isabel. "I have the leaves washed every day to keep her nice and clean."

"Madame Ripetti?" repeated Edith.

"She planted it for me, and made it grow, so I call it after her. She was my governess."

"Then you liked her?" questioned Edith, whose feelings towards Madame Lourmel had not been precisely of a nature to induce her to keep alive her memory in a flower-pot.

"Oh, anybody would have liked her. She was a round, rosy little woman, very fond of little cakes, and very much afraid of earwigs and spiders."

"I was sorry when she went away," she continued. "But the weather was horrid for two or three months; I don't think the sun shone once. And she couldn't bear it at all, you know. She used to cry all by herself, and I found out that it was because she wanted to see Italy again. So I told mamma that she must go, and mamma sent her all the way back to Sienna. She was a good-natured little woman. I wished her back a hundred times the first week Madam Lepelletier was here."

"Then you too have had a French governess," responded Edith, sympathizingly.

"Oh, yes. How I did dislike her! She was a long, lean grasshopperish person, with a flat forehead, and a red nose. She was a Protestant, and she called herself very pious. It was so dismal! She made me learn the History of the Crusade against the Albigenses by heart; and she gave me for light reading, the Siege of La Rochelle, and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. They made me perfectly blue. I was very sorry for the poor people, but I couldn't do them any good, you know. And then, just as if it wasn't enough to be advising and lecturing me all day, she used to pester me to death with little notes, telling me of the interest she took in my soul, and full of texts. I got perfectly sick of the sight of them. But at length what do you think she did? She told me a positive, direct, downright fib! I went to mamma, and told her that I would never speak to Madam Lepelletier again, and that the sooner she went away the better."

"Did you really say that to Lady Tremyss?" responded Edith, astonished. "What did she answer?"

"Mamma? Why she said 'very well.' She always says 'very well.' And of course Madame Lepelletier went. I danced about for an hour after the carriage drove away; then I burnt up the Albigenses and the Huguenots and La Rochelle, and I burnt up the writing table too. They set

the chimney on fire. The men had to climb on the roof, and pour buckets of water down to put it out."

"Wasn't your mamma very much vexed?"

"Mamma never is vexed. She didn't say anything to me. She only told the servants to have the fire put out."

"Was that your last governess?" inquired Edith, who began to take a certain interest in the history of Isabel's duennas.

"No, the next was a German. Mamma had to get foreigners, for the only way I can learn languages is by hearing people speak. I can't learn from books; it makes me miserable to study. As soon as I'm put down to a book it is all I can do to keep myself from running away into the Chase. Did you ever see the Chase?"

Her eyes sparkled.

"No."

"Oh, it's such a place! Great trees, full of squirrels; and if you climb up and sit close and wait, by-and-by very like you'll see a great stately deer, or a little frightened dove, come past. I have often sat there for hours watching for them."

"But the German governess," suggested Edith, to whom the idea of climbing a great tree, and sitting in the branches for hours waiting for the sight of a deer, presented but moderate attractions.

"Yes," answered Isabel, recalling her thoughts from the Chase. "She was a white, puffy-faced woman, with such thick ankles, always calling me 'liebe Fraulein,' and telling me what a rich inner being I had. I never knew what she was talking about. She used to harangue me by the hour about the arts, and the craft of nature, as she called it; and then she would jump plump down from the clouds, and eat cheese, and herrings, and ham. She said that anything else for luncheon disagreed with her. But she played the piano-forte beautifully. After a while I thought I had better

come to an understanding with her, so I said: 'Madoiselle, I don't like you, and I don't believe that you like me. But I want to play, and you can teach me, so I mean you shall stay here two years; then I shall be sixteen, and I don't intend to have any more governesses after that. Only, there's one thing,—you are not to call me 'liebe Fraulein' any more, and I won't hear another word about anything that I can't see or touch.' You should have seen her face when I began, but by the time I got through, she looked quite contented. 'Wie sie wollen, Fraulein,' she said, and from that time we got on very well together. But what's Mimi about?" she exclaimed, interrupting her narration. She directed Edith's attention to where a great Spanish cat was crouching beside a cavity whence some plant had recently been removed. The creature was peering over the brink; the slight but rapid vibration of its tail showed that it was about to pounce upon some unseen object within.

"She has found a field mouse, I fancy."

Isabel bent eagerly forward, as the cat sprang into the hole.

"I hope not; they are such pretty, harmless little things," said Edith, pitifully. "But no, that is not a field mouse, it is a mole," she exclaimed, as the cat reappeared, triumphantly holding her struggling prey. "Oh, the poor creature."

"But moles aren't harmless things at all," objected Isabel. "They are as cruel and fierce as they can be. If one mole meets another which has anything that he wants, in their underground ways, he will fight with him and kill him to get it. You needn't pity the mole at all."

"But I do," returned Edith, indignantly, "and I mean to get him away from her."

And she ran towards the cat, who, having released her game, was affectionately pawing and turning it over, as a

preliminary to the still closer acquaintanceship which she meditated.

As Edith, followed by Isabel, sprang towards her, the cat again seized the mole, and rushed down the terrace. Seeing the glass-door already mentioned, ajar, she turned abruptly aside and took refuge in the room within. The two girls followed closely, Isabel laughing aloud in high excitement at the chase.

They darted hither and thither through the great dining-room, following the cat's rapid movements, till at last, dropping the mole, the creature sprang through the window, and disappeared.

"There she goes," cried Isabel. "But the mole, where is he?"

The mole had vanished. They looked around in perplexity.

"He didn't get out through the window, I'm almost sure," said Isabel, dubiously.

"There—there," exclaimed Edith, pointing to a rapidly moving object under the thick Turkey carpet. "He has got underneath. How quick he goes, here; before the side-board."

They threw themselves down beside the spot, and raised the carpet from the oaken floor. Beneath was a dark, wide-spreading stain.

"What is it, Isabel?" said Lady Tremyss, in her quiet, impassive voice, entering. As she spoke, her eye fell on the upturned carpet and on the large, dark stain. She pointed with a mute, imperious gesture to the door. Isabel took Edith's hand, and silently drew her away.

When the door had closed, Lady Tremyss threw herself upon her knees beside the spot. She laid her cheek on it, she pressed her lips to it, uttering the while low inarticulate moans like those of some wounded wild creature. Then she replaced the carpet, and rose to her feet. A horrible smile

passed slowly over her features. It vanished, leaving them stirless, as was their wont. She turned and left the room.

The paroxysm had been but brief. As the two girls reached the upper landing of the great staircase, they heard Lady Tremyss' even step as she passed through the hall, and re-entered the drawing-room.

"What could it have been?" asked Edith.

"I'm sure I don't know. A wine stain, I suppose. Perhaps I made too much noise; but mamma never thought I made too much noise before."

They proceeded along the gallery.

"This is my room," said Isabel, pausing as they neared the end. "I do wish the maids would keep that door shut," she exclaimed, petulantly seizing the handle of a half-open door beyond.

"Stop, please," said Edith. "I see pictures. If you are willing, I should like to go in."

Isabel threw open the door.

It was a long room, uncarpeted, the ceiling crossed with heavy oaken beams. On one side was a long range of windows; the opposite wall supported paintings. There was nothing else in the apartment, not a chair, not a table, not even a chest.

There is something singularly depressing in the aspect of an uninhabited room, even if no picture on the wall mock the silence around; but the strange, unreal life such presentiments possess by its contrast, adds inexpressibly to one's sense of loneliness and desolation. The eyes fastened full upon you, and from which, shift your position as you will, you cannot get away; the lips, with their eternal reticence, that yet look ready at each instant to accost you; the hands, once doubtless busy enough for good or evil, now hanging or folded in unchanging repose; the haunting presence, the dogging footsteps of the past which press upon you, closely following down the long vista of some unfre-

quented gallery; all these might well influence less impressionable nerves than those of Edith; yet, side by side with the repulsion, stood the fascination such places unaccountably possess; it drew her across the threshold, and lured her on.

"I hate to come into this room," said Isabel, glancing askance at the stern portraits. "They all look at me as if they hated me; I'm sure I don't know why. I never did them any harm. Come, do let us go back."

"One instant," replied Edith, who at that moment perceived at one end of the gallery a much newer picture than the rest, conspicuous in its gilded frame.

She quickened her steps, and took her stand before it.

It was the portrait of a man somewhat past middle age, short, thickset, powerful. The bull neck, the broad shoulders, the sombre brow, the heavy features, were but partially redeemed by the piercing glance of the eye, and the massive character of the forehead. The fresh coloring of the picture imparted to it a startling life-likeness, seen as it was in contrast with the dim and sunken tones of the paintings around.

"That's Sir Ralph," said Isabel, turning away her head.

"But you do not look like him in the least," remarked Edith.

"I hope not. There's no reason that I should."

"But," questioned Edith, much perplexed, "Is not Lady Tremyss your own mother?"

"Of course, but mamma was married twice. Her first husband was Captain Hartley. After he died she married Sir Ralph."

"Was he kind to you?" asked Edith with a distrustful glance at the scowling brow and Cyclopean shoulders.

"He hadn't much chance to be otherwise. I never came in his way if I could help it. I always hated him. Fortunately, it was easy to keep out of the way, the house is so

large.—But do come to my room; we can talk there just as well."

And Isabel hurried Edith up the gallery, carefully closing the door behind them, as if to effectually keep Sir Ralph in.

"Here it is pleasanter, isn't it? I had it all done to please myself," she said, ushering Edith into a gaily painted and papered room.

A cultivated taste might have been somewhat disturbed by the irregular and capricious juxtaposition of the colors employed, and by their too vivid tone; yet they seemed, in their own way, to harmonize with Isabel's style of beauty. If her surroundings were rather gorgeous, they were certainly becoming. They had obviously been chosen by instinct, for Isabel had to all appearance never plunged into the mysteries of the counter point of color.

"It looks very bright and cheerful," replied Edith, as she seated herself on the low chair which Isabel drew forward.

"And now, please tell me something about your father."

"Yes," returned Isabel, "only first let me make myself comfortable."

She cast herself full length on the ground, and crossed her arms over her head. "I love to lie so. Did you ever try it?"

"No," said Edith. "It would make me ache all over.—But you were going to tell me about your father."

"I don't know much, for mamma never speaks of him. She keeps a miniature of him locked up in her room. I got a sight of it once when she didn't know. I look just like him. I held it up beside my face before the glass to see. It's older, and the features are larger and it has whiskers, but except that we're just the same."

"How sad that he should have died," said Edith, gazing down on the beautiful face before her, so full of the joy of life.

"Yes; I suppose so. I don't know anything about it. Let's talk of something else. Do you ride?"

"Sometimes."

"Don't you love it?" asked Isabel, raising herself on her elbow. "I should like to live on horseback."

"I was thrown and hurt once, and that makes me afraid."

"What, have you given it up?"

"No, I said I rode sometimes. I have been out every day since I came to the Hall, on a pony; but it's lame now."

"What a pity!" said Isabel, sinking back, with a look of profound commiseration. Then suddenly starting up—"I know what I'll do," she cried, dragging Edith impetuously along the corridor and down the staircase.

"Mamma," she exclaimed, flinging open the drawing-room door, "Miss Arden's pony is lame, and she's afraid of horses, and I want to lend her Moira; can't I?"

"Of course," replied Lady Tremyss, raising her eyes an instant, then lowering them again upon her embroidery frame.

"Yes; but, mamma, I want you to come to the paddock, please. Moira is so fond of you. I want Edith to see."

Lady Tremyss rose, and passing through the hall, took her way along the terrace, followed by Edith and Isabel. As they came to the dining-room window, Isabel's roving eye rested on the mole lying dead beside the steps. A little trail of blood showed where he had made his way from the dining room.

"See, there's the little gentleman in velvet, as the old song says," she said, pointing him out to Edith.

Lady Tremyss turned her head.

"It's the mole, mamma. Mimi caught him, and we chased her into the dining room to get him away, and he crept under the carpet. It was then you came in."

Lady Tremyss walked quietly on. She led the way through Isabel's flower garden to a door in the high wall

beyond. As she opened it, a small black Irish horse which was grazing at the extremity of the enclosure, raised its head and gazed attentively towards them. As it recognized Lady Tremyss, it gave a plunge, and came galloping towards her, its long thick mane and tail flying behind it. It circled around the group, whinnying joyfully, then, coming close, it laid its head on Lady Tremyss' shoulder.

"See," said Isabel to Edith, who looked somewhat apprehensive, as if she feared a similar friendly demonstration. "She is just like a dog, and so easy! Come, Moira, I am going round the paddock to show you off. Down!"

The horse crouched like a dog, and Isabel seated herself upon its back.

"Around, mavourneen, around,—softly," she said. The pony rose carefully, and cantered gently around the paddock with a wave-like motion.

Edith's eye followed with delight Isabel's graceful figure and easy movements.

"How beautifully you ride," she remarked, as Isabel returned to her starting point.

"Oh, but you should see mamma," she exclaimed springing down. "I'm nothing to mamma."

Lady Tremyss turned silently, and led the way to the gate. Leaving the paddock, they went towards the house.

"Well, my dear, and how do you like Isabel?" asked Mrs. Arden as the carriage rolled down the avenue.

"Very much."

"And Lady Tremyss?"

"I don't know."

"Poor thing," continued Mrs. Arden, compassionately; "she's had many trials. I don't see how she has lived through them all, I really don't; and drowning is such a dreadful death!"

Edith was busy in wondering why Isabel had never once spoken of Walter.

As the carriage passed the couchant sphinxes and turned into the road, she looked around her, and gave a sigh of relief. She had not seen Goliath.

Isabel was as good as her word. The next day Moira appeared, led by a groom who bore an affectionate note to Edith, concluding with an entreaty that she would keep the horse as long as she liked.

The groom waited until Walter's horse was brought to the door, and Edith descended.

"I beg pardon, Miss," he said, touching his hat, as Edith cast a timid glance upon the mare, "but there isn't no cause to be shy of her. She's as gentle as a lamb, and ten times more intelligenter. If you'd allow me to advise you, Miss, you'll leave your whip at home. You need only speak to her, she'll understand; but as for a whip, she doesn't like it."

Moira seemed aware of the groom's encomiums, and determined to merit them. Exchanging her canter for an amble, she paced gently along beside Walter's high-stepping bay, gradually reassuring Edith, until she forgot to be afraid, and began to chat as if she were on the white pony.

They were approaching a farm house, and Edith was delightedly expatiating on the beauty of some little red and white calves which, huddled together in a ferny corner of a field, were looking over the hedge with their large, soft, startled eyes, curiously gazing at the passers-by, when a bull-dog rushed from the open gate of the farm yard, and with the detestable instinct which always teaches his race where attack will inflict the keenest distress, made a furious onset upon Moira's shoulders, jumping up as if trying to reach Edith.

Walter flung himself from his horse, but before he could reach the spot, Moira had wheeled so as to bring her hind legs into position, and inflicting two vigorous kicks upon the brute, flung him forcibly against the stone wall.

After assuring himself that Edith's fright had nothing in it alarming, Walter turned from her.

"I'm not afraid to leave you an instant. Moira will stand," he said, glancing at the mare, who, her eyes shining brightly from beneath her heavy front lock, was watching with evident complacency the retreat of her limping, yelping foe. He advanced to the farm yard.

"Farmer Robeson," he said, quietly addressing a shambling, long-faced man, who was in a lukewarm manner superintending the erection of a new cow-shed, and who had paid no attention to the savage outburst of his dog, "I have warned you three times already about that dog. I now give you another warning. Your lease is out next October; you will do well to look for another farm. Good morning." Without waiting for any reply, young Arden, who acted as agent for his aunt, mounted his horse, and proceeded on his way with Edith, leaving his tenant with gaping eyes and open mouth, whence the sentence came slowly dropping—

"The young Squire! Who'd ha thought it!"

"Who'd have thought it?" repeated Mrs. Robeson, a plump, black-eyed, little woman, who came flying from the house into the farm-yard like a bomb-shell, and there exploded. "Who'd have thought it? Anybody that had two eyes beside their nose, and a head a-top of them, would have thought it. Haven't you been behindhand with your rent, till anyone else would have turned you out long ago?" Like many other women, Mrs. Robeson, on occasions of distressful emergency, invariably abandoned the customary conjugal plural. "Haven't I been preaching and preaching, till I was as hoarse as a young turkey-chick with the pip, telling you that you had better keep on the right side of the young squire, for that he'd got a wrong one to him, for all so pleasant as he looks. And now you can do no better than to bring him here, with his face as white as a

sheet, and his eyes two coals of fire, to tell you that the lease is out next October. And such an easy rent! and all the money for repairs and drainage! and where are you going to find such grass land again? Get out of my sight, you cur," she exclaimed, the stream of her indignation being for the moment diverted from its original direction by the yelps of the cause of the disaster; and seizing a rake, she drove the offender into an empty cart-room, there to moralize on social distinctions whilst awaiting his doom. Then briskly returning to the house, without deigning a glance at her partner, she dressed herself in her best, and picking a bunch of the brightest flowers her garden afforded, and gathering a basket of her finest fruit, she betook herself to the Hall, ensconcing herself in the housekeeper's room, until the time of Edith's return.

"I've looked at her in church, and I'll trust her to make our peace with the young 'Squire and Madam Arden. She looks as soft as snow, but there's steel has gone to the making of her, I'll warrant."

Nor did Dame Robeson's manner of acquitting herself of her embassy disgrace her penetration. Having been admitted to an interview with the young lady, she enumerated to Edith the many favors her husband had received from the family, and lamented his thriftlessness and remissness, especially in the matter of the rent.

"He's a regular born innocent, poor man, Miss," she said—for Dame Robeson exchanged her home trumpet for a flute when she crossed the domestic threshold. She penitently accused herself as the guilty cause of the dog being retained, giving as her excuse that the farm-house was a lonely one, and that the previous tenant had been saved from the murderous midnight attack of three robbers, solely by the timely interference of a ferocious watch-dog; and finally, she besought Edith to save them from the double misfortune of losing at once so advantageous a lease and so

good a landlord; "for Miss," she concluded, "it is not for the like of me to be praising my betters; but I say no more than all the parish says, when I say that there isn't a gentleman in the whole county that can stand beside our young Squire."

And Edith, her sympathies strongly excited by Mrs. Robeson's manner of stating her case, promised to speak in farmer Robeson's behalf.

The subject was under discussion as she entered the drawing-room before dinner.

"I never liked Robeson, never liked him at all," Mrs. Arden was saying. "I'm glad he is going; I'd rather have him off the estate than on it. I don't care so much about his not paying his rent, but when it's got so that people can't be sure of their lives passing his gate, I say it's time he was gone," she ended, her habitual benevolence quite overbalanced for the moment by the ascendancy of her timidity. To her imagination, excited as it had been by the account of the creature's attack upon Edith, the bull-dog stood four feet five in his toes, and was of corresponding dimensions. "No, I'm determined he shall go the day his lease is out, and you did quite right to tell him so."

The moment was unpropitious; Edith must wait. But she had not to wait long; the wished-for opportunity soon presented itself.

"How much stronger you have grown," said Walter, as they sat over the chess-table after dinner, slowly arranging the pieces. He contemplated with satisfaction the rounding outlines of her figure, and the delicate pink of her cheek. "I am sure that fright would have knocked you up a little while ago."

"Do you know, I like that Roman Catholic custom of acts of gratitude," responded Edith, without any very obvious reference to her cousin's remark.

"What are they? I never heard of them."

"When one has some great good to be thankful for, they do something to make others happy. Is it not a good practice?"

"Yes, that's all right."

"Then will you help me?" she asked, with one of her smiles.

"But you must first tell me what your act of gratitude is to give thanks for?"

"It is for being brought here," she answered, simply.

As she met the earnest, unconsciously searching glance he fastened upon her, a blush rose on Edith's cheek, a blush that comes but once, the blush of the young girl who feels for the first time that she is no longer a child.

A something, he knew not what, almost painful in its sweetness, thrilled Walter from head to foot.

—Was that blush for him?—

"Ask me anything," he said.

"Let farmer Robeson stay."

"Anything."

* * * * *

The adventure of the bull-dog had probably somewhat shaken Edith's nerves, for she awoke from her next morning's slumber with a piercing shriek, much to the alarm of her maid, who was sewing at the window. She dropped her scissors, upset her work-basket, and sprang forward.

"Oh! gracious me, Miss, you've had a bad dream."

"Yes," replied Edith, glancing around with an expression of relief. "I dreamed that Sir Ralph's portrait was trying to get out of the picture gallery, and that Miss Hartley and I were holding the door against it. Oh! there it is again!" she exclaimed, as a loud clap came from without.

"Dear me, Miss, that's only a blind on the next story that has got loose. The wind is rather high this morning."

"What a face Sir Ralph's is," said Edith uneasily, half to herself. "I wish I had not seen it."

"Oh, but Miss, you must not let a picture that's nothing but a picture get on your nerves. Sir Ralph wasn't a bad sort of a gentleman, for all that he was rather ill-favored. My third cousin by the mother's side was housekeeper at the Park till she died, last year, of anneyeurism, the doctors said it was; and I've spent many an hour there, and knew all the ongongs of the house as well as if I lived there. Sir Ralph just fairly doated on my lady. To be sure, he never wanted her to speak to anybody else, and he was even jealous-like of Miss Hartley, but that was all along of his great love for her. He'd have given her the eyes out of his head. Why, that very horse you rode yesterday, Miss, Sir Ralph paid four hundred guineas for it. Not that it was worth it, for it wasn't. I've heard the coachman say its value wasn't much except for the tricks it can do, for it was trained like a dog;—and that's only one thing out of many."

"You say he was jealous of Miss Hartley?" asked Edith.

"Oh, yes, Miss! I'm sorry to say there wasn't no doubt about that. The servants said he would scowl if he did but hear her voice. It might have frightened another child, but she was as bold as a little lion. She never went near him, to be sure, but that wasn't because she was afraid of him. Once I was in the housekeeper's room, and she was running through the long entry, and she met Sir Ralph. That entry was like a sort of whispering gallery, you could hear anything that was said in it from one end to the other. They stopped for a moment. I suppose he looked at her some way she did not like, for the next minute I heard her say 'I hate you, Sir Ralph,' and off she ran. I expect his conscience pricked him for his dislike of her, for I heard him mutter, 'she's right.'"

"And Goliath?" questioned Edith. You know something about him."

"Oh, Miss, there's a man! If ever there was a good Christian on this earth, it's Mr. Goliath, for all his black skin—not that his skin goes against it, for I've heard that one of the chiefest fathers of the church, as they call them, was a black man. As for Mr. Goliath, for long-suffering and patient mindedness, he is a crown of glory. Why, Miss, the day Sir Ralph threw the decanter at him, and cut open his face, and it's a mercy he didn't make him blind of an eye for life—that very day when Mrs. Praylin, that was the housekeeper that was my cousin, was staunching the wound, for it bled most fearful, and binding it up, she couldn't help saying something sharp about Sir Ralph. She told me she couldn't keep her tongue between her teeth for that once, for all that she was a prudent woman that didn't look upon herself as justified in bearing any witness against her masters. And what do you think Mr. Goliath answered, Miss? He said Sir Ralph was hot in his temper always, but that it was nothing to think about. Sir Ralph would feel sorry some day. My cousin, Mrs. Praylin, the housekeeper, said that she looked at him as he spoke, and at that very moment, what with the pain and the natural grief he felt at receiving such a hurt, his face was quite a pale greenish color, instead of being black as it always was before and after. And he might well take it to heart, Miss, for though it's hard to believe now that he has got that awful scar, he used to be one of the handsomest men I ever looked on, in spite of his color, and now there isn't nobody that can brook the sight of him scarcely. Some wonder why Lady Tremyss keeps him in such a place, but he's been in the family a long time, and the scar is none of his fault. But, Miss, I'm tiring you, I expect, and that before you are out of bed."

Edith would gladly have questioned about Lady Tremyss, but her disinclination to hear more gossip overcame her curiosity, and she finished dressing, and left the room without any further conversation with her maid.

Her dream and Nitson's commentary, faded from her mind as she descended the staircase, and her thoughts reverted to her embarrassment of the previous evening. As she entered the breakfast-room, the flush that haunted her memory re-appeared upon her cheeks. It was only as the breakfast proceeded that she at length became at ease.

All the time before Walter's eyes floated the rosy light of Edith's blush.

The day was fine. The horses came to the door, Moira still officiating in place of the little white pony, and Edith and Walter took their way through the avenue, and past the rounding hollows of the Meadland farm.

As they turned their horses into a narrow and unfrequented lane, in which Walter assured her she would find any quantity of eglantine, they perceived at a little distance, a man walking from them. There was an air of dejection and neglect about him, that was scarcely warranted by his powerful frame.

Moira suddenly quickened her pace, and pressing close to the man, thrust her nose into his hand. He looked round quickly.

"Is it you, old girl—is it you?" he said. "I might have known you weren't a human, to be so friendly." Then raising his eyes, he touched his hat to Walter. "Beg pardon, Sir; but you saw it was none of my fault. I always took care of her, and she remembers."

He patted Moira's neck.

"I am sorry to see you in such a poor plight, George," said young Arden, disapproval and compassion struggling in his tone.

"Thank you, Sir. I never thought to see myself like this."

The man glanced at his tattered sleeve.

"I should have thought so good a groom as you are would have been able to find a place."

"Ah, Sir! you know the proverb about giving a dog a bad name. It's worse for a man. I've found places enough, and all seemed straight until they asked the name of my last master. That was the end of it; for you know, Sir, it was in all the papers how—" The man stopped a moment. —"I did get a place with a horse-breaker; but, Sir, it's hard when you've lived under gentlemen all your life, to take orders from them as aren't gentlemen. I had good wages, and I understood the work, but I wasn't contented, Sir. I gave it up, and tried again to get into a gentleman's stables; but it wasn't of no use."

"What brought you back to this part of the country? You surely must have known that your chance was better elsewhere."

"Well, Sir—I may as well say it—there was a young woman, Sir—" His face twitched. "But there's no use in speaking of that, Sir. It is all over, and I don't blame her."

There was something in the man's utter dejection and unresenting hopelessness that pained Edith to the quick. She averted her eyes, though she sat where he could not see her.

"It is hard on you, George, I acknowledge, very hard, that one single instance—for I believe it was the only time—"

"The only time, Sir, in all my life. I never liked drink. I never wanted it. And all along of one glass of wine."

"How's that?" inquired Walter somewhat distrustfully.

"So sure as God Almighty is above us, Mr. Arden, I never touched a drop of anything that day, except a pint of ale and one glass of wine."

"How came you to be drinking wine?"

Young Arden did not like the improbability of the assertion. His voice was growing colder.

"It was Mr. Goliath, Sir. Just before Sir Ralph started,

Mr. Goliath called me into the pantry, and told me that my lady was very uneasy because my master was going to ride Kathleen. He told me to keep a good look-out, and see that no harm came of it; and he poured me out a glass of port wine and I drank it. I didn't like the taste of it much, but I had never tasted any before; and, Sir, it got into my head. I began to feel queer while I was riding, but the air kept it off awhile. When we got there and I went into the servants' hall, I couldn't hold my head up. I sat down in a window-seat, and never spoke a word. They said I was asleep; but I wasn't, Sir. I was looking at faces all the time."

"What do you mean, George?" said young Arden. "Looking at faces!"

"Looking at faces, Sir," the man repeated, firmly. "I saw them plainer than I see you now." He fixed his haggard eyes on the young gentleman. "I thought I was in a sort of tool-house, whitewashed, with black patches here and there, where the whitewash had peeled off, and so long that I didn't see the end of it. And there were people—a whole procession of them—that never stopped; and they stared at me as they went by; and their faces were so thin, and so white, and so starved-looking, and some of them looked so wicked, Sir, that I'd have looked away, only I couldn't. At last some one came and told me as how the gentlemen were going. I got up, and some of the other grooms helped me to get my master's and my own horse ready; but they'd no sooner got me into my saddle than I fell off, and after that I didn't know anything till they woke me up next morning—for I stayed in the barn all night on the hay—telling me that Sir Ralph was drowned, and all along of me."

"This is a strange story, George," said young Arden, doubtfully; "a very strange story. I never heard of a man's being intoxicated by a single glass of wine."

The man made no reply.

Edith bent forward.

"Walter, I believe every word he has said."

"God bless you, Miss," burst from the man's lips

"I've watched him, and he is telling the truth."

Walter looked at her a moment. A kindred conviction was beginning to communicate itself to his mind.

"I can't stop longer now," he said to the groom, "but come to the Hall to-morrow morning. I'll see what can be done."

Slipping a piece of money into the man's reluctant hand, he rode on with Edith.

"I don't understand the thing at all," he said, ponderingly. "A single glass of wine? It sounds like a bare-faced falsehood."

"I don't judge people by facts,"—Edith remarked.

"No?" said her cousin. "By what do you judge them then?"

"I judge them by their faces. Faces never deceive, but facts may; I mean what we think facts, may."

"And are you never deceived in faces?"

"I sometimes meet faces that I cannot understand—Lady Tremyss' for instance; but I never make up my mind and find afterwards that I have been mistaken."

"You know we men aren't so sharp-witted as women in that way. We have nothing but facts to go by."

"What are you going to do for that poor man?"—interrupted Edith, aware, that in spite of facts, the groom's cause was gained.

"I'm sure I don't know. It's very awkward. I can't take him myself, because of Lady Tremyss."

"No, you couldn't do that, and he would not be happy; you remember what—"

Edith paused.

"Poor fellow! I pity him from the bottom of my heart," said Walter, his natural benevolence now in full ascendancy.

He rode on for awhile in silence, then, abruptly turning to Edith, said:

"What do you think of sending him out to Canada? He would have a new chance there."

"I think it would be just the thing," she exclaimed eagerly, "the very best thing. All the disgrace and pain would lie behind him, and he would still be among his own people. I think it an admirable idea. I wish he could know it now."

"Would you like to turn back and tell him?" asked Walter, drawing his rein. "He has not gone far."

"Oh, no, I am not quite so impatient as that. It would be better to have everything settled and arranged, and to look in the paper to see when the next vessel sails, and to tell him everything at once. We will wait till to-morrow morning."

On reaching the Hall they found Mrs. Arden in a state of excitement, her maid having reported Letty Prast as crying her eyes out and refusing to say why.

"What has distressed Letty so much?" asked Edith.

"It's all about a man, and a very bad man, I'm sorry to say. It's that groom of Sir Ralph's. It seems they used to be fond of each other when she was in service at the Park, and she had set her heart on him, and they were to have been married as soon as they had saved up a little money; and I declare I can't help being sorry for her, I can't, indeed, for it wasn't her fault, you know. Then all that happened, and her mother made her promise never to have anything more to say to him; and now he's come back, and I'm afraid he got a sight of her last night, for she's done nothing but cry ever since. She'd have cried a great deal more if she had married him."

Leaving Walter to explain as much of George's story as he thought proper, Edith proceeded through the offices until she reached the laundry.

Her knock, for she did not wish to take the girl by surprise, was answered by a stifled "Come in."

Letty stood diligently ironing a damask table cloth. She did not raise her head at Edith's entrance. The young lady stood for a moment uncertain how to begin. The presence of a great grief will check the expression of the kindest sympathy. Letty continued her occupation in silence. At last Edith spoke.

"I have heard, Letty—I have come to tell you how sorry I am."

"Thank you, Miss," Letty answered, and went on with her ironing. Anyone might have thought the girl devoid of feeling were it not for the beating of the vein in her throat.

Edith bent over the ironing table.

"I have seen him, seen him this morning, and I do not believe he has done any thing wrong."

Letty dropped her iron, sat down, covered her head with her apron and began to cry bitterly.

"It is very hard, very hard indeed, that he should be innocent, and that every one should believe him guilty," Edith continued.

"Not me, Miss, I never thought him guilty, never, never, oh! never!" sobbed Letty from under her apron.

"Mr. Arden is going to try to get him a place, and I am sure you will not be sorry to have him go where he can begin life afresh;"—Letty made a movement of attention—"He is going to ask this gentleman to take George with him to Canada."

A suppressed exclamation came from under the apron.

"It seems a long way off, I know, but he will soon be there, and then he will have no one to bring up all these stories against him, and he will be like a new man; and bye-and-bye he will come back, or, perhaps, you might go out to him."

Letty burst afresh into weeping.

"Oh, Miss! I promised my mother, and I can't. I would now if it wasn't for that, and I told him so last night; but I cannot break my promise. I wish I hadn't made it; but it's too late now—it's too late."

"Don't say too late," urged Edith. "I can't think that anything so dreadful as the innocent being thought guilty can go on forever. Don't cry, Letty, take heart, and believe that better days are coming." And after encouraging and comforting Letty to the best of her ability, finding it difficult to maintain a conversation which consisted solely of exhortations on the one side, and sobs on the other, Edith left the laundry to confer anew with Walter.

The next morning no George appeared at the Hall. A poor woman came to say that he could not move from his bed. Edith had the woman brought into the hall, and went out to see her.

"He's dreadful bad, Miss—took with the rheumatiz all over. He can't move no more nor his hand, poor soul, and he's all of a live coal with the fever. He said he couldn't no ways bear that the young Squire and the Miss should think ill of him, for not coming up, so I just made bold to come up myself, Miss."

Further questions elicited the cause of George's illness: he had slept for the three preceding nights under hedges.

Mrs. Arden effervesced into active benevolence forthwith, and ordered a basket to be made ready with all the comforts the occasion required. She would gladly have gone down herself, but Walter protested, and despatched a groom for Dr. Frintly, dismissing the woman with Mrs. Arden's basket, and a message that he would call himself in the course of the day.

When Walter called that afternoon at Mrs. Dingall's cottage, he found the man in a stupor.

"He's been so, Sir, pretty nearly ever since he took the doctor's stuff," said the woman. "He was in dreadful pain

before; but he quieted down very soon, and hasn't taken notice of anything since."

The stupor went off before the evening, and when Doctor Frintly called again at eight o'clock, he found his patient awake.

"Well, my man, how's the pain?" he said cheerfully, as he entered the little attic; skilfully avoiding bringing his head in contact with the low, slanting roof, while he advanced to the bed side.

"The pain is easier, Sir, thank you; but please, Sir, for God's sake, don't never give me no more port wine."

"Port wine," repeated the doctor, darting a scrutinizing glance at his face. "Who's been giving you port wine?"

"Mrs. Dingall, Sir. She brought it from the apothecary's."

"Mrs. Dingall didn't know what she was talking about when she called it port wine. It was an anodyne."

"It wasn't she, Sir. I've tasted it before, and what I had this morning was port wine."

"Hope he isn't out of his head," thought the doctor, feeling his patient's pulse. The anodyne had certainly not produced the effect he had anticipated. The man's pulse was higher, his eye was restless, his nerves were obviously much excited.

"Where was it that you drank port wine?" he questioned, carefully examining the man's countenance as he spoke.

"In the pantry at the Park, Sir."

"Well, if you drank it there, you drank precious good wine, I can tell you. Sir Ralph's cellar was the best in the county."

"This was just like it, Sir."

"He's not out of his head," thought Dr. Frintly, as the result of his investigation. "What the devil can he be talking about?"

"How did it taste?"

"Queerish, Sir."

"Queerish. A good many things taste queerish beside port wine."

"It wasn't only the taste, Sir, it was how it made me feel."

"How did it make you feel?"

"Most dreadful, Sir."

"Well, but how?"

"I'd rather not say, Sir, please; I don't like to think about it," said George, glancing uneasily around.

"He tells a straight story enough—puzzling enough, too," thought the doctor. "It may be that port wine disagrees with him—sherry does with some people; but it wasn't port wine."

CHAPTER IV.

SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS.

THE next morning, Edith accompanied Walter to the cottage, and waited at the door, while he made his visit above. Mrs. Dingall, a small, bleary eyed woman, with an habitually down-cast expression, came forward in obedience to a sign from Edith.

"Oh, yes, Miss, he's better now, much better, Miss, but he was awful bad the first night. He talked—I don't know whether it was in his sleep or not, he was so queer like, but he talked the whole time about Mr. Goliath, and the river, and Sir Ralph, till I was clean afraid he'd bring Sir Ralph's ghost to hear what it was all about. And, Miss," she added, glancing over her shoulder, "I'm not sure he didn't, for I heard the shutter move outside the window, I did, Miss, as sure as I'm standing here, and there wasn't a breath of air

stirring, Miss, not a single breath. And I heard footsteps, I didn't dare to look out, but I heard footsteps, Miss, and they stopped on the gravel below the window, ever so long a while, and then they went away."

Edith looked up at the window of the attic.

"But, my good woman, nobody is tall enough to reach the window shutter."

She had forgotten the supposed supernatural character of the visitant.

"That's just it, Miss, nobody is tall enough, and it was reached; so you see that proves it was a ghost."

Mrs. Dingall's fears, expanding as is usually the case, by expression, were rapidly becoming convictions.

"But you do not really believe in ghosts," said Edith, contemplating her interlocutor with some curiosity.

"Not believe in 'em, Miss!" repeated the woman, with a look of shocked piety. "I wouldn't dare not to believe in 'em; and as to Sir Ralph's ghost, it isn't the first time he's come."

"What do you mean?" asked Edith.

"Well, Miss, nobody speaks of it, for my lady was very much displeased when she heard of it; but the night Sir Ralph was drowned, his ghost came and told of it with an awful shout; it woke some of the maids. They were so frightened, Miss, that they didn't dare to move, for all that they sounded like Sir Ralph's voice. And true enough, the next thing they knew, the house was roused, and there was Mr. Goliath, his clothes all dripping, for he'd been uneasy about his master because of the horse he rode, which was so vicious; and he'd been down to look out for him, and had seen it all, and been into the river himself, and Sir Ralph was drowned. And it's all true, Miss. One of the maids is daughter to the woman who lives next to me, in that little cottage there, and it was she that told me; but she said my lady ordered it to be made known to them, that if any of

the household ever spoke of such a story again, they should lose their places; for my lady doesn't believe in ghosts, Miss."

"I don't wonder she was displeased," said Edith, thinking that she herself would greatly resent having a ghost admitted as an imaginary inmate of Arden Court.

Walter's appearance at the door of the cottage interrupted Mrs. Dingall's relation. With a few kindly words and a gratuity to George's nurse, he left the cottage.

"How is he this morning?" asked Edith, finding with a certain sensation of relief as she looked at him, that young Arden's powerful frame, clear eyes and pleasant smile, disproved the theory of ghosts.

"He's much better; in a few days he'll be up again. He tells me that Frintly says he has just escaped a rheumatic fever. But what do you think?—it's really curious—Witchkin's stupid assistant sent the poor fellow port-wine instead of an anodyne, and it produced the same effect as before."

"How very strange. It seems impossible," replied Edith, doubtingly.

"So I should have said, but Frintly rode over to inquire, and the assistant, careless donkey, owned that he had made the mistake."

"I don't like to have things coincide so," said Edith after a pause. It does not seem natural."

"The chief thing is, after all, that he is better, you know," returned young Arden, "and happy enough at the idea of going away."

"Yes, please tell about that," said Edith.

"It seemed a great relief to him. He has been dogged by ill-luck so long that at first he was scarcely able to believe he was at length to have a fair chance, like any other man. I wish I could get him a place as groom there. I would rather that he had everything clear before him when he sails."

"Do you know any one in Canada?" questioned Edith.

"Not a soul. The only way would be to get him a place with some one going out." Walter pondered awhile, then exclaimed:

I have it. There's Frank Daubenay; his regiment is just ordered there. I'll write to him by this very mail. It would be a capital berth for George. Daubenay is the kindest-hearted fellow in existence."

"I think, Aunt, I shall be able to get George a place as groom with Daubenay," said Walter at lunch. "You know a first-rate English groom is not easily found willing to leave England, and he'll be wanting one there."

"Is a Daubenay really going out to Canada?" inquired Mrs. Arden, her eyes looking very large.

"Yes; Daubenay's regiment was ordered off last week."

"Dear me, how very strange that is," said Mrs. Arden. "Yet it would be awkward to exchange under the circumstances, perhaps."

"What circumstances?" asked Walter. "It's not such very hard duty in Canada. Plenty of pretty girls, and balls by the dozen. Why shouldn't he go?"

"Dear me, didn't you ever hear of it? I never knew what to believe about it. All I was sure of was that it was a dreadful thing, and that the poor young man was very much to be pitied all the same, whether he were right or wrong, you know."

"But I don't know," said Walter; "that's precisely what I want you to tell me."

"Well, then, Frank Daubenay's uncle, Henry Daubenay, was condemned to death in Canada," responded Mrs. Arden, emphatically.

"A gentleman! how dreadful!" exclaimed Edith.

"Yes; wasn't it perfectly shocking? It quite broke his father's heart—quite. He never held up his head afterwards, but took to his bed and died, poor man."

"I never heard anything of this," said Walter. "How was it? It is hard on Daubenay."

"It was all because of some dreadful colonel. He told Daubenay to do something or other, and Daubenay wouldn't, and they quarrelled, and Daubenay drew his sword on him—I'm quite certain about that—and so he was condemned by a court-martial."

"And was he executed?" asked Edith in a low voice.

"No, dear; oh, no. It was very bad, but not quite so bad as that. The day before he was to have been shot, he escaped. I was so glad when the news came. It was his wife who got him off, so every body thought, for she disappeared at the same time. He'd been married only a little while to Lady Emily Blackland. She had run away, and followed him out to Canada."

"Why couldn't she marry him here?" asked Edith.

"Her parents opposed it, for he was a very wild young man, my dear."

"And what became of them?" inquired Edith.

"Nobody knew, my dear, and it was a great deal better they shouldn't, for if he had ever been found again, he would have been shot. People thought they had made their way to the States, poor things. But come, Edith, you must go and lie down on the sofa; you know Lady Tremyss and Isabel dine here to-day. I do hope Isabel will be quiet and sit still. I'd as lief have a salamander in the room when she's in one of her wild moods; I had, indeed."

When Edith entered her room to dress for dinner, she found an evening toilette of white muslin and Valenciennes displayed on the bed.

"Oh, no; please give me a high dress," she said.

"Certainly, Miss, if you say so," the maid answered, moving towards the wardrobe. "Only Lady Tremyss keeps very strict to London ways, and she and Miss Hartley are always low-necked in the evening; and so I thought, Miss,

perhaps it would be pleasanter for them if you were low-necked too. But it's just as you say," she concluded, with treacherous submission, opening the wardrobe door.

Thus presented in the light of a duty, Edith assumed the dress, but looked with distrust upon the parure of turquoise which the girl produced.

"No; really that is too much."

"If you think so, Miss. Only Miss Hartley always wears ornaments, and I thought it would please Mrs. Arden to see you looking nice."

Assailed on a second vulnerable point, Edith yielded.

"Come nearer, my dear," said Mrs. Arden, looking up from her novel, as Edith appeared in the drawing-room. "I want to look at you. Dear me, how very nice!"

She touched caressingly her niece's soft, floating curls.

"I'm afraid I'm too much dressed," said Edith, a little apprehensively; but Nitson seemed quite sure."

Whatever Mrs. Arden ventured to think, she only replied:

"You look very nice, my dear, very nice, indeed. I think Adeline Crane, in this book, must have looked very much as you do now; only I hope the likeness won't go any further, I'm sure, for she had three husbands, all at a time, and yet she seems to have been a nice sort of person, too."

Mrs. Arden returned to her novel, while Edith retired to a sofa, and worked at some purple and silver crotchet-work, until Lady Tremyss and Miss Hartley were announced. At the same instant Walter entered, and almost directly the doors of the dining-room were thrown open; so that Edith was not able fairly to look at Lady Tremyss and her daughter until they were all seated at the table.

Under the lamplight, their peculiar and strongly-contrasted beauty assumed new vividness. Lady Tremyss' purely cut features, her length of sable hair, braided and wound around the back of her head, displaying its severely

classic outline, her colorless complexion, the exquisite modelling of her neck and arms, relieved against her dress of black lustreless silk, gave her the appearance of some priestess on an Etruscan vase; while her intent look, even when listening and replying to the veriest trifles, the unslumbering expression of her eye, communicated something incomprehensible to her presence. Edith felt she stood before that which was entirely out of the scope of her perceptions. What was Lady Tremyss' ruling motive,—she began to ask herself. By what tie was she bound to life? She was still pondering, when Isabel spoke to her mother. As Lady Tremyss turned her eyes upon her daughter, they softened momentarily, then became cold and inscrutable as before. One look, and yet it was enough. Edith felt that she had solved the mystery. That instant had illumined to her view the sealed recesses of Lady Tremyss' heart.

"Nor is it strange," she thought, directing her attention to Isabel, who, with heightened color and brilliant eyes, was dilating to Walter upon the qualities of some music by a new composer.

Isabel, as predicted, was in full dinner costume. Her white dress and sash were embroidered with small crimson flowers, a spray of fuchsia was placed among the waving masses of her brown hair, and about her slender throat was twisted a glittering snake of black enamel and gold. Her fingers were loaded with rings, which shed a shower of sparks with every motion of her hands. There was a provoking grace, an elf-like sportiveness, a flush and glow of unquiet life about her, that made her all but intoxicating to look upon. You were pleased, you were vexed, you were delighted, you were piqued, all at once, and you could not tell why.

"Does Walter feel it? He must," thought Edith, glancing shyly at her cousin.

A brighter flush rose on her cheek, a faint smile deepened the corners of her mouth, as she dropped her eyes.

Walter was listening with an air more absent than interested; his eyebrows were imperceptibly raised, his lips were pressed a trifle closely together. In fact, Isabel was rather boring him. She had talked to him so many times before, just as she was talking then; and he was used, of late, to something so much better.

In spite of her beauty, Isabel was not attractive to Walter. The superficial character of her mind, the trivial nature of her interests, the restless changefulness of her moods, had never been displeasing to young Arden; but since he had known Edith, Isabel's gay prattle had become distasteful to his ear, her sparkling beauty wearied his eye. Something of this Edith felt as she sat there.

—"Walter does not care for Isabel."—She had not yet turned the next page. She had not yet learned to think,—
"Walter does care for me."—

Then came the thought—"I hope Isabel does not care for him."—

She turned to her. Isabel's rapid flow of talk had ceased for an instant.

"Let me thank you for all the pleasure you have given me," said Edith. "You do not know how I have enjoyed these rides. I shall send Moira back to-morrow; the pony must be well by this time."

"You couldn't be so cruel as to ride the poor little thing just after it had got a sprain, could you?" pursued Isabel.

"Not if it would hurt it, certainly; but, really, I can't keep Moira any longer."

"I can assure you that you had better keep Moira, and if ever I want her I'll send down a groom for her."

Isabel chatted quietly for awhile with Edith when they returned to the drawing-room, but soon she began to grow restless. She tangled the purple silk with which Edith was crocheting, she turned over the pages of the illustrated vol-

umes on the table by which they were seated, she unsnapped and snapped her bracelets; in short, Isabel fidgeted.

"I wish Mrs. Arden wasn't talking to Mamma," she said, finally, looking at them regretfully.

"Why?" asked Edith.

"Oh, then I would make her tell me stories; she knows ever so many horrid ones. I make her tell them whenever I spend the evening here. Did you ever hear them?"

"No."

"What a pity," ejaculated Isabel, "I suppose we can't make her tell them now." She paused and reflected, then with sudden animation resumed,—
"I know what we can do, we can make her give us the key of her private book case—she always keeps it locked, and we'll go upstairs and get some books and read the stories for ourselves, though it won't be half so good as if we, while she tells them, had her eyes to look at—I am sure she really believes them all."

Isabel approached Mrs. Arden with her request.

"Oh, yes, to be sure," replied that lady, apparently not sorry to have Isabel safely out of the room, for the clicking of the bracelets had been jarring her nerves. "There they are, my dear," and she produced from her pocket two small keys tied together. "Only please be sure to put back the books exactly in their places. Those you want are on the third and fourth shelves; and don't forget to bring me back the keys."

"Come," said Isabel in a low voice, returning to Edith's side, and holding up the keys. "We'll find something funny, you may be sure. I do so like to explore old ladies' crannies, don't you?"

"I never tried," said Edith, as they crossed the hall and ascended the staircase.

"It's great fun. I got Lady Chatterton to lend me her keys once, and you've no idea what things I found; and Mrs. Hammerthwaite—why her house is a perfect curi-

osity shop, for all it looks so precise and formal—I must tell you all about it some day, and how I got lost in it, and frightened one of the maids into hysterics. But here we are.”

So saying, she applied the key to the bookcase in Mrs. Arden's sleeping-room.

“No; don't look at that, it's nothing,” she continued, as Edith raised her hand to a crimson volume entitled “Sights and Sounds in the Catacombs,” “nothing worth reading; but just look over this;” and she took down a small, well-worn book. “It's Norwyn's Diary.” You wouldn't think it anything from the name, but when you've once begun it you can't stop. I got hold of it one day, and I begged Mrs. Arden to let me take it home with me, and I walked my horse and read all the way. The Bishop and some other people were coming to dinner, and I was not dressed in time, and I did not know what to say, for I only came down as they were going in. I thought the best thing was to tell the Bishop how it happened, and he said he didn't wonder at all, for that once when he was first in orders he began to read it before church, and it made him half an hour late for morning service.”

Here Isabel, seeing Edith, who had begun to read, seat herself on the projecting ledge of the bookcase, with the volume in one hand and the candle in the other, began to explore the shelves in search of a book for herself. Apparently she found nothing to her taste, for she presently unlocked the door of the cupboard beneath and drew forth one volume after another. She was soon absorbed in the contents of a large book, bound in that purple and white marbled paper of which the French are so fond. She rose to her knees, holding it up to catch the light of the candle, and studied it intently for a while; then laying it down, a mischievous sparkle glittering in her eyes, remained plunged in thought. At length she replaced the books and locked the cupboard door.

“Come, don't you think we had better go down?” she said. “I think tea must be brought in by this time.”

Edith mechanically descended from her post still wrapt in the pages.

“Isn't it interesting?” asked Isabel. “But the first part is nothing to the middle and the end.”

“Yes,” replied Edith absently, following Isabel downstairs in silence. As soon as they entered the drawing-room she sat down in a corner by a lamp, and went on with the narrative.

Isabel took her place near Mrs. Arden, behind a small japanned stand. She spread out her fingers upon it, and seemed to be at once studying her rings and listening to what Mrs. Arden was saying.

“I'm sure it's very kind in you to take any interest in the man, though he is in a pitiable state, very; but Walter is going to send him out of the country as soon as he can, to Canada with young Daubenay, and then no one will ever hear of him again, you know.”

The stand behind which Isabel was sitting, here gave a slight lurch forward.

“Oh, the table—what's the matter with it?” exclaimed Isabel, but without removing her hands.

“What is it, my dear?” asked Mrs. Arden, turning her eyes towards Isabel.

“Oh! look, there it goes again,” responded Isabel, as the table made a still more decided movement.

Mrs. Arden fell back in her chair. Lady Tremyss sat quietly observant.

“What is it?” repeated Isabel, as the table rocked backward and forward beneath her fingers.

Mrs. Arden raised her hand as if imploring silence whilst she collected her faculties of speech. At length, “There's a spirit in the room,” she said, in a tremulous whisper.

The motion of the table immediately ceased.

"There, do you see that?" she continued, drawing still further into the recesses of her easy-chair. "It heard me."

"What are we to do?" inquired Isabel, anxiously. "It won't hurt us, will it?"

"I hope not; I'm sure I hope not," replied Mrs. Arden, nervously; "but we must be very careful."

The table lurched forward.

"There it goes again!" ejaculated Isabel. "I'd rather not stay. I think I'll go home."

"No! no!" exclaimed Mrs. Arden, affrightedly; "don't think of it; don't take your hands away. I don't know what would happen if you did. Don't you see what it is?"

"No," answered Isabel. "I don't see anything at all—I only feel the table jump."

The table nearly tipped itself over.

"It's the spirit getting impatient," responded Mrs. Arden in an awe-struck whisper.

"What does it want?" asked Isabel.

"It wants to tell something. First, we must ask who it is. That's the way they begin."

"Then you must ask," Isabel answered. "I don't want to."

"Who are you?" inquired Mrs. Arden, in a trembling voice, staring at the chandelier.

There was no reply.

"Oh, I must say the letters—I quite forgot," said Mrs. Arden, hurriedly; and she began to repeat the alphabet. At Y the table moved.

"It's Y," she said tremulously, "Y."

A second trial gave the letter E.

"Y E, Ye. It's speaking to us all," said Mrs. Arden, apparently much relieved. But the succeeding letters decidedly impaired the consolatory effect of the first. Q U E N E came, much perplexing her mind.

"Isn't it old English?" asked Isabel. "Perhaps it means the Queen."

"Oh, gracious, you don't say so!" exclaimed Mrs. Arden, wildly. "What shall we do? Shall we go down on our knees?"

"I think we had better see if we can find out what queen it is," replied Isabel, in a somewhat unsteady tone, which Mrs. Arden took as an indication that even her nerves were not proof against the majestic presence of the unseen visitor.

ELIZABETH came, letter by letter, to increase Mrs. Arden's consternation. But the table left her no time for comment or reflection. MERCURY AND SATURN MENACE CONJUNCTION LET THOSE WHOM IT CONCERNETH BEWARE, was the message delivered by the supernatural visitant of the drawing-room. Then the table resumed its pristine tranquility, and remained obviously impervious to all Mrs. Arden's entreaties that it would graciously deign to explain its utterance.

"Well, I think no one now need attempt to deny the existence of spirits," said Mrs. Arden, after a pause. "To think of it!—merely to think of it! And everything looks quite the same as it did before," she continued, casting her eyes around the room. "It seems impossible before any one has seen it, and yet perfectly natural after it has happened,—don't you think so?" she added, addressing Isabel.

"Yes, I do," Isabel responded; and, rising abruptly, she seated herself near Edith, and, turning her back to the rest of the room, seemed shaken by an internal agony. This Pythoness-like convulsion passed unnoticed by her hostess, whose mind had returned to the contemplation of the ominous warning conveyed by the table.

"'Mercury and Saturn menace conjunction.' That means, according to Destrouyn's Manual, craft and power when they are alone; and when Mercury approaches Saturn, craft changes to treachery, and power becomes—what's

the word?—maleficent, he says, and betokens the approach of an enemy. 'Let those whom it concerneth beware.' It must have meant some of us, or else it wouldn't have come here. Isabel was the nearest person. I hope it did not mean her," she said, turning to Lady Tremyss, who had sat an impassive spectator.

"I do not fear anything for Isabel," replied Lady Tremyss, in her calm voice.

The tea-tray here appeared, interrupting Mrs. Arden's remarks; and directly afterwards Walter came in.

No further mention was made of the spiritual experience which had taken place, unnoticed by Edith, who was still immersed in Norwyn's Diary, and unseen by Walter, who had been mentally comparing Edith and Isabel to the accompaniment of sips of sherry in the dining-room; for Mrs. Arden, great as was her desire to display this last conclusive proof, yet was withheld from so doing by the fear lest her recital should be received by Walter with an imprudent incredulity, which might bring back Queen Elizabeth, in all the grandeur of outraged and invisible dignity, to avenge herself by some one of those sudden outbreaks of rage, with which contemporaneous historians have made us familiar,—
"If it had been any spirit but Queen Elizabeth, I shouldn't feel so afraid," mentally soliloquized Mrs. Arden; "but she was a terrible woman, and there's no knowing what she might do if she got angry; perhaps she might hale us all about by the hair of our heads, as she did that poor lady who wanted to get married. I think I'd better not say anything about it, not even to Edith. Perhaps the next one will be Lady Jane Grey, and she wouldn't hurt anybody. Yes; I'll wait. But what could it have meant?"

When Lady Tremyss and Isabel had driven away, and Edith and Walter had retired to their respective apartments, Mrs. Arden unlocked the cupboard of her private bookcase, and drawing thence various volumes, studied their contents

till one o'clock; though, judging from the expression of her countenance, she appeared in no wise enlightened when she ended.

A little note from Isabel, inviting Edith and Walter to take a drive with her mother and herself that afternoon, was brought to the Hall early the next morning; and punctual to the hour mentioned Isabel and Lady Tremyss appeared.

"Doesn't Mamma look like a beauty in that hat?" said Isabel to Edith. "She wears it on purpose to please me. I pulled all the feathers out as soon as it came down, and made Melvil put them in another way. Isn't it becoming?"

Becoming it certainly was, Edith thought, as Lady Tremyss stood in the hall, a wide black scarf draping her, the heavy plumes of her small black hat casting their shadow over her pale face.

"It looks like rain," said Isabel, descending the steps side by side with Edith. "Oh, if you want to see Mamma look her handsomest you should see her in a thunderstorm. Her eyes shoot out lightning, and—"

"Isabel," said Lady Tremyss' quiet tones from the carriage, "are you not keeping Miss Arden waiting?"

Isabel hurried forward.

"Tell him to take the Durston Road," she said to the footman, while Walter handed her into the carriage; "and tell him to drive fast."

"I'm sure we're going to have a shower," she repeated, taking her place opposite Edith.

"It's a pity," Edith replied.

"No, it isn't, not a bit," responded Isabel, shaking her pretty head.

"Not in an open carriage?" queried Walter, with a glance at Edith's white muslin dress.

"Oh no, it won't hurt any of us, you'll see," rejoined Isabel.

Her eyes were dancing, she looked brimming over with suppressed merriment, and chattered like a mocking-bird as they drove forward, keeping the while an observant eye on all around. She detailed to them with infinite comic fidelity of imitation, her experiment of the night before, and convulsed Walter and Edith with her rendering of Mrs. Arden's expression of countenance before the regal visitor from *outré vie*. At length a large white tent appeared in sight. Isabel pulled the check rein. The footman descended.

"Tell Jarvis to drive to that tent," she said peremptorily. The footman resumed his seat, and the carriage drove on.

"My dear," said Lady Tremyss, who had not before spoken, "you cannot know what that tent is."

"Yes, I do," replied Isabel. "It's wild beasts, and I've brought you and Walter expressly to make it respectable, and I must go. I must, really and truly. I shall die if I don't. I dream about lions and tigers every night, because I haven't seen any, and now here they are, and they've come on purpose to be looked at."

"But nobody goes," Lady Tremyss objected.

"We're not nobodies, we're somebodies; so what nobody does doesn't concern us," responded Isabel. "And what's the harm in going? Only because other people don't go. I don't want to see other people there, I want to see the animals, and I've set my heart on it, and you'll let me, now won't you, you darling? You couldn't say no to me if you tried, you know you couldn't. May I go?" And Isabel looked smilingly in her mother's face.

A sharp contraction, as of pain, one instant furrowed Lady Tremyss' smooth forehead, then leaning back she made a mute sign of assent. Isabel clapped her hands.

"I knew you would. Ah, here we are! How slow Gilbert is," she said, impatiently.

At that moment a low, deep growling was heard from the tent. Edith drew back involuntarily. Glancing at Lady

Tremyss, she saw a sudden gleam escape from her eyes. She had no time to watch her further, for just then the tardy Gilbert threw open the carriage door.

"We had better take our cloaks with us," said Lady Tremyss, standing up in the carriage, and casting a glance at the black clouds that were slowly rising from the west; "it may rain.—No, thank you, I will keep it," she added, as Walter offered to relieve her of the heavy covering. "You can carry Miss Arden's and Isabel's."

They entered the caravan.

"We will take our seats at once," said Lady Tremyss. "The performances have begun. We can walk round and let Isabel look at the animals afterwards."

Leading the way to a vacant bench, she placed Edith by her side in the front row of the circle, while Isabel and Walter took their places directly behind.

As Edith gazed around, a very disagreeable sensation crept over her. She felt as though oppressed with nightmare. Her senses were assailed on every side by strange and bewildering sounds, sights, and odors. Above the heads of the circle of spectators she saw massive bars, behind which moved with restless, incessant motion, those monsters which had haunted her childish dreams. Their bright, fierce eyes glared at her; she beheld again the sharp white teeth which had so often in those terrified visions been ready to close upon her; the strong and penetrating odor acted peculiarly upon her nerves, producing in itself a sinking apprehensiveness. The low growlings, interspersed from time to time with angry snarls and plaintive, half-human cries, made a demoniacal concert.

Edith struggled against her nervousness; she felt herself humiliated by her fears. Her will chafed against the thick coming fancies which assailed her imagination. She sought to turn aside her attention. She looked at the circling ranks of wondering and delighted rustic faces before her; she

heard their shouts of laughter, while the keepers displayed the tricks of their trained dogs and ponies; she beheld the little deformed dwarfs, the monkeys, playing their grotesque antics, with almost human mockery, and closed her eyes in disgust, soon compelled by the fascination of fear again to open them and turn them upon the ever-moving objects of her dread.

"Oh, look," said Isabel, in an excited whisper, "here comes the great elephant. I like him best of all."

As it advanced, the aspect of its sagacious, benevolent eye, the massive repose of its figure, scarcely disturbed by its slow, swaying tread, its friendly glance, when it received from the hand of the crowd its customary dainties, its look of patient strength, communicated a moment's relief to Edith's fevered nerves. But her pleasure was of short duration. A faint flash of lightning glanced through the open roof, followed by a long, low, muttered roll of thunder. The animals moved more quickly up and down; they uttered discordant cries. The keepers looked around uneasily, then, glancing at the spectators, they whispered to each other. There was a pause in the performance. The crowd began to give signs of impatience. The sounds appeared to decide the keepers. They withdrew to the back of the caravan. "The great American panther, the only one ever tamed," Edith heard whispered around her, and every eye was turned to the open space in the circle.

Edith dared not ask any question. Surely they were not going to bring the animal there!

A murmur rose from the outskirts of the crowd of spectators; she looked, and saw a keeper enter, leading a panther by a leash. Its dark, sullen head held low, its sinister eyes glaring sideways on the audience, its tail swaying heavily, it was led along with slow, reluctant motion, to the centre of the ring. Suppressed exclamations of surprise and delight broke from the spectators as the animal, in unwill-

ling obedience to the orders of the keeper, leaped through his arms, laid its paws on his shoulders, rolled over like a cat, and went through the round of its performances; but at every fresh command there was a pause before it obeyed, and those nearest could see that the keeper's eye watched observantly its every motion, while the elephant held itself aloof, eyeing it with an oblique, distrustful glance.

At length the exhibition of its accomplishments was over, and the keeper proceeded to lead it around the circle before it made its exit. He had taken but a few steps when a vivid flash of lightning, followed instantly by a loud crash of thunder, broke over the tent. The animal stopped short, cowered, and uttered a short cry. The keeper shook it by the leash and menaced it with his iron-handled whip. It snarled and proceeded. Its tail moved rapidly, lashing its flanks; its eyes glowed like burning emeralds. Edith's eyes followed its every step. Her fixed gaze seemed to draw towards her the creature's attention. As it reached the opposite side of the circle, it turned its head, and glanced around. Its look rested upon her white, shrinking figure. Again it stopped, it stretched out its neck, and gazed immovably upon her. Again the keeper shook the leash, then with an affrighted shout, smote it with the iron handle. It crouched, rose in the air, and sprang full towards Edith.

A heavy mantle met the animal in its bound, enveloping the upper part of its body, blinding it; Lady Tremyss cast herself on the ground beside it, in the desperate endeavor to retain the folds about its head, whilst the panther, rolling over on its back, tore furiously at the mantle with its claws.

There was a moment of unutterable confusion, shrieks, cries, oaths, crashes, a trumpet-like roar, a ponderous rush, a piercing yell, and the panther lay writhing on two long white tusks, pinned to the ground by the elephant, which, with upcurled trunk, and tail erect, stood motionless, watching, with keen, expanded eye, the dying struggles of its foe.

One universal uproar rose from the cages around. The bars rattled as the excited animals within strove to break free. The terrified crowd pressed tumultuously towards the exit.

"This way, Madam, this way. You'll get soonest to the air this way."

The keepers opened a small door which led to a vacant enclosure without the tent. Walter carried out Edith insensible. Two or three women attached to the caravan, came hurrying to her aid. As they bent over her with restoratives caught up in haste, Walter raised his eyes from her death-like countenance. He remembered the terrible face that had flashed before him with blazing eyes, and lips drawn back. He looked at Lady Tremyss. She was pacing up and down with rapid steps, her chest heaving, her nostrils dilated, impatient fire in her look.

Leaving Edith, Isabel sprang towards her.

"Mamma, mamma, are you hurt; that's blood."

Snatching away the broad scarf that Lady Tremyss held closely about her, she showed her side, torn by the panther's claws.

"Don't stop me, let me breathe," said Lady Tremyss, throwing back the upper part of her figure with a gesture of wild strength. And she continued to pace up and down, like the creatures within.

"She's come to," exclaimed one of the women, joyfully. "Thank Heaven! pretty dear."

"Lady Tremyss," said Edith, half inarticulately, as her senses returned. "I want Lady Tremyss."

Isabel dragged her mother towards her.

Edith rose staggering to her feet, and extending her arms, sought to throw herself on Lady Tremyss' neck. Lady Tremyss seized her wrists, and held her back.

"You have saved a life," said young Arden, hoarsely.

She answered nothing, but turned away.

Repulsing every offer of assistance, she entered the carriage. The horses sprang rapidly forward to escape the impending storm. Lady Tremyss did not speak, till in her usual quiet tone she bade Edith good afternoon, as Walter lifted her out at the Hall, with courteous hopes that her alarm might have no bad consequences.

CHAPTER V.

EDITH'S ILLNESS. DR. JACOBS.

THREE weeks had passed, during the course of which Mr. John Arden, Sir Joseph Slingsby M. D., and Brenton had made their appearance and disappearance at the Hall, and still Edith was confined to her room.

The palpitations which had followed her fright had been long and severe, leaving her in a state of great prostration. Her father, summoned in haste, had arrived the next day, bringing with him the great London physician and Edith's maid.

The latter Edith, in an exhausted whisper, positively refused to see; and Brenton was accordingly despatched to Arden Court by the return train. Sir Joseph, after assuring Mr. Arden that the case presented no alarming symptoms, sent off, in his turn, for the physician of the shire town, Dr. Jacobs, into whose hands he committed Edith, declaring to her father that she was under as good care as was to be found in England. He then took his leave, crossing, on his way back, three separate telegrams sent to summon him to three devout and titled believers, who would have considered it little short of self-immolation to commit their bodies to any other skill.

Mr. John Arden made a longer stay, remaining for the period of ten days, at the end of which Dr. Jacobs politely dismissed him.

Like most men, Mr. John Arden was endowed with an opaque want of comprehension as to what was desirable in a sick room. He would sit by his daughter's bedside, turning over the morning papers in search of something to interest her, when every rattling of the sheets was like a blow upon her temples. He closed the door whenever he came in or went out of her chamber, with the extremest caution until it was in its place; then suddenly relaxing his hold, sent off the lock like a pistol. He woke her up with inquiries whether she were not hungry, and kept her awake with regrets that he had disturbed her; in short, with the best intentions in the world, Mr. John Arden acted as if instigated by the worst, and the result of his assiduous attendance told so palpably upon his daughter's state, that her physician, as we have said, was at length forced to advise his return to Arden Court.

His absence did not produce all the good results that Dr. Jacobs had anticipated. Edith's restlessness diminished, it is true, but her depression increased. Three weeks after he had been first summoned, the physician sat at the foot of her bed, surveying her with a puzzled aspect.

Dr. Jacobs was a man of about sixty, with a broad forehead and snow-white hair. The lynx-eyed penetration that would have been alarming in any other, in him was tempered with such gentleness, such kindness and charity, that it lost all that was formidable, and served but to give confidence in his ability.

As Dr. Jacobs sat with his eyes fixed upon Edith's face, watching the weary gaze she had fastened on the opposite wall, he heard a low sigh break from her—a peculiar quivering sigh.

A sudden gleam of comprehension shot across his face. He turned to Mrs. Arden and said, "How old is she?"

"Nearly seventeen," and Edith's aunt sighed as though a world of woe were comprised in the communication.

"Indeed! I had thought her much younger."

Dr. Jacobs studied Edith's face again. While he looked, the hall door was unclosed, and the sound of young Arden's voice came through the open window.

A faint flush rose on the wan cheek.

Dr. Jacobs pressed his lips together and looked down on the carpet, then rose and walked about the chamber a little while. Stopping before Mrs. Arden, who by dint of anxiety had grown to look as grim as a Gothic Saint, he said, cheerfully, "I think, Madam, that we must change our treatment a little."

Mrs. Arden looked up eagerly. Could it be! Was Dr. Jacobs really going to try the Panacea?

Vain hope;—his next words destroyed it.

"Yes. We have tried entire rest and seclusion long enough. Now, if Miss Arden approves, we will have a little more variety and amusement. I think she needs toning. We must have some open air, and a little conversation."

Edith had turned her head, and was watching him intently.—Was she really going to see Walter again? and how soon?—She listened eagerly.

"We will begin cautiously. I think, perhaps, it would be better that she should be dressed, and taken into the next room. She might see, for instance, Mr. Arden for a few moments to-day, Miss Hartley a day or two later. But Miss Hartley is more of a stranger. We had better keep principally to the persons she is most accustomed to, for the present."

He approached the bed.

"Do you think you could try it, my dear?"

After the first fortnight, he had always addressed Edith as "my dear."

She looked up and smiled. There was something in the smile that went to Dr. Jacob's heart.

"I hope nothing will cross her," he said to himself as he went down stairs. "It might be one of those cases."

By one of "those cases," Dr. Jacobs was in the habit of mentally designating what is termed in the vulgate "a broken heart." He always spoke of such instances as "cases of consumption."

During every waking moment of those long three weeks, Edith had longed for Walter's presence.

She craved the repose of contact with his strength, his cheerfulness, the exhilaration of his gaiety. His companionship had grown to be more than a luxury—it had become a necessity. Of all this Edith was aware, yet she had never gathered up together her various wants and needs and desires, and looked upon them and called them by their name. For a moment she had been bewildered by their newness; then she had decided that they were gratitude. It was gratitude that she felt. She was grateful to him, oh, so grateful!

It now was gratitude that brought the light to her eye, the color to her cheek, as, when she was established on the couch in the next room, Walter was admitted and came to her side and took her outstretched hand. He was there. She had all she wanted.

The interview had done Edith infinite good. Dr. Jacobs nodded approvingly at her the next morning, and told her he saw that she meant to dismiss him as soon as possible. He moreover informed her that he had the day before received a note from Miss Hartley, imploring to be allowed to see her, and that he had consented that she should come for half an hour.

"I hear carriage-wheels," said Edith, suddenly, half raising herself on the couch.

"Lie still, now do, please, my dear," implored Mrs. Arden, rising and going to the window. "Yes, it is Isabel, and—"

"And Lady Tremyss?" exclaimed Edith, her face flushing.

"Yes, but of course Lady Tremyss is not coming in. There, the carriage is turning."

While she spoke, quick steps were heard running along the gallery, and Isabel entered, bearing a basket of flowers. As she caught sight of Edith, she suddenly deposited her burden on the floor, and springing forward, knelt beside her, and laid her cheek on hers; then raising her head for a moment, she looked earnestly in Edith's face, her brown eyes glistening, and sat quietly down on the floor beside her, holding her hand.

Mrs. Arden glanced at her an instant over her spectacles; Isabel was behaving better than she had expected.

As Isabel sat thus clasping her hand, a slow revolution began to work itself in Edith's thoughts concerning her. She became dimly conscious of depths in Isabel's nature at which she had not guessed, she vaguely felt that under her thoughtless vivacity, her childish recklessness, there lay a fund of undeveloped earnestness, a hidden reservoir of passionate strength. She turned and gazed in Isabel's eyes, then passing her arm around her neck, drew her towards her and kissed her.

"My dear, haven't you forgotten your flowers?" said Mrs. Arden after a pause, during which she had directed several perplexed glances at the two silent figures before her. Mrs. Arden did not comprehend mute speech.

Isabel rose and brought the basket to Edith.

"How beautiful," she exclaimed, as her eye rested on the brilliant, strongly contrasted hues, "and the basket, how pretty it is?"

"Do you like it? I am very glad! Mamma set me working it for you when I was so miserable, because I came away every day without seeing you. She drew the pattern and showed me how."

"Is she really quite well now?" asked Edith, unconsciously paling a little.

"Yes," said Isabel; then lowering her tone, she added: "When you see her, don't say anything. She won't like it."

"No," replied Edith, sinking her voice likewise. "But why?"

"I don't know. All the county has called just as they have here; and sent messages and all that; but mamma wouldn't receive, and always sent word that she was perfectly well. But she could not wear a tight dress for more than a fortnight; beg all I could, she wouldn't have the doctor, and she wouldn't let me see the place."

"I won't say anything," whispered Edith, as Isabel, glancing at her watch, rose to leave her; "but tell her how I feel."

She took Isabel's two hands and looked earnestly at her.

"Yes," replied Isabel, "I'll tell her. When would you like to see her? She'll come."

It was arranged that Lady Tremyss should call the next day.

Punctual to Isabel's appointment Lady Tremyss came. Her visit was at once a relief and a disappointment to Edith. The scene at the caravan had, to all appearance, passed totally from her preserver's mind.

CHAPTER VI.

DR. JACOBS INTERVIEWS THE DRUGGIST'S ASSISTANT.

"WELL, Doctor, how do you find your patient this morning," said Walter, as he met Dr. Jacobs in the hall a day or two later.

"We are doing very well. We are promoted to beefsteak and old port to day."

"Old port," repeated young Arden, rather dubiously. "Are you not afraid it may act on her nerves?"

"I hope it will. That's what I give it for. But why do you wish that it should not?"

"Oh, I know nothing about it," replied the young man, "only if it were to make her see disagreeable things."

Dr. Jacobs laughed.

"A wine glassful would scarcely do that."

"But a wine glassful did do that," replied Walter, gravely.

Dr. Jacobs stopped laughing. His professional curiosity was roused. Had young Arden really discovered any person so peculiarly open to the action of stimulants? It was worth while finding out what he meant.

"Just explain, won't you? Do you mean to say that you ever met any one over three years of age who could be seriously affected by a glass of wine?"

"Certainly. It struck me as strange, but it happened only a few weeks ago. That groom of Sir Ralph's, who was so much abused at the time of the accident, you remember?"

"Yes."

"Well, he came here and was taken ill. Frintly ordered him a sedative, and Witchkin's assistant sent him port-wine by mistake. It produced the strangest effect upon him—made him see visions."

Dr. Jacobs raised his eyebrows incredulously.

"What sort of visions?"

"According to his account, painfully distinct—a procession of disagreeable faces."

"It wasn't port wine. It was an opiate—an overdose."

"But it wasn't the first time it had happened. He took a glass the day Sir Ralph was drowned, and it produced the same effect."

Dr. Jacobs shot a quick glance at his companion.

"Indeed! Who gave it to him?"

"The butler at the Park, Goliath."

Dr. Jacobs' eyebrows lowered over his eyes. He compressed his lips, and stood a moment in thought, then looking up, said:

"Where was this groom when he took the supposed sedative?"

"At Mrs. Dingall's; one of the people on the Tremyss estate."

"Can you give me the direction?"

Walter gave the address.

"It is a very curious case. I think I shall call and find out all I can about it. One can't get too much light on such matters, you know."

Dr. Jacobs drove away in the direction of Mrs. Dingall's.

Mrs. Dingall had been busy at the wash-tub when the unaccustomed event of a vehicle stopping at her door brought her out.

"Is your name Dingall, my good woman?"

"Yes, sir, if you please, sir," answered Mrs. Dingall, looking alarmed. All her surprises in life, poor woman, had been of a disagreeable nature, accordingly she looked distrustfully at this new one, personified in Dr. Jacobs.

"There was a man, a groom, staying here, ill, awhile ago, I believe."

"Yes, sir, but he's gone, sir; he went a week ago to-day. Mr. Arden sent him off to Canada, sir."

She looked up, as if that were well off her mind. Surely now the visitor would go away.

But no. Dr. Jacobs gave no sign of moving.

"When he was ill, there was a mistake about some medicine, I believe."

"Yes, sir; but it wasn't I, sir. It was the apothecary's young man, sir."

"Yes, I know you were not at all to blame."

"Thank you, sir," said Mrs. Dingall, courtseying, and looking somewhat relieved.

"Who was it that took the prescription to be made up?"

Mrs. Dingall's fears returned in full force.

"It was I, sir; but I brought it home just as it was given to me. Nobody ever thought of blaming me, sir."

"Of course not. Then you saw it made up?"

"Yes, sir. I saw the young man take the big bottle down, and measure it and pour it into a little one."

This improbable statement appeared in no wise to diminish the interest with which Dr. Jacobs was listening to her communication.

"And then what did he do?"

"Then he poured in a little of something yellow, sir."

"Syrup," said Dr. Jacobs to himself.

"And then—?"

"And then, yes, sir, then he filled it up with something that looked like water."

"Very well, you observed very well. Now, can you tell me where the large bottle stood, out of which he poured the first liquid into the little bottle that he gave you?"

"Yes, sir," responded Mrs. Dingall promptly, inspired by the comfortable belief that, since the gentleman had praised her, no harm was coming of it. "He turned round and took it from the shelf just behind him."

"Where was he standing?"

"Behind the scales, sir. I noticed it, because he rested his chin on the top of them when he asked me what I wanted."

"Which shelf did he take it from?"

"I don't know, sir. It wasn't from the top ones."

Dr. Jacobs paused and cogitated. Mrs. Dingall, her fears allayed, began to remember, regretfully, the warm soap-suds. They would certainly get cold. She shifted her weight from one foot to the other with a sort of meek impatience.

"Was it not rather queer, his resting his chin on the top of the balance?"

"Yes, sir; the young man was rather queer, sir."

"How?"

"Why, he seemed a sort of 'mazed like, sir. He was uncommon polite, and called me 'sir' all the time."

Dr. Jacobs meditated anew. Mrs. Dingall stole sideways to the door of the cottage and looked in. The tub was still steaming. She took courage and returned.

"Was there any label on the bottle?"

"No, sir."

"Unpardonable carelessness, that!" commented Dr. Jacobs.

"Then he gave you the bottle, and you took it directly home?"

"Yes, sir. I never let it go out of my hand till I gave it to him here, sir."

"Pray, have you any of the bottles used when the groom was ill?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I've got them all. You don't think I'd throw anything away, sir!"—in a tone of deprecatory surprise.

"Oh, very well," said Dr. Jacobs, brightening up. "Sometimes it's the best thing people can do to throw physic away, but it wouldn't have been so here. Would you be so good as to bring me those bottles? and then I won't detain you any longer."

Mrs. Dingall withdrew, her motions quickened by the unmistakable vision of the strange gentleman's hand approaching the strange gentleman's pocket.

She was gone longer than Dr. Jacobs had expected. Finally she reappeared, holding two bright shining glass phials.

"Eh—oh! What's that!" exclaimed Dr. Jacobs.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, sir, but they were

dirty, and I washed them out, sir. Now they look as clean as need be."

And she held them up triumphantly.

"The corks, you didn't wash the corks, did you?" said Dr. Jacobs, catching at a ray of hope.

"No, sir, I'm very sorry, sir," responded Mrs. Dingall, penitently, perceiving that something was wrong; "but I beg pardon, sir, they smelt bad, sir, and I didn't think they would be useful, and so I just dropped them into the fire, sir."

Dr. Jacobs silently put a shilling into Mrs. Dingall's hand, and turned his horse away.

There was something here to be found out. He had been foiled at the woman's with regard to the bottles, but he had, nevertheless, got some important information. He was very nearly sure that it was not port wine that Mrs. Dingall had carried home. Now to Witchkin's, to verify the position of the large bottle, and find out the truth of the story as to the alleged mistake.

Mr. Barrows presented himself to Dr. Jacobs' eyes as he entered the shop. He stood for an instant, studying the assistant's appearance.

"Unsatisfactory," thought Dr. Jacobs to himself. He advanced to that part of the counter where the scales were suspended, and cast a glance along the row of bottles. There it was, just where Mrs. Dingall had seen it. Then why on earth had the assistant said he had made a mistake?

Dr. Jacobs looked again at him. Mr. Barrows meekly advanced. He did not exactly like the investigating expression of the stranger's face, for Mr. Barrows had but recently made his appearance in the shop, and Dr. Jacobs was a stranger to him.

"A fine morning, sir," he said, with a lack-lustre glance at that portion of the sky visible between the colored jars in the window.

"A very fine morning; enough to make all the sick people well."

"Well, sir, I hope not."

And Mr. Barrows gave a melancholy smile that would have suited a sentimental vampire.

"Oh, you think that would not suit you."

"No, sir; there's not much doing anyway. The country is a dreadfully healthy place, sir."

And he looked more depressed than before.

"Yet the country people have their ailments. One of the finest young fellows I ever saw was pulled down a week or two ago at Mrs. Dingall's."

"Very like, sir; but I don't know the name."

"Perhaps you would know her. She was a pale-faced woman, with both of her front teeth gone. She brought a prescription for a sedative from Dr. Frintly?"

"Don't know,—can't tell, sir."

"Don't you remember? There was some mistake about it. You sent port wine instead, didn't you?"

Mr. Barrows' face took an expression of hopeless perplexity.

"I am sure I don't know, sir."

"Have you got the prescription?"

"I can look, sir."

Opening a large book, he began feebly to turn over the pages.

"Give it here," said Dr. Jacobs; and in a few moments he paused at Dr. Frintly's prescription.

"There, do you see that?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you give the woman that brought it?"

"I gave her the prescription, sir."

"Then why did you tell Dr. Frintly that you gave her port wine?"

Barrows, feeling that his wits were leaving him, groaned aloud.

"Come, answer me; why did you say that?"

"I suppose it must have been true, sir."

"But don't you know? Can't you tell the truth, now?"

"If I knew, I would, sir."

Whereupon Dr. Jacobs, giving up the interrogatory as useless, left the shop.

"The fellow is an idiot," he thought to himself, as he drove down the village street; greatly disturbing some stray geese, and loudly acclaimed by some round-cheeked children, who, running after him, with an instinctive perception that they were safe from any unsympathizing cut from the whip, scrambled up behind—"an idiot. What the woman said settles the question. The man took a sedative, an over-dose. He describes the usual symptoms, says he has experienced them before, gives as a date the evening of Sir Ralph's death, and names the butler as the person who gave it to him. But, perhaps, he had the toothache, or some ache or other, and some of the women in the house—women are always playing doctor—had given him an anodyne, and he had ascribed its effects to the port wine. That's much more probable. And the man is not here to question. I fancy I have given myself a good deal of trouble about nothing."

So saying, Dr. Jacobs dismissed the subject from his mind.

Nemesis drew back into her shadowy hand the clue that had fallen from the good doctor's careless hold, and waited and watched again.

CHAPTER VII.

EDITH CONVALESCENT.

As Dr. Jacobs had predicted, Edith soon dismissed him, or rather he declared that he had more serious matters on

hand than coming every day to assure himself that she did not need his services. Accordingly he withdrew, and Edith was left to the sole care of Mrs. Arden, who, sharing the disinclination to out-door exercise that marks most ladies of her age, laid that portion of the charge which necessitated drives, rides, and when Edith grew stronger, walks, upon Walter.

One afternoon they had strolled together in the direction of the village church. They had taken a woodland path, and had loitered along. The close of the summer had passed while Edith was shut up, and now the autumn was come. The soft hues, the tender sadness, the regretful quiet of the season, harmonized with the naturally subdued tone of Edith's spirits. The dreamy stillness of the autumn woods, scarce disturbed by the momentary appearance of a little brown rabbit or leaping hare, seemed a spell around them both. They scarcely spoke, wandering on in silence as if they feared to disturb some unreal habitant. At length they came to the border of the woodland: the little church lay before them, grey, peaceful, solemn.

Drawn by that sense and love of contrast which we so often see in the young, they entered the churchyard and wandered amid the graves, stooping here and there to decipher some moss-grown inscription, or to part the weeds from some tiny head-stone which told that an infant lay beneath.

Edith seated herself upon the low wall, and gazed around. The sun was sinking in the western sky, a few amber clouds floated high over head, the chirping of birds came from the old trees that surrounded the quiet spot.

"How much better to lie here than under the stone pavement of the church," she said. "How sad for those who have loved them to stand Sunday after Sunday above the vaults, and think of those who lie there cold and still, deaf to the chanting, dumb in the responses—so near, yet gone for ever."

"And yet it almost seems that the dead may like to be grieved for," answered Walter, whose associations were perhaps more classic than Christian.

"If they truly loved they would wish the living to be happy," said Edith. "How dreadful it must be for Lady Tremyss to think of her husband, who was so fond of her, buried under her very feet."

"But he is not," replied Walter.

"Why? I thought the Tremyss tomb was there. Are not the Tremyss monuments in the church?"

"Certainly; but Sir Ralph is not there."

"Why not?"

"His body was not found. The river is deep, and full of rocks and holes. They dragged it for miles, but the body had got caught somewhere. It never rose."

"And perhaps it is still there, close to his home?"

"No one can say."

"It may be that the sphynxes know and cannot tell. Do you not remember that first day?"

"Yes, I remember. You said they looked as if they knew something."

"How can she bear to live there with that cruel, treacherous river running past her very gate?"

"Use, you know; besides, the Park is her property. It was left to her. She would not like to give it up."

"Did Sir Ralph leave her all his property?"

"Everything he could dispose of he settled upon her."

"I thought estates usually went to men?"

"There was no entail on the property he inherited from his mother. He could do with it as he liked. But the sun is going down; had we not better return?"

"You will think me more foolish than ever," replied Edith, rising reluctantly; "but I really don't like the idea of crossing that river."

"I never think you foolish, you know; and it is quite

comprehensible why this evening the river should be disagreeable. We had better go home by the road, it is the shortest way."

Leaving the churchyard they walked in the direction of the river, which lay between them and Arden Hall.

They reached at length the bridge, a single Roman arch, whose solid masonry still firmly spanned the rushing water below. Edith stopped and looked over the stone parapet.

"Where was it that he fell in?" she asked, looking up the river. "Ilton Park is higher than this, it must have been at some distance."

"I was away, and do not know exactly; but anyone in the neighborhood could tell."

"I want to know, because then there will be only one place to feel uncomfortable at passing; otherwise the whole river is dreadful."

She drew back.

Walter saw that Edith was distressed. She must be satisfied immediately. He looked around. A group of children were playing at marbles near by.

"Here, boy," he called.

They raised their shock heads, looked distrustfully at him an instant, as if he were a beadle in disguise, then whispered hurriedly together. The result of their conference was the pushing forward of a staring-eyed boy, who advanced a few steps, and then stood immovable, mindless of the admonitions of the rest.

"Do you live in this neighborhood?"

"E'es, Sir; I lives down there," pointing to a miserable little cottage close to the water's edge.

"I'll give you a shilling if you can tell me where Sir Ralph fell in."

He drew the coin from his pocket.

Every muscle of Jem's face reversed its position; his sharp eyes shone, he stretched out his hand; then a slow

eclipse spread over his face, and he dropped his arm with a perplexed and doleful look.

"What, don't you know?"

"I know's summ'at, Sir."

"Then tell all you know, and you shall have it."

The boy gazed longingly at the shilling.

"Can't you speak? Well, if you don't want it—"

And young Arden was about to put it back in his pocket. The boy jumped like a fish on a line.

"Please, Sir, let me think a bit, Sir."

"Be quick, then. Why are you so long about it?" said Walter, beginning to lose patience.

"You won't never tell nobody, Sir, what I says to you if I'll tell?"

"No. I only want this young lady to know."

"Well, Sir," said the lad in a confidential whisper, coming nearer, "Daddy had some lines out here and some more down the river that night, and he set me a watching of these. And as I was watching down there," he pointed to a spot near the bridge, "I heerd a horse galloping along the road, and I scuttled away and hid myself under the bridge; but I peeped, and I spied Sir Ralph. He was going like mad. The moon was out. I knew him well enough: it wasn't a week since he'd laid his whip over my shoulders for being in the road as he drove by. When he'd got past I came out again, and in a little while I heard a sort of roar, like, come down the river. I was scared at it, Sir, it was such a sound, and I thought to myself—there's the devil got Sir Ralph at last,—and I crept under the bridge again. And the next morning I heerd as how Sir Ralph was drowned. They said it was swimming of the river in front of the Park, but it wasn't true, Sir. I seen him, Sir, as plain as I sees you; but Daddy would have thrashed me if I had let on a word to any body, 'cause as how then it would have come out about the lines."

"Strange," said young Arden thoughtfully. "Did you never tell your father?"

"No, sir. Daddy was in a thundering fury that night 'cause as how he'd had bad luck; and he basted me 'cause the fish hadn't risen. So I kept clean out of his way at first, and afterwards I didn't think to tell."

Walter tossed the boy the shilling, and turned to Edith.

"Well, you have heard. You won't be afraid to cross the bridge now? I thought it was directly in front of the Park, but I wasn't sure. I wonder the boy should have heard so distinctly. However, sound travels far on water, especially at night."

"That must have been the same shout the servants heard."

As they turned from the road into a narrow lane that led to the Hall they heard the sound of hoofs. They looked back. Lady Tremyss, in her black habit, and Isabel, in her riding-dress of pale gray, shot past like phantoms.

Edith and Walter watched them until the misty shadows hid their fast receding figures. They seemed to Edith to have vanished into another world.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DINNER AT ARDEN HALL.

SINCE the time of Edith's illness, Isabel had been almost a daily visitor at the Hall. One of those friendships which sometimes so strangely link to each other opposite natures, had sprung up between the two girls, so dissimilar in appearance, in education, in taste, and in character.

On Isabel's side the attachment was the more enthusiastic, certainly, yet she appeared satisfied with the quiet affection which Edith tendered her. Its very tranquillity seemed to be to her one charm the more.

Her habit was to gallop over from the Park after breakfast, to spend the morning with Edith, and to gallop back to lunch. She seemed to have no definite aim in these visits, except to be in Edith's presence. Often she would lie on the floor the whole morning, her head resting on her arms, her face perfectly motionless, her eyes watching Edith's every motion; then, when mid-day approached, she would rise from her recumbent position, kiss Edith on her forehead, or her cheek, or her neck, or her hand—she never kissed her on the lips—and go away, having spoken scarcely a word.

Edith had at first attempted to induce her visitor to lie on the sofa; but Isabel's look of discomfort pleaded so powerfully against the enforced luxury, that her hostess was fain, after a few reluctant efforts on Isabel's part, to allow her to return to her favorite resting-place on the floor.

Little by little she grew accustomed to Isabel's private ways, which were as unlike as possible to those which she displayed in public. Edith would read, draw, work, and think with perfect disregard to Isabel's presence, from time to time looking up and gazing an instant on the beautiful face that lay watching her with such strange fixedness. Then the shadow of a smile would rise in Isabel's brown eyes, as if she heard the distant song of a bird, or caught a gleam of sunlight on falling water. Sometimes she would rise from her recumbent position, and drawing up her knees and resting her chin on them, would sit plunged in reverie. If Edith asked what she was thinking of, she would answer—"Nothing."

But these fits of silence and reverie would pass off, and leave Isabel the same gay, laughing, playful being as before. Then she would chatter by the hour together, apparently not much caring whether Edith listened or not.

She would mimic all her acquaintance, from the rector, a pompous personage, who officiated but rarely, down to Dame Barlow, a red-eyed old woman, afflicted with a lamentable

stammer. She could mock the sound of every feathered or four-footed creature, and would take an elfish delight in provoking them to trials of skill. In short, nothing could be more capricious, more desultory, or more perplexing, than her moods, her occupations, and her fancies; yet through all these ran a vein of originality which engaged Edith's interest.

It was about a fortnight after Edith's walk to the churchyard. The morning was sunny, the light poured brightly into the great sitting room which had been appropriated to Edith's use since her arrival at the Hall. Edith sat at a table near the window, drawing. Isabel lay lounging in an easy chair, her dark riding habit showing every outline of her symmetrical figure. Her hat was cast on the floor beside her, in company with her riding-whip and gloves; her long, curling lashes almost touched her cheek as she lay, her eyes bent on the floor. At length she broke silence with a sigh. The sound was new to Edith. She had never heard Isabel sigh before. All her fits of silence had seemed pure introversion—no sadness had mingled with them. She raised her head.

"What is it, Isabel?"

"It's something dreadful," was Isabel's reply.

Edith dropped her pencil and came towards her. She seated herself on the elbow of the easy chair.

"What is it? Won't you tell me?"

"I've always been so happy, and now I'm almost seventeen,—in a month it will be my birthday."

The discord which Isabel apparently perceived between her past happiness and the vicinity of seventeen, was not equally visible to Edith's perceptions.

"Well," she said, as if expecting a more distinct explanation of the sigh.

"But it isn't well. I feel,—I don't know how I feel,—

as if I were going to be a stranger,—as if all were to be changed, and as if I should lose myself in it."

She turned an appealing look to Edith.

"Tell me all about it. Try to think it out," said Edith softly.

"I can't," said Isabel, shaking her head. "Besides, I don't want to. What would you say if I told you that I felt as if I could be wicked?"

"I shouldn't be afraid," replied Edith, "I know you would not hurt me, and I don't believe you would hurt any one else."

"Yes, but I might hurt myself," said Isabel, gloomily. Then, springing up hastily, she passed her hand through the masses of her hair, tossing them down with a quick impatient gesture.

"I have had a bad dream I think. I don't believe it was myself."

She went to the window, looked out over the even sweep of the lawn, gazed an instant at the blue sky, tormented a canary by executing an impossible cadenza, wound up her hair again, kissed Edith and left the room.

"You ought to have read up for this evening, ladies," said Walter, coming into the parlor where Edith had joined her aunt, some hours later. Here's a note from Mr. Tracey, to say that Mr. Hungerford, the great traveller, has just come down to stay with him, and asking leave to bring him. You won't shine, Edith, unless you are well up in Mexican architecture and North American earthworks."

"Dear me, you don't say so. What shall I do?" exclaimed his aunt, suddenly passing into a state of extreme and anxious perplexity. "I never talked to a great traveller in all my life. I shan't know in the least what to say to him. I wish he hadn't come down; I'm sure he'll find it stupid. And as to reading up, I wonder you should speak

of such a thing, Walter, when you know I haven't got any time. Here it is three o'clock, and we dine at seven."

"But if you were to take the Encyclopedia, and read up Canada—that's where he was last," replied Walter gravely,—"I don't think it would take long."

"Don't mind him, auntie, he's only teasing you," said Edith, consolingly. "Mr. Hungerford will be very pleasant. We had Dr. Spracklin to dine, and he was such a nice, chatty little man."

"Mind, Aunt Arden, that you put Edith near him. Perhaps she would like to have him take her into dinner," interposed Walter.

"Oh, but I can't, I can't indeed; the table is all arranged. Dear me, Walter, here I was just quieting myself down for the evening, and you've upset me again. My nerves are all in a quiver; I wish you'd go away and not stand there looking so provoking. Edith can't go in with Mr. Hungerford, that is, unless she wants to—but you don't, do you, my dear?" she said, imploringly, addressing her niece.

Thus adjured, Edith professed perfect willingness to go in with any one whom her aunt might choose. But Walter, having ascertained Edith's private wishes, manoeuvred until he had modified the dinner-table arrangements, so that Edith should have the traveller opposite her.

When Walter entered the drawing-room that evening, Edith's back was turned towards him. At first he hardly recognized her in her trailing length of skirt, her curls shortened and raised, freeing the graceful outlines of her neck and shoulders, and imparting an unaccustomed dignity to her appearance. As she turned at his approach he half drew back. A painful sensation, as if she had been suddenly snatched to a distance from him, ran through his mind, mingling with his admiration a sharp pang of regret. He had felt her so near, so dear, so childlike, so clinging; and now, by some inexplicable mystery, she stood before him,

a graceful young woman, no longer the Edith of every day, but something older and more beautiful, perhaps inaccessible.

She looked up at him and smiled. The smile, the eyes, were the same.

"You don't say anything. Don't you like Edith's dress? I am sure you must," said Mrs. Arden. "She has turned quite into a young lady, you see."

"I see," responded Walter; then, with an effort, he continued. "But how magnificent you look yourself. It seems to me that there never was so much of you before."

He turned his eyes upon her ample sweep of velvet folds, and upon the rich *parure* of old point which completed her costume.

"It's all Edith's fault," replied Mrs. Arden, looking a little ashamed. "She made me order a new dress, and ransacked all my things till she came across this lace, and she told Nitson how to make it up; and she said I must wear it to please her, and so of course I did, you know."

"Wasn't I right, and isn't it becoming?" asked Edith, gazing affectionately at her aunt's diminutive figure and features, set off as they were by her well-chosen toilette.

"Do tell me what you think about Edith?" repeated Mrs. Arden. "How do you think she looks to-night?"

Edith, who had been used since her earliest childhood to hear her appearance commented upon, turned an unembarrassed glance towards him. She did not care much about it herself, but she would be glad to have Walter like it.

"I liked to see her better as she was before," he answered; and, turning away, he employed himself in re-arranging some engravings which lay upon a table at a little distance.

Under a certain sort of provocation Edith was anything but patient. Her eyes sparkled, and her color rose at Walter's tone of cold and almost rude dissatisfaction.

"Dear me, how very odd Walter is to-night," said his aunt in an aggrieved tone. "I never saw him so before. Don't care for it, dear; you look perfectly lovely." And she left the room to ask a question that she had forgotten.

Edith sat down on a low couch and gazed silently into the fire.

Walter turned his head and looked at her. He knew that he had vexed her. He hastily approached.

"You never looked so well as you do to-night."

She raised her eyes. There was that in his tone that disarmed her anger at once.

"Then why—?"

"Don't ask me," he replied, abruptly, and returned to the engravings.

—Why?—he shrank from thinking.

Mrs. Arden returned and hurried up the room as a carriage drove up to the hall door.

"I am so sorry that almost all the people, excepting Lady Tremyss, will be strangers, quite strangers to you, my dear," she said, as if struck by a sudden thought. "I ought to have had Isabel, I really had. But then she never comes, and I never thought of it."

"I am used to strangers; I don't mind them," Edith answered, smiling.

Walter was not displeased with her. There was nothing else that could disturb her now. The guests arrived, closely following each other. At length Mr. Tracey and Mr. Hungerford were announced. Edith instantly singled out the *savant*, a small, thin, wiry man, with projecting eyebrows, mobile features, and bronzed complexion. As he was introduced to Edith after his reception by Mrs. Arden, his expression changed. He smiled, and addressing some little compliment to her, entered into conversation.

—It is something quite wonderful, the link of sympathy which draws together men of study and science, and pretty

young girls. What they talk about together, what mutual ground they find to meet upon, is an unsolvable mystery; but the fact is there: to the utter disgust and discomfiture of their younger and more eligible rivals, the brightest glances and sweetest smiles are rained upon men who at other moments clasp "ologies" to their bosoms.

While Lady Tremyss entered the room, Mr. Hungerford's eye rested attentively upon her. He broke off what he was saying, with an inquiry:

"Who is that? I did not hear the name."

"Lady Tremyss. Very beautiful, is she not?"

"Singularly so."

"And so graceful."

"Yes. It is a peculiar grace. She does not walk like an Englishwoman."

"I have often thought that she did not look English."

Indeed! and yet I perceive what you mean. She is darker than one usually sees, but her features are purely English."

Here dinner was announced, and young Renson with his ten thousand a-year, who had stood internally puffing and fuming at seeing the attention of the young lady who should have fallen to his share as by predestined right, thus engrossed, advanced to claim Edith, and snatched her from the *grifles* of the London lion.

Edith surveyed the dinner-table when she found herself fairly seated. On her right was young Renson, a red-faced youth, with uproarious whiskers, small grey eyes, ordinary forehead, and strictly correct costume. On her left sat Colonel Pycherly, a middle-aged man, with unmeaning blue eyes, a long nose, and a small mouth and chin, which seemed, from their want of size, to be quite unable to meet the steady demand he was in the habit of making upon their receptive powers. At the end of the table sat Walter and Lady Emily Marsh, the latter composed of a scarlet

velvet dress, a white lace shawl, a towering head-dress, and a set of emeralds. Edith looked at her several times without being able to perceive anything but these articles of attire. Her eye slipped involuntarily over Lady Emily's *effacé* features and vacant expression. On Walter's right, turning the corner of the table, sat Mrs. Tinedale, a brunette, with fine eyes and irregular features. Next her, Mr. Hungerford; beyond him, a solid embankment of snow and pink silk, together forming Mrs. Powell, quite obstructing the view down the table, and presenting an impenetrable breastwork; with her *vis-à-vis*, Colonel Pycherly, isolating Edith's end of the table. She looked for Lady Tremyss, but the great *épergne*, with its drooping flowers, stood between.

"Walter was right," was the mental result of her rapid reconnoissance. "How dreadfully stupid it is going to be!"

So thinking, Edith hopelessly resigned herself to inevitable *ennui*.

The soup plates, as is their custom, appeared to impose a reverential awe upon the guests. The first course passed in silence, broken only by an observation from young Renson to Edith, conveyed in a mysterious undertone, as if he were seeking to establish a private understanding.

"Delicious soup *bisque* is!"

"*A la reine* is better," replied Colonel Pycherly, who had overheard the whispered remark, and who had already reached the gilt cipher at the bottom of his plate.

"You should have sent word to Mrs. Arden," maliciously responded Mrs. Tinedale, one of whose favorite diversions consisted in bullying Colonel Pycherly.

"Eh—what—I beg pardon," replied Colonel Pycherly, made aware that he had committed some blunder, by her provoking smile. And turning very red, he applied himself diligently to discussing some turbot *à la crème*, which here providentially made its appearance.

Mrs. Tinedale's face assumed an expression of content. She never undertook a conversation with any pleasant man at dinner until she had silenced all the stupid ones within reach. She waited quietly a while for an opportunity to demolish young Renson, but he was on his guard, and prudently held his tongue. She was obliged to give him up.

"It is a long time since you were in England before, is it not?" she said to Mr. Hungerford.

"Nearly three years."

"Does not a civilized table look very strangely to you?"

"Somewhat."

"Is it true that one grows so fond of the sort of life you have been leading, that one gives it up unwillingly?"

"I can imagine it might be so."

"But how do you find it yourself?"

"Really, I can scarcely tell."

Edith heaved an inaudible sigh.—"Mr. Hungerford wouldn't talk—it was just as Walter had predicted."—

Mrs. Tinedale understood Mr. Hungerford's reserve to mean that he wanted to eat his dinner, and would not talk until he chose, so she turned to Walter.

"You must allow me to congratulate you on Miss Arden's recovery. How charmingly she is looking to-night."

"Yes. She is well again," he replied.

"Are you quite well again, my dear?" asked Lady Emily, raising her voice and addressing Edith. "What a dreadful thing it was!"

Mr. Hungerford looked up enquiringly.

"A shocking fright she had. How can Lady Emily refer to it?" Mrs. Tinedale said, in a low tone.

"Excuse me," he said, suppressing his voice, "but you excite my curiosity."

"It happened at a show. Miss Hartley took her there in one of her freaks. They let out an American panther. It sprang at her."

"An unpardonable thing to let such an animal loose. They are untamable."

"And such a lovely young creature as that," responded Mrs. Tinedale, warmly.

Mr. Hungerford looked at her. She was not jealous of a prettier woman than herself. He liked her. He would talk, but later. He was not going to harangue a dinner-table.

"Pray, where were you at this time last year?" asked Walter, mindful of Edith's delight in hearing clever men talk, and making a forlorn effort to gratify it.

"Last October, at this time, I was in Canada."

"I have heard that there are such lovely flowers in Canada," said Mrs. Tinedale, promptly returning to the charge, "quite different from any we have here. Is it true?"

"I found some specimens that I thought valuable, in the lands of the Assiniboines and of the Arramaboos."

"Would you not describe to me some of the strangest you saw? I will have them made up for a ball dress. I hate to wear what everyone else does. I'm sick of roses and forget-me-nots, and lillies of the valley, and eglantine. I should be so glad to have something new."

"I have some drawings at Mr. Tracey's, which I should be happy to show you," replied Mr. Hungerford, looking super-eminently bored, as he perceived that the whole table was listening to him, "but really I'm sorry to say that I can't undertake to describe a flower so that it could be made available for the purpose you mention." Herewith he helped himself largely to some *crème à la Venise*, a wonderful compound, raised upon a basis of pounded chicken.

"What a bear!" thought Mrs. Tinedale, and she betook herself to listening to her neighbors.

"I've not seen you at any of the meets," said young Renson, who now prepared himself for an attack in form, addressing Edith. "I'm sure you ride."

"A little."

"Oh, but it must be more than a little, if you're going to be here long. And Arden, he hasn't been out this season."

"I do not know how long I shall be here," said Edith. —How painful the thought of going away had become. She wished she could always stay at the Hall.—She looked up, and, catching Walter's eye, looked hastily away again.

"Arden rides famously; you must get him to give you lessons, to bring you into training, you know. Our meets are capital. It's a bore to miss them."

"I don't think I should enjoy them," replied Edith.

"Oh, but you couldn't help it, you know. It's the one thing worth having:—a scamper across country for hours, half the hunt thrown out, only a few stragglers in at the death; it's quite glorious, you know."

"Is it?" answered Edith, incredulously.

"Only a lady must have a horse that understands his business, that won't baulk at a ditch, nor hang his hind legs on a gate. Arden's horses are good, but I should think rather hard on the bit for a lady. I've a lovely little mare, just the thing for you. I should be so glad if you'd let me send her over."

"You needn't be in hopes that Miss Arden is in need of Patsy," said Mrs. Tinedale. "She rides Moira, and she has Mrs. Lacy's pony, too. Mrs. Arden bought it two months ago."

"Oh, but really, do you ride Moira? Then I quite wonder at your saying you ride a little."

"She is very gentle."

"Perhaps you think so, but I should have said she was a perfect devil."

"Don't talk that way, Renson, you'll frighten Miss Arden," said Walter, glancing at Edith.

"All I can say is, once I said to Miss Hartley that her

horse seemed as tame as a cow, and she asked me to change for five minutes, and at the end of three I was in a ditch, and I'm not particularly awkward on horseback either."

"No, that you're not," said young Arden, good-naturedly. "But how did it happen?"

"I don't know. And there she stood looking at me and shook her head, and kept just out of reach, and led me that way a mile and a half."

"Who? Miss Hartley?" asked Lady Emily.

"No, the mare. And Miss Hartley quizzed me about it every time she saw me, till something else put it out of her head."

"Yes, I am sure she gave you full measure, said Mrs. Tinedale, laughing. "You should have been photographed as you lay in the ditch, with Moira looking at you. What a run that photograph would have had! I would have given two guineas for one."

And she laughed again.

"She's never easy except when she's plaguing some one," said Mr. Renson, in a sulky undertone to Edith, pouring down a glass of champagne.

"Pray do you ride everyday?" he asked, after a short interval.

"Yes, except when it rains."

"Then I shall be on the look out. At what time do you usually go?"

"After lunch," answered Edith, secretly determining to take all her future rides before that hour.

"Ah, then I shall have a good chance of meeting you. It's scarcely fair, when there are so few ladies, that Arden should have you all to himself."

And so the dinner dragged its slow length along, to the accompaniment of Mr. Renson's pointless sallies and clumsy compliments, for with the champagne that young gentleman's courage rose.

When the ladies returned to the drawing-room, Lady Tremyss sat down behind the stand upon which was placed Isabel's basket, filled with flowers. She bent over it a moment, then signed to Edith to come to her.

"Would you be so kind as to order this basket to be taken away? There is something here that gives me the headache."

Edith rang and gave the desired order, then ensconced herself in a recess, to rally from Mr. Renson's conversation, whilst the ladies talked *chiffons*, as women generally do when men are not present, and occasionally when they are. When the gentlemen returned from the dining-room, Mr. Hungerford came towards her. Lady Tremyss, who was at a little distance, rose and moved away to a shaded part of the room.

Mr. Hungerford's eye followed and dwelt upon Lady Tremyss observantly. Edith perceived it.

"I never saw Lady Tremyss look as she does to-night," she said, glancing at her, as she sat in the shade, the diamonds on her neck and arms sending forth their bright, unquiet reflections. "Her features look more stern, more sharply cut than I have ever seen them."

"A beautiful woman; but not a beauty that I admire," said Mr. Hungerford. "I should almost think—"

He stopped.

"Think what?" asked Edith.

"It is too wild a fancy to put into words," he replied. Then turning to Mr. Tracey, who approached at that moment, he said,

"Do you know that you are in for a breakfast to Mrs. Tinedale? I have promised to show her my drawings."

"She shall be welcome to a bachelor's fare," responded Mr. Tracey, whose rubicund face and rotund figure bore witness to none of the implied inferiority of the culinary department of a bachelor's establishment. "And will Miss

Arden be bribed by the drawings into doing me the same honor?"

Pressed by Mr. Hungerford, Edith accepted.

"Two ladies already. I feel quite flattered. I think we must make an affair of it, Hungerford. I don't often get such a chance."

And Mr. Tracey laughed as though he found something extremely hilarious in the idea; then rolling away, he proceeded to dispense his invitations in all quarters for breakfast the next day but one.

Mr. Renson came up as Mr. Tracey retired.

"Immensely nice flowers these are," he observed, surveying the vases on a table near Edith. "I suppose you are fond of flowers; all young ladies are."

"I like everything in its place," replied Edith coldly, a reply whereat Mr. Hungerford smiled, and Mr. Renson felt uncomfortable, he did not exactly know why. He glanced around the room.

"How glum Arden looks to-night," he remarked, with that intuitive and quite astonishing penetration which young men usually display with regard to each other. I wonder if anything has gone wrong."

"Have you been talking to him?" asked Edith, half looking at him with drooping eyelashes. "If so, you know more about it than I do."

"No; but I think I will," replied young Renson, vaguely feeling himself in danger, and beating a precipitate retreat.

Mr. Hungerford laughed when Mr. Renson was out of hearing.

"Are you often so severe?" he asked, "really you don't look it."

"I don't like young men," answered Edith, with one of the quiet, half sarcastic smiles she could give on occasion.

"I hope you except your brother. He is one of the finest young fellows I ever saw."

Edith flushed a little.

"He is only my cousin, or rather my aunt's nephew," she replied.

"I condole with you, then, on not having such a brother."

Edith glanced at Walter. He was talking with young Renson, and somebody else whose name she had forgotten. —He did look very grave certainly. What could be the matter with him?—

"He is just as kind as if he were my brother," she answered, "so I don't lose anything."

And she flushed again at the thought of all her causes of gratitude to him.

As Edith turned her head, she saw Lady Tremyss' eye fixed sidelong upon her and her companion. There was something disagreeably keen and piercing in the glance: she moved forward so as to escape it, though by so doing she abandoned Mr. Hungerford. She passed Walter on her way towards her aunt. She hoped that he would speak a word; but no;—he did not even raise his eyes. She sat down near Mrs. Arden, and remained under her wing until Walter came up.

"Mr. Hungerford is talking in a way that you would like to hear. Mrs. Tinedale has got hold of him, and has drawn him out."

He led Edith to a chair near Mrs. Tinedale's sofa. Mr. Hungerford was talking to her. People were standing around, listening.

"—I had seen from the other bank some high land rising above the trees. My guides told me that the stronghold of the Arramahoos was built on it, so I made as straight for it as I could."

"I should have thought you would have been frightened to death," exclaimed Mrs. Tinedale.

Mr. Hungerford smiled.

"I can't say that I felt quite at my ease. At length I

climbed up the rocks and got into a deserted fort lined with wigwams. I found one old Indian ill with fever; not another soul was to be seen. There was food in the different wigwams, so I made myself at home. As to the old man,—I undertook to cure him. It wasn't particularly easy, as I had to force the quinine down his throat, but he was grateful enough when he began to mend. After four or five days, the rest of the tribe returned. They took my presence in dudgeon, and would have made an end of me had it not been for my old man. He took me under his protection, and finally smuggled me off."

"How did he manage it?" asked Mrs. Tinedale.

"He did it very cleverly. He hid me in the wigwam sacred to the spirits of the dead. No Indian dared come near it, so I was quite safe there. It was a curious place, by the way, all hung round with long locks of hair. One thing that I found rather unpleasant was the seeing a tress of long, reddish golden hair, and beside it some shorter black curls, both European, I am convinced."

"How could they have come there?" asked Mrs. Tinedale.

"My old man told me that they belonged to a white man and woman who had come to the tribe many moons ago, and had died not long after their arrival. After their death, locks of their hair had been hung up as the customary peace-offering to Manitou."

"And is that all you know?" inquired Edith.

"Every syllable. The old man succeeded in smuggling me across the river, and that is the last I have seen of the Arramahoos," said Mr. Hungerford, who seemed of opinion that he had absorbed the attention of the company long enough. He got up and went to talk to Mrs. Arden; Edith was consequently obliged to resign herself to be talked to by people she did not care about, for the rest of the evening; enduring, *tant bien que mal*, the tedium of a country dinner party.

As the last carriage rolled away, Walter came back into the drawing-room.

"It went off very well, I think; very well," said Mrs. Arden, in the satisfied tone of a hostess who has done her duty, and feels that nothing more will be expected of her for six weeks to come.

"Yes, it was very nice," answered Edith, fortunately oblivious, for the moment, of all save the traveller. "Mr. Hungerford is delightful; but, Walter, I am afraid you have not been enjoying yourself."

"Why, what's the matter?" said Mrs. Arden, suddenly turning upon her nephew.

"I know," said Edith.

"What is it then, my dear?"

"He has a headache. He is pale; don't you see it?"

"And that champagne won't make it any better," responded Mrs. Arden reproachfully. "How could you taste it, Walter, with a headache?"

Walter, after a rapid survey of circumstances, thought it better to let it pass as a headache. And this he did; nor, engrossed as his mind was by its new emotions, did that evening's conversation again return to his memory, until recalled by circumstances which he was at that time very far from anticipating.

CHAPTER IX.

LADY ANNE'S CHAMBER.

ISABEL made her appearance on the following morning somewhat later than usual.

"What do you think?" was her greeting to Edith. "I want to do something, and Mamma won't let me! She ac-

tually said no!" Isabel's face expressed the profoundest astonishment.

"Is it the first time she ever said so?" asked Edith.

"The very first time in my life. I can't understand it at all."

She sat down, looking greatly disconcerted.

"What was it about?"

"This morning a note came from Mr. Tracey to me asking me to go to his breakfast with Mamma, and saying that I should see Mr. Hungerford's drawings. I wanted to go because he's a dear old soul and I love him; and, besides, I wish to see the drawings. I told Mamma so, and she said that she had changed her mind, (for she had accepted, you know), and wasn't going. Then I said I should like to go with Mrs. Arden and you—and she said 'No!'"

"Did she give you no reason? Didn't she talk with you about it?"

"Mamma? She never talks to me. I talk to her, and she answers."

"With whom does she talk, then?" asked Edith, surprised. She had supposed that ~~Edith~~ and her mother were on the same terms as other mothers and daughters.

"She never talks to anybody. She doesn't like to talk."

"How does she spend her time?" pursued Edith, who was in an investigating mood.

"She embroiders almost all the time; sometimes she reads. When there's any new book of travels sent down, she reads that."

"And she rides?"

"Oh, yes. She hates driving, but we ride together every day about sunset, you know."

"I must not forget to tell you," interrupted Edith. "I am going to take all my rides after breakfast in future."

"Then I shall come in the afternoon. But why do you change?"

"Mr. Renson wants to ride with us."

"Does he want to get on Moira again?" inquired Isabel, her eyes sparkling mischievously.

"I fancy not. He told us of his mishap, and how you laughed at him."

"He was made to be laughed at. Why, do you know, he used to be such a figure before he had Storrord! Once I counted the stripes on his trousers. It didn't take long, there were only two and a half all the way down. And he wore red neckcloths and yellow waistcoats."

"He was dressed like any one else last night."

"Oh, but I told you Storrord keeps him in capital order."

"Who is Storrord?"

"His valet. He used to be Sir Ralph's. I was glad to have him go. He always looked like a Jesuit in disguise. Melvil used to say that he heard through the doors and walls. He knew everything. All the servants were afraid of him, except Goliath."

"I am so sorry you can't go to-morrow," said Edith, who did not care to think of Goliath.

"Yes. But there is one good side to it. Mamma told me to invite you to come and dine at the Park the next day, I suppose to console me, for I was immensely disappointed. You must come. I've been here almost every day since you were ill, and you've only been once to see me."

Accustomed as Edith was to the modern elegance of Arden Court, and the old-fashioned comfort of the Hall, the formal magnificence of the Park rather oppressed her. Its length of dark corridors, its endless ranges of rooms,—some of them never used, but, like all the rest, kept in scrupulous order,—filled with antique plenishing, and shown in detail by Isabel, who seemed determined to make her friend as well acquainted with the premises as she was herself, rather depressed Edith; they suggested all sorts of gloomy fancies,

the more depressing, perhaps, because so utterly unshared by her companion. At last she expressed an unwillingness to explore any further, and proposed a return to Isabel's own room.

"One moment," said Isabel, unclosing a door. "I want you to see Lady Anne's chamber."

She drew Edith within a room larger and more richly furnished than any they had seen.

"This is very handsome," said Edith, looking at the satin bed in its tarnished gilt alcove, the toilette glass of chiselled silver, the ebony wardrobe whereon was carved St. Michael struggling with the fiend, and the stained glass in the oriel window which projected boldly over the terrace. "I should think it would still be used."

"It hasn't been used for two hundred and fifty years," replied Isabel, impressively, "not since Lady Anne died in that bed."

"But why?" asked Edith, glancing at the alcove. It was not precisely agreeable to be brought in fancy so near the long vanished occupant.

"Why? Because she murdered her husband in this very room. Sit down and I'll tell you about it."

She drew Edith to a great yellow easy chair, and sat down on the floor before her.

"Lady Anne was a great heiress, you must know, and a very haughty sort of woman. She had refused numbers of lovers, but at length she married Sir Hilary, who wasn't a particularly good sort of man. She was dreadfully jealous of him, but it was ever so long before she found out anything. However, one evening she was sitting in that window, and she looked out and saw Sir Hilary walking cautiously down the terrace. He turned the corner of the house, after looking all around as if to be sure that nobody saw him. Lady Anne hurried along the gallery, and looked out of a loop hole in the tower at the end, and there he was talking

with one of her women, and she saw him kiss her. Then she went back and sat down again as if nothing had happened. And that night she poisoned Sir Hilary, and everybody thought he had died in a fit; but what she did to the maid was worse. She took her into a lonely room, and tied her hand and foot, and locked her up in a closet, and starved her to death. Then she took the key of the room, and nobody ever found it out till after Lady Anne was dead."

"How did they find it out, then?" asked Edith.

"If you will believe it, she had left a written confession of the whole in that wardrobe, where they found it after she was dead."

"I can imagine that the solitude of her crime was too much to bear," replied Edith, thoughtfully; then rising quickly, "I don't want to think how she felt," she said. "It seems to make me feel wicked too."

"You wicked!" said Isabel, rising to her knees, and gazing steadfastly into Edith's face. "You couldn't feel wicked if you tried—I wish I couldn't."

She turned away, and walked with Edith silently down the gallery to her own room.

"What do you mean by saying you might feel wicked?" said Edith, seating herself caressingly by Isabel.

"You couldn't understand," replied Isabel, turning away her face.

"I am fond of you, and that would help me to understand," answered Edith.

"Are you really fond of me?" exclaimed Isabel, throwing her arms around Edith.

"Yes."

"And you won't think the worse of me?"

"How unjust that would be."

"Then I'll tell you.—Sometimes I feel as if I should stifle to death, as if I should die. I long to tear this life from me, and to rush forth I don't know where. I dream of

great plains and snow fields, and of being borne across them like the wind, and there is fire in me and I feel no cold. I want to be free. I don't want to be good and go to church and live among quiet people. I want,—oh, I don't know what I want."

And Isabel threw herself down, pressed her face into Edith's lap, and burst into a passion of tears.

The wild words, the stormy self-abandonment, awoke a responsive trouble in Edith's thoughts. Hitherto unfelt chords within her vibrated to Isabel's impetuous, imploring voice.—What could she say to her?—She could think of nothing. Before she knew it her own tears were flowing, she could not tell why.

The unreasoning sympathy seemed to calm Isabel. She rose from her position, and sat quietly down beside Edith. They had not yet spoken when the dinner bell rang.

"Oh, there's dinner. Do I look as if I had been crying?" exclaimed Isabel, running to the glass; then turning to Edith, she displayed her brilliant color and hazel eyes, as fresh and bright as if she had never shed a tear.

"Come—I did not hear the first bell, did you?" We were in the old rooms, I fancy."

She hurried with Edith down the gallery.

Edith's heart rather failed her as she entered the great dining-room, the same where she and Isabel had chased the mole, and where, lifting the carpet, they had seen that dark, wide-spreading stain. She glanced at the spot. Upon it stood Goliath with his Herculean form and ghastly scar. She was internally thankful that she was placed at table so that he was not within her sight.

Isabel's mood had changed. She chattered without cessation during the whole of the dinner, she told the most absurdly improbable stories, most of them invented expressly for the occasion; she mimicked all her acquaintance in turn, and ended with a charity sermon from the rector, delivered

with such ludicrous accuracy of imitation as to send the statue-like footman into inward agonies, and to bring a smile over the grim visage of Goliath.

Edith was in momentary expectation that Isabel would receive some reproof from Lady Tremyss, but no word of counsel or disapprobation crossed her hostess's lips. She sat a quiet spectator of her daughter's vagaries, without in any way attempting to check them.

At length Isabel talked herself out, as she expressed it, and applying to Edith, demanded an exact account of the breakfast at Mr. Tracey's.

"It was very pleasant indeed," answered Edith.

"Yes, but that isn't enough. You must begin at the beginning. Who were there?"

"Every one, excepting Lady Tremyss, who was at the Hall, and quite a number of people beside."

"There couldn't have been any dancing, of course," said Isabel. "I love dancing. Mamma, when I'm seventeen you must give a ball."

"If you wish it," replied Lady Tremyss.

"I never thought of it before, but I do wish it, and you're a love to say I may have it; but we'll talk about that by-and-bye;—now we'll listen to the breakfast."

"As soon as breakfast was over we went into the drawing-room, and Mr. Hungerford showed us his drawings."

"Were they very beautiful? Mr. Tracey said they were quite different from anything in England. Is it true?"

"Yes, quite."

"I wish I had seen them. Did you ever see any like them before?"

Edith hesitated. She had seen some flowers like Mr. Hungerford's before, but an inexplicable unwillingness made her reluctant to say where. She had intended to tell Isabel, but now that she was with her and her mother, she felt her tongue tied.

"Yes, you have, I see. Where were they?"

"I thought some of them were like the flowers on your basket," she answered reluctantly.

"What, the flowers Mamma drew? How strange. Why Mamma, how learned you are! Where did you find them?"

"There are some engravings in the library that you can look at with Miss Arden, after dinner. Perhaps those are like Mr. Hungerford's."

"I never saw them," answered Isabel. "Where are they?"

"On the highest shelf, between the windows."

"Oh, I can't reach there; the steps are not tall enough for me; but I'll have them got down. It is odd they should be there. All the other engravings are below."

As soon as they rose from the table, Isabel led Edith into the library.

It was a large room, so dark in its coloring that the light of the fire and of the two wax candles that stood in solemn solitude on the great green table, did but illumine a small circle of the surrounding space. Their rays, brightly projected at first, soon died away, leaving in shadow the great bookcases with their piled-up treasures, and the bronze busts which looked gravely down from the top of their heavy cornices. Edith wondered, as she looked round, whether Sir Ralph used often to sit there, and what books he used to read.

Isabel answered the unexpressed question.

"I don't often come here. It is the only place in the house that makes me think of Sir Ralph. He was always shut up here, poring over his books, while Mamma sat at her embroidery in that window. One day I climbed up and peeped in at the other window as I went down the terrace. He wasn't reading, he was staring at her. She didn't see him. He had on such a face!"

"What sort of a face?"

"He had bitten his lip till it was white, and his brows were all scowling; and as I was peeping I saw him pass his hand across his forehead two or three times, as if he couldn't bear what he was thinking about. It was queer, for Mamma looked handsomer than ever that day. She was dressed in white, and I had stuck a red rose in her hair when she went down."

"Then you used to have her with you sometimes?"

"Oh, yes. She always came into my room, and had her hair done there, and sat with me while I took my breakfast, before she went down. After breakfast she used to sit with him a while, and then she would come upstairs and stay with me ever so long. I know he didn't like it. Storror told Melvil that he had heard Sir Ralph curse awfully at me when Mamma was with me and he thought nobody heard him, but he never prevented it. I don't believe he would have dared to try. He always seemed afraid of Mamma."

"Afraid of his own wife!"

"He never could bear to have her look at him, so the servants said. I don't know much about it. I was never with them. But I know that he never, even at table, sat opposite to her, though he used to keep her beside him as much as he could."

"How very peculiar," Edith remarked.

"Yes, it was one of his whims. He was full of them. He hated the dark. The house used always to be lighted before sunset. Anybody would have said he thought there were ghosts in it. But I'm forgetting what we came for. Now let us see the engravings."

The portfolio of engravings was brought from the shelf. It was a very old one, and the engravings were spotted and defaced as if by age. They represented birds and flowers grouped together.

"Many of these are like Mr. Hungerford's," said Edith; "and see, here is the scarlet flower on your basket, and there, look—is not that the white, crown-shaped one?"

"Oh, yes, and I know this one, and this, and this," exclaimed Isabel, rapidly turning them over; "and these birds. Why, Mamma is embroidering some of them now. There's her blue bird, and her crimson-breasted bird, and her hawk. Come and see."

She hurried Edith into the drawing-room, where, by a stand with candles, Lady Tremyss sat bending over a frame.

"Oh, Mamma, we've found your birds; I want Edith to see them. Look."

Turning back the frame, she displayed a group of singular force of design and coloring. A blue jay had swooped upon an oriole, which, mortally wounded, its feathers torn, was dying in its assailant's grasp; while above, a black hawk, with closed wings and inverted head, was dropping unseen upon the victorious marauder.

"How life-like that is. I can hear the poor bird's last gasp," said Edith, compassionately. "How treacherous and cruel the blue bird looks. I am glad the black hawk is near," she added, with a sudden change of tone.

A long ray of light shot from Lady Tremyss' eye; then she silently returned the frame to its place, and bent over it again.

"Now let us finish looking over the engravings," said Isabel.

They went back to the library.

As they turned over the last sheet, Isabel pushed aside the portfolio.

"Now that we have seen those and found out where Mamma gets her designs, let us talk about the ball. This house will be nice for it, won't it? We can have how many rooms open? There's the hall—but that won't count—the drawing-room, the dining-room, the library, and the dancing-room—that's four. That's enough, I think."

Edith agreed that it would be enough.

"I don't mean to have flowers everywhere," continued Isabel. "I won't have the house look as it were all conservatory. That would not be in *its* style at all. I will have the rooms just as they are, only as light as day; all but the dancing-room. I mean to have that filled with flowers. But you haven't seen it. I'll show it to you."

Isabel tried to open a door. It was locked. She rang for the key. The door was unclosed. A long black vista lay beyond. She took one of the candlesticks from the table, and, calling to Edith to follow her, advanced into the room.

It had the chilly and ghostlike look of all uninhabited apartments. It was of great length, but not of corresponding height. At intervals along the walls were placed mirrors; the floor was of polished oak.

"Wont it be nice for dancing?" exclaimed Isabel. "See, there are the guests already coming to meet us."

She smiled and nodded to the multiplied reflections of her figure in the mirrors around. The reflection, coming out of the darkness beyond, smiled and nodded back with a strange, unreal mirth.

Isabel set the candlestick upon the ground.

"Come, let us waltz round to see how nice it will be when it is all full of flowers and music and people."

And catching Edith around the waist, she whirled her about the room till they were forced to stop from want of breath.

As Isabel released her, Edith staggered back and leaned against the wall.

"Oh!" exclaimed Isabel, penitently, "I hope I haven't tired you out."

"I am only a little giddy. It will pass in a moment," replied Edith. "But what is that sound?" she said, after a moment's pause, standing up erect.

Isabel laid her head where Edith's had rested. There was a sound as of distant hammering.

"Why, where can it be? It can't come from upstairs—the picture gallery is over this room; nor from the cellars, for they are under another part of the house."

"If it were from upstairs, it would sound nearer," said Edith. "It seems a great way off."

"I'll call mamma," said Isabel. "Perhaps it's the ghost of Lady Anne's maid."

She ran away to summon her mother.

Lady Tremyss came gliding in her sweeping black dress, up the length of the room. She stood where Edith had stood, and listened.

"Send Goliath," she said; "but Isabel, Miss Arden and you must not stay here any longer; you will both take cold."

The girls returned to the library.

As Goliath approached his mistress, she pointed to the wall.

"Stand there. Do you hear that? It must be stopped."

"I have tried. It cannot be helped, my lady."

Lady Tremyss, followed by Goliath, left the dancing-room without another word.

"What is it, mamma?" asked Isabel, as her mother passed through the library.

"Rats," Lady Tremyss answered.

CHAPTER X.

WALTER PICKS A LITTLE BOY OUT OF THE RIVER.

IN such natures as Edith Arden's, it is suffering only that awakens passion. As yet she dwelt in the tranquil world of sentiment. Not from any lack of native force. The vivid eye, the thin nostril, the deeply cut lips, all

revealed a latent strength capable of being stimulated into vehemence; but that strength lay sleeping in the quiet recesses within.

So the autumn's days passed on, each hour bringing her unconsciously closer to Walter, her unfailing companion in her rides and walks and drives. She forgot her dreary childhood, its loneliness, its grief; she did not remember the separation from the Hall, which must inevitably come at last; no cloud cast its shadow over that golden spring time of her life. Edith was happy.

One result of the morning rides referred to was to bring Isabel to the Hall in the afternoon, and consequently to throw her much into Walter's society.

In young Arden's newly awakened tenderness, his tone had become gentler to all; and it scarcely needed Edith's warmly expressed conviction that Isabel possessed much more feeling and mind than she was in the habit of showing, to sensibly modify his tone towards her. His respect for what Edith esteemed, was heightened into something very like friendship, by his sympathy with Isabel's adoring affection.

So Isabel came over each afternoon and sat with Edith, and listened while Walter read aloud or talked, and grew quieter and gentler every day. Her intellect seemed to have received some sudden impetus. It developed rapidly. Her very appearance began to change. Her eyes grew deeper, her smile became less frequent, and more thoughtful. Her former glitter and glow was settling into a steadier lustre, more grateful to eye and sense.

One afternoon the wind had risen and brought with it clouds, heavy and storm laden. For three days the rain fell without intermission, lashing the panes, and sweeping wildly away over the lawn.

Walter had hoped for still more unbroken companionship with Edith, now that they were fellow prisoners in the Hall,

but to his surprise and displeasure she evinced a sudden preference for his aunt's society. She clung persistently to Mrs. Arden's side, and tacitly refused all continuance of that solitary converse with him which had recently formed so great a pleasure in his life.

Mrs. Arden came to the conclusion that Edith was getting a little tired of being so much with Walter, and did her best to amuse her, secretly wishing that the weather would clear up and bring Isabel. She liked Isabel much better now that she was quieter, and could sit still and talk like a reasonable being.

On the fourth day the rain ceased, the wind fell, the sun shone out, and brought Isabel, delighted at her release from the Park.

"My dear," said Mrs. Arden to Edith, "I think you had better put on your habit and take a little ride with Isabel, I do indeed. You're not looking quite so well as you did, and as I like to see you. I know what you want, but there's no use thinking of that," she added, regretfully, "and so you'd better go out, you really had, to ride. Walter will go too, I dare say. It will do you good to get a little fresh air."

"Yes, do come. It is warm as midsummer," said Isabel.

The horses were ordered, and they left the Hall. They rode through the wooded lanes, already beginning to dry, but in their deep gullies and tiny water-courses showing how violent had been the recent storm. The trunks of the trees were dark with moisture, and ever and anon a few lingering drops fell on the heads of the riders, as a startled bird sprang from some little bough above them. The sun shot long, slanting rays of light over the vivid green of the fields, and sprinkled golden dust upon the crumbling ridges of the ploughed lands.

They rode on for a while almost in silence, enjoying the subdued beauty of the scene and the warmth of the sunny air. At length Isabel suddenly exclaimed.

"I knew I had something to tell you. Just fancy, Mamma won't have the dancing-room used!"

"That's a pity," replied Edith; "it is such a nice room."

"Yes. I had set my heart on it, and I never imagined I couldn't have it; but this morning when I asked Mamma how many camellias we should want for it, she said it was not to be thrown open, but that the dancing would be in the great room opening out of the dining-room."

"I dare say it will do quite as well," responded Edith, consolingly.

"Oh, but I assure you you're mistaken! It hasn't any mirrors at all, and a dancing-room needs them. It is so very strange—Mamma has contradicted me twice lately, once about the breakfast, and now about this. I can't think what it means."

They had reached the river as she was speaking, and were crossing the bridge.

"Look there!" exclaimed Isabel, interrupting herself. She laughed and pointed with her riding whip. "Just look at their funny little heads."

Edith looked, and saw not far from them a number of children's faces looking up from the river, with staring eyes and laughing mouths. The little bathers had crouched under the water until the party should have past by.

"Little rascals, they oughtn't to be there," said Walter. "The river is very full, and—"

Shrill cries rose as he spoke, from the water two little pink arms were seen struggling wildly a moment, then they disappeared.

Walter leaped from his horse, threw aside his coat and boots, and sprang on the parapet. He stood for an instant, the noble proportions of his figure displayed against the sky. The little head appeared an instant, then sank again. Walter plunged in. As he flung himself down, all the color left Edith's cheeks and lips. She closed her eyes. Isabel

urged her horse close to the parapet, and leaned over, watching the swimmer. The child rose twice again before he could reach him. As he sank the third time, young Arden dived. He reappeared bearing a helpless little burden.

It was hard work, swimming with one hand against a river running like a mill-course; but he gained the bank and gave his insensible charge into the hands of a woman who came running from a cottage on the bank.

After assuring himself that the child had received no harm, Walter returned to his companions. Edith received him in silence; Isabel, with a few hurried words, held out the reins of his horse.

"Much obliged," he said gaily, hastily resuming his discarded articles of attire, and springing into the saddle. "It's lucky that Roy didn't take himself off. What an opportunity he lost!" He laughed, and patted the horse's neck. Isabel thought she had never seen him look half so handsome.

The groom came leisurely into sight at that moment. Setting spurs to his horse, he galloped up.

"Now I shall go home, and you will go back with Edith. She looks ready to faint."

Isabel struck her horse a sharp blow, and dashed away, followed by the groom.

"Were you frightened?" said Walter, bending over Edith's saddle-bow, as they turned their horses' heads homeward.

"I,—yes,—no,—I mean I was afraid the little boy would be drowned," replied Edith, with that instinctive duplicity with which even the most candid of her sex will seek to hide her emotions from him who is the cause of them.

Walter, thus repulsed, rode on beside her without a word, until they reached the Hall.

Mrs. Arden was sitting reading at the drawing-room window. She came out in tremulous haste.

"Oh, Walter! dear, dear me, what is the matter? You're all dripping wet. What is it? Tell me quick. Are you sure you aren't hurt? Where have you been?"

"Picking a little boy out of the river—that's all," he answered, rather gruffly, lifting Edith from her saddle.

"Oh, what a dreadful risk! Was there any danger? I'm sure there was. I'm trembling all over, only thinking of it. And what would have become of me if anything had happened to you? Oh, Walter, Walter! But where's Edith?"

Edith had disappeared.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BALL AT ILTON PARK.

FROM that day the division between the cousins grew rapidly wider. Each was wounded to the quick by the coldness and avoidance of the other, and each expressed that grief by increased distance of manner. They only met before others. At such times they exerted their utmost efforts to appear cheerful and unconcerned, succeeding so well as to completely blind Mrs. Arden to the real state of things before her eyes.

Only on one point did her aunt interfere with Edith. After five days of absence from riding, she told her that she really couldn't consent to her giving it up. She noticed that Edith had quite lost her appetite, and she was sure it was that; she must beg that Edith wouldn't insist on stopping her rides. It troubled her so much to see her sit without tasting any thing. She'd ordered all sorts of dishes, and Edith did not so much as to look at them, and when she had seen her that morning refuse those cream cup-cakes, she felt

that really something must be done about it; and since she could not take anything to keep her up, except open air and exercise, open air and exercise she must take. Whereupon, Edith after a vain resistance, invited Isabel to join Walter and herself in their morning rides, an invitation which Isabel gladly accepted, by her gay chatter relieving the embarrassment resulting from the changed position of the other two members of the party.

This arrangement definitively confirmed Walter in the belief that Edith had detected the state of his feelings, and was determined to put a stop to them.

The long, miserable days dragged themselves on, and the night arrived on which there was to be a dance at the Hall.

Mr. Arden had sent down on the preceding day a large box and an écrin, which severally contained a ball-dress of tulle and white heath, and a set of pearls.

"Oh, I can't wear them, they are much too handsome," Edith exclaimed, as her aunt opened the case, and displayed the pear-shaped ornaments.

"But, my dear, you know if your father sent them he expects you to wear them, and you ought, you know; indeed, I really think you ought," rejoined Mrs. Arden, inspecting the large, lustrous drops.

"I wish he had sent something simpler," Edith replied, submissively.

In all her life Edith had never disobeyed her father, never disregarded a desire he had expressed. His wishes were her laws, in small as well as in great things. Accordingly, to Nitson's rapturous delight, both ball-dress and pearls were to be worn.

As Edith, wrapped in her cloak of white satin and lämmergeier, descended to the drawing-room on the night of the ball, she found Walter standing with a bouquet of carefully chosen flowers in his hand. His eyes glanced rapidly over her draped figure and rested on the bunch of tea roses, sent by Isabel, which she held.

"So you've got a bouquet already. I hoped you would wear these," he said, in a constrained tone.

Edith might have told him that a yard of white satin ribbon enabled a young lady to wear two bouquets at a time; but while she was confusedly uttering her thanks and trying to find words to explain the possibility, Walter cast the flowers carelessly upon the table and turned aside. Mrs. Arden came forward.

"Well, then, my dear, if you are quite ready."

Two carriages were waiting without.

"Two carriages. Why, what is that for?" Mrs. Arden exclaimed.

"I ordered the other for myself, aunt. I thought I should make one too many in yours. Ladies' dresses won't bear squeezing. May I ask you for the first quadrille?" he added, to Edith, a little hurriedly, handing her into the carriage. "I must secure it now, or give it up altogether."

Edith said yes, the carriage door was shut, and they took the road to the Park.

The night was black and still. Not a breath stirred the frosty air; no stars were out. Impenetrable gloom enveloped every object outside the narrow circle lighted by the carriage lamps, Edith leaned back in silence.

"— do you, my dear?" caught her ear after a while.

"I beg your pardon—what was it?"

"I was saying, my dear, that the Park must be crowded, isn't it?"

"Yes, quite so. Isabel has given up her own room."

"Dear me, given up her own room. Why, she means to sleep somewhere, doesn't she?"

"Yes; but all the rooms were taken up except Lady Anne's chamber, and they did not want to put any stranger there, of course. So she has taken it. She says she would like to see a ghost."

"She'll get well frightened some day if she isn't careful,"

responded Mrs. Arden. "People don't know what they are talking about when they jest on ghosts. But here we are," she added, interrupting herself, as the carriage turned into the gates of the Park.

Great torches were planted in the ground before the sphinxes. The light glared fitfully, casting strange shadows over their stony faces. Their eyeballs seemed to move, their lips looked ready to uncloze, as the red blaze rose and fell beneath them. Along the file of pines which lined the avenue were suspended colored lamps, which threw strange and unnatural tints in rapid alternation upon the guests as they drove by. The sound of gay music reached them as they neared the house.

The ancient saloon, usually so sombre, was now blazing with light. The waxed panels reflected like mirrors the hundred wax candles. A painting of Judith bearing the head of Holofernes hung opposite the door. The Jewish widow's eyes were cast as if fixed on the mistress of the house, who had taken her stand directly before her.

As Edith approached Lady Tremyss, she raised her eyes, which she had lowered at the sound of the whisper that greeted her entrance. She half drew back. Robed in the costliest lace, a diadem of antique cameos set in brilliants blazing on her forehead, her neck and arms flashing back the light, her eyes contradicting with their ominous lustre the marble stillness of the rest of her face, Lady Tremyss impressed Edith as something terrible—, beautiful, but with the blood-chilling beauty of a Medusa.

Beside Lady Tremyss stood Isabel, with her gay and sparkling face, her rose-colored dress and wreath. While Edith was murmuring her words of acknowledgment in reply to Lady Tremyss' greeting, Isabel caught her hand.

"How sweetly you are dressed, and what splendid pearls those are; only you are looking as pale as a pearl yourself. You are not tired already, I hope?"

"No."

"And you have worn my bouquet. That is good in you. I was afraid that Walter would give you a handsomer, and that you would leave mine at home."

Isabel's attention was here claimed by some new arrivals, and Edith was glad to be able to turn away. As she drew back, Mr. Tracey took his place beside her, and she saw young Renson advancing, crush hat in hand.

"I am delighted to meet you, delighted to see the Park thrown open again. Fine house, though the rooms are rather low, very fine," said the old gentleman.

"This is the first time for several years, I believe," said Edith.

"Yes; not since the death of Sir Ralph. A trying evening for Lady Tremyss it must be; and, indeed, there is something about her rather different from usual, it seems to me," remarked Mr. Tracey, looking at his hostess.

His remarks were interrupted by the appearance of young Renson, looking rather redder and stiffer than usual.

Isabel came up at that instant and spoke to Edith.

"I am to dance the first dance with Lord Skeffington, and the second with Walter. You'll be my vis-à-vis, won't you?"

Edith assented.

"You're engaged to Walter, of course, and after that?"

"To Mr. Renson and Mr. Osborne."

"Half-a-dozen men have been begging introductions, but I've put them off until after the quadrille. Walter,"—to young Arden, who just then came up—"you are to be my vis-à-vis."

Walter offered Edith his arm, and they followed Isabel into the dancing-room. It was, as Isabel had said it should be, filled with flowers. Opposite the entrance was a large mirror, before which stood two gigantic vases of oriental porcelain, supporting pyramids of flowers.

"See, are they not superb?" said Isabel, directing Edith's attention to them. "They are a present from your father. They arrived this afternoon. Aren't they magnificent?"

During the ten minutes after the quadrille, Edith promised dances to half the men in the room, including Lord Skeffington. A momentary opening in the circle around her was immediately filled up by Mr. George Osborne.

Mr. Osborne prided himself upon his waltzing, though why he should do so it was difficult to discover. Edith did not share his opinion, and after two or three rounds, sat down, preferring his conversation to his dancing.

The evening wore on, as all evenings will. Edith's partners talked a great deal to her, but did not seem to require any particular conversational exertion on her part. They all said the same things. And her eye wandered in quest of Walter where he stood talking to other women.

At last the longed-for moment came. Walter led her into the circle of dancers, passed his arm around her, and bore her round. The music, the odor of the flowers, the lights, Edith's beauty, that evening more peculiar and remarkable than ever, had roused his emotions almost beyond his control.

There was a fierce, reckless look about him that half terrified Edith when, on stopping, she stole a glance at his face.

"I had no idea you danced so well," he said abruptly. "It's a pity I did not profit by it last summer. You would have waltzed with me then the hour together."

Edith flushed violently.

Walter went on—"But now you are Miss Arden, I must take my turn with the rest. Curse me if I do, though; I'll never waltz with you again.

—Could this be Walter—so rude, so ungentlemanly? What could it all mean? She would have felt angry with

him once, but she felt no anger now. The look he gave her as he spoke—that fierce, hungry, imploring look, prevented all such possibility.

"Bring Edith into the supper-room; I am going to have an ice," said Isabel, passing them.

Walter led Edith into the supper-room, and found her a chair. Isabel came up.

"Walter, you have danced her to death. You never stopped. Now, Edith, do you stay here quietly and rest. I won't let any one speak to you."

Isabel posted herself as a sentinel before Edith, after obtaining a promise that she would try to eat the ice Walter had gone to bring. He brought it, and gave it to her without a word.

Edith felt a choking sensation in her throat. Oh, that would not do. She must think of something else. At that moment Walter was called away.

She looked up. The supper-room was comparatively deserted, the view to the dancing-room was open; through the door she saw a crowd of gauzy dresses, white, pink, and blue, intermingled with deep toned brocades, ponderous velvets, laces, diamonds, plumes, black coats and white cravats, all under a blaze of light. It seemed very far off, and yet a moment ago she had been there, waltzing with Walter. As she gazed wistfully, a tall figure, taller than any in the crowded room beyond, passed before her. She started violently. It was Goliath, dark, silent, sinister. She turned her head away, and saw two old gentlemen standing by the sideboard so near her that she could hear what they were saying.

"Yes, it is sixteen years," one of them replied, in answer to something that she had not caught.

"Sixteen years—that is a long time. Sir Ralph was a bachelor then."

"Yes; he used to give dinner parties, not balls."

"You must find some things changed."

"Not everything, as I feared. This room, for instance, looks almost exactly as it used, but not quite. It seems to me that I miss something."

The old gentleman, whose yellow face betokened him a recent arrival from India, gazed inquiringly around.

"I don't see anything altered," said his companion.

"I have it—to be sure. It is the fowling pieces, don't you remember?"

"Hush!" exclaimed the other, lowering his voice and catching the speaker by the sleeve. "That's Miss Hartley."

He whispered something that Edith could not hear, and then they hastily moved away, looking much disconcerted.

What could there be in the mention of fowling-pieces, so harmful to Isabel? Edith lost herself vainly in conjectures.

She had not yet succeeded in framing any satisfactory explanation, when Lord Skeffington came towards her.

She had paid little attention to his appearance when Isabel had presented him, but now she saw him to be a slender, washed-out looking young man, with high Roman features, and a very attenuated mouth.

"The evening is half over, and my turn is yet to come," he began, in the languid tone familiar to the ears of party goers. "Cruel in Miss Hartley, it was, 'pon my word, to turn me off in this way."

And Lord Skeffington looked as if he considered Edith must be quite overcome by his professions of disappointment.

"That is the waltz, I think," he lisped, as the measure of the music changed. "Seyton will be quite cut up at having missed his quadrille. He has been looking for you everywhere. May I?" And he offered Edith his arm.

She danced that dance, and the next, and many succeeding dances, with many succeeding partners; tall, short, heavy, or amusing, as the case might be.

At length the ball broke up. The carriages rolled away in rapid succession; the musicians left their flower-hidden stand, and retired to their private supper; the wax lights had reached their sockets; the flowers were beginning to droop.

"It is all over," said Isabel, looking around the deserted dancing-room, where she was standing alone with Walter and Edith; "but it has been very pleasant. Give me a bud from your bouquet, to remember it by."

The two girls left the dancing-room. Walter walked up and down, waiting till his aunt and Edith were ready. The sound of the gay voices of the party staying in the house, came from one of the rooms beyond. Suddenly he saw a glove where Edith had been standing. He remembered that she had taken it off to detach the rose. He seized it, and placed it in his bosom.

He did not hear Lady Tremyss' noiseless step in the room behind him. He did not see the reflection of her still face and searching eyes in the mirror, watching him. Before he had turned his head she had glided away. He found her in the drawing-room when he went to take his leave.

"Wait till I bring you your glove," said Isabel.

She ran into the dancing-room.

"Very odd. It's not there," she said, returning.

"I must have dropped it somewhere else," replied Edith. "It's no matter."

Lady Tremyss cast a furtive look on Walter. He remained silent.

Edith and young Arden left the Park, unconscious that their future lay in the grasp of Lady Tremyss.

When Edith and Mrs. Arden reached the Hall, they found Walter waiting for them in the drawing-room. He approached Edith, as Mrs. Arden rang the bell.

"Will you forgive me?"

She bowed her head, and closed her eyes, to hide the quick tears that rose at his voice.

"I will speak to him—I will tell him that I have nothing to forgive," she thought desperately to herself. She looked up—Walter was gone.

"I am quite surprised; really I don't know what to think of it," said Mrs. Arden to Edith,—“Walter has gone to London on business, and doesn't know when he shall be back again. But, gracious, my dear child, how pale you look! how dreadfully your color has gone! That ball was too much for you, quite too much, I'm afraid,” and Mrs. Arden mentally rescinded her resolution as to giving a dance, leaving some dinner parties for the moment in abeyance.

"Not at all. I feel perfectly well," said Edith. "Yes, it is rather strange he should be called away so suddenly; but business accounts for everything."

She took her place and drank a glass of water.

"What a charming party it was, wasn't it? and how pretty Isabel looked," Edith resumed, and she proceeded to discourse upon the ball, giving evidence of such good spirits, united to such keen perception of the ludicrous, as greatly to delight her aunt.

"Well, I have not enjoyed myself so much for a long time; I haven't really," she said, as she laid aside her napkin and rose from the table.

Edith, going upstairs to her own room, shut herself in, until summoned to receive Miss Hartley.

"Gracious, how white you are looking!" exclaimed her visitor, as Edith entered the sitting-room. "I hoped you weren't tired at all. I met Mrs. Arden in the hall, and she said she had never seen you in such good spirits. Ah! now you look more like yourself," she added, as the color rose to Edith's face.

"Do you know, such an unlucky thing happened to-day. One of the grooms was carrying the letter-bag, and his horse cast a shoe and fell lame, and the mail had gone, and

he had to bring the bag back again, and your father won't get mamma's note of thanks till to-morrow. He will think us savages."

"Not quite," replied Edith. "He will know there was some mistake."

"That's the only disagreeable thing that has happened," continued Isabel. "Wasn't it nice, and didn't every one look pleased?"

"It wasn't quite so bad, after all, being seventeen, was it?" said Edith, forcing a smile.

"I don't know that," answered Isabel, with sudden gravity. "I have only been seventeen one day. But if all the days were to be like yesterday, I should want never to be anything but seventeen. I do so love waltzing. Did you ever know anything so delightful as the way Walter waltzes?"

"He waltzes well," replied Edith.

"Oh, it's more than well; he waltzes to perfection. He carries you round. Didn't you find it so?"

"Yes."

"I mean to have another dance next week, just a little one, only the nearest neighbors, to learn the *pas Ghika*."

"You must not count on Walter. He has gone to London, and doesn't know when he will come back," said Edith, steadying her voice.

Isabel sat silent a moment.

"We must find some other good dancer," she said. Then drawing out her watch, "How late it is. I must go. I only came for a moment. Good-bye," and without giving her customary kiss to Edith, she left the room and galloped homeward.

She sprang unaided from the saddle when she reached the Park, and throwing her reins to the groom, ran hastily upstairs to her chamber. She was stifling. What a horrible sensation in her throat. She tore open the breast of her

riding-habit, cast a quick, affrighted glance around, and burst into tears. Suddenly she checked them.

"What am I crying for? I don't know. I am a fool!" she exclaimed, impetuously.

She changed her dress, unassisted, smoothed her hair, and descended to the drawing-room, where Lady Tremyss sat, bending over her embroidery frame.

Isabel moved restlessly about the room, taking up and laying down one object after another. At last, selecting a book at random, she sat down and began to turn over its leaves. Their rustling ceased after a while. She was reading. Presently, through the stillness, came the drop of a heavy tear, another and another. Isabel laid down the book and left the room.

As the door closed Lady Tremyss came gliding from the window, took up the book, and sought through it, till she found the tear-stained page: "The Bridge of Sighs." What painful associations could Isabel possibly have with the "Bridge of Sighs?"

She read it.

"Not only in that old Venetian city,
Betwixt the prison and the palace wall,
Oh, Bridge of Sighs, across the sullen water
Doth thy dark shadow fall.

Athwart the deep-sealed current of our being,
Close hid from curious glance of strangers' eyes,
Close hid from pitying ken of those who love us,
Rises our Bridge of Sighs.

Across its arch, in endless, sad procession,
Have gone, still pass, and shall forever tread,
Our weeping hopes, with slow reluctant motion,
To join the silent dead.

The gladsome visions of our childish morning,
The soft, sweet promise of our youthful day,
The noble aspirations of our noontide,
All, sighing, pass that way.

We kneel, we stretch our longing arms towards them,
With wild entreaty and imploring moan;
In vain.—The echo of their footsteps ceases,
And we are left alone.

Alone beside life's dark, fast flowing river,
Whilst through the bitter tears that dim our eyes,
We see the pageant of our hearts' desires,
End on the Bridge of Sighs."

As she laid down the book, the sound of music came from a distance—a wild mournful melody. It ceased abruptly.

Lady Tremyss pressed her hands to her forehead, and groaned.

When mother and daughter met at dinner, Lady Tremyss furtively studied Isabel's face. There was a startled glance in the girl's eyes, an unquiet quivering about her lips. She looked like a child aroused from slumber, who fears some painful dream may yet be true. The dinner passed almost in silence.

"What are you doing, Mamma?" asked Isabel that evening, as she saw her mother busy with pencil and paper.

"Writing a list for the dance you said you wanted to give, to practice the new step. Are these all?" She read the names aloud. "There are just enough gentlemen for the ladies."

"Then you will have to ask another man. Walter has gone to London."

Lady Tremyss turned a sidelong look upon her daughter, and Isabel, the child just waking into womanhood, nestled into her mother's arms, and clung around her neck.

As Lady Tremyss pressed her lips to her daughter's cheek, she raised her eyes with the fierce look of a tigress watching over her young, and gazed steadily before her. She was mentally crouching for her spring.—Isabel loved Walter. Walter and Edith must be separated.—

The means were easy of management. Mr. Arden, in

the overflow of his gratitude, had called frequently at the Park when staying at the Hall during Edith's illness. She had detected his dislike of his nephew, she had perceived his ambition and vanity. In the conversations he had had with her, she had divined his intentions with regard to Edith. It needed but a word to her father, and she would be instantly removed from the Hall. And the letter that had missed that morning, that must be sent on the morrow:—it gave her the desired opportunity. The dark, cold eyes glittered as she thought of the chance that had placed Walter's secret in her hands.

No sooner had Isabel left the room than Lady Tremyss sat down to her writing-table, and in her sharp, Italian hand wrote to Mr. Arden.

She explained the cause of the delay of her missive, she expressed her admiration of his taste and her high appreciation of his *gracieuseté*, she regretted he had not been present on the preceding evening, she extolled Edith's beauty and distinction, she mentioned the general admiration she had attracted, then touched upon Walter's evident *tendre* for her, (Lady Tremyss, though speaking English perfectly, wrote it like a highly educated French woman,) hinted what an advantageous match it would be for him, and concluded with a hope that they might soon have the pleasure of again seeing Mr. Arden in Warwickshire.

CHAPTER XII.

A CALL AT HOUSTON LACY. ORMANBY AVERIL.

THE next morning brought a note from Isabel, saying that she could not come over to the Hall for her usual ride, and Mrs. Arden proposed that Edith should accompany her on two visits she was to pay that afternoon.

"It will do you good, my dear, to be in the fresh air, and get a little color into your cheeks. I am afraid, my dear, you are beginning to find the Hall rather dull, I really am."

"I never was so happy in all my life as I have been at the Hall," exclaimed Edith, bursting into tears, to the great discomposure of Mrs. Arden, who listened to her irrepressible sobs with sensations of helpless remorse.

As Edith retreated to her room, her aunt looked after her solicitously.

"She wants a change, I'm afraid. I read the other day that some persons' lungs continually require fresh oxygen. I'm sure other persons' spirits do. I wonder if she is homesick!" Mrs. Arden's eyes vibrated rapidly as they always did when she was making up her mind. "That is it, I'll be bound. To be sure it is. I might have thought of it before. And she is so good and dutiful, she never would express a wish against her father's. She would stay here as long as he wanted. She was happy enough at first, but now she wants to go home. It is natural, after all. However, I can't say anything about it. John Arden might think I wanted to get rid of her." Mrs. Arden paused, and heaved a deep sigh. "How I wish she could have taken some of Lady Pettigrew's Panacea!"

"Where are you going this afternoon, Aunt?" asked Edith, as she was about to dress for the drive, "and what shall I wear?"

"We are going to Lady Chatterton's and Mrs. Lacy's, my dear; and you had better put on your prettiest things, —not for Lady Chatterton, she would not know or care, but Mrs. Lacy thinks of nothing so much as dress," except flirting, Mrs. Arden might have added, but, being good natured, did not. "What is it your father sent you that you have not yet worn?"

"What carriage dress? A Russian pelisse of light grey and ermine, with a dress and muff like it, and a blue capote."

"That will do very well, very well indeed."

Edith withdrew to assume the winter costume which was to impress Mrs. Lacy.

As she descended to the hall where her aunt was standing, Mrs. Arden's face beamed with pleasure.

"Well, really, I never saw anything so pretty as that, never in all my life. And little grey boots trimmed with ermine to match," she added, smiling, as Edith's downward motion revealed her coquettish *chaussure*. It suits you very well indeed, I'm sure."

The road led by Ilton Park. As they passed the sphinxes at the gate, Edith remembered for the first time the conversation she had overheard in the supper-room, and the incomprehensible perturbation of his companion, when the old India gentleman alluded, within Isabel's hearing, to the fowling-pieces that had formerly ornamented the walls. She asked an explanation of Mrs. Arden.

"I really don't know, my dear. It was a shocking case, very. I was away at the time that it took place; but I remember that Captain Hartley, Lady Tremy's first husband, shot himself accidentally while staying at the Park, but whether he was out shooting, or how it happened, I can't recall just now. They must have been referring to that."

"I wish I could find out," said Edith.

"It's very easy to find out, my dear; very easy indeed. If you really care about knowing, I will ask Lady Chatterton; she always knows about everything, and likes to tell what she knows. She will tell you all about it, I'm sure."

As Mrs. Arden predicted, so it turned out. Lady Chatterton, a little, wizened, lively old woman, with gold spectacles, and a face whose construction put one irresistibly in mind of a chameleon, did know all about the circumstances of Captain Hartley's accidental death, and went off into a detailed account of the same as soon as Mrs. Arden's question had turned the stop-cock of her flow of conversation.

"Oh, yes, it was a dreadful thing, poor young man, so gay and handsome as he was—and his beautiful young wife—it was really a most shocking thing, and a dreadful blow to Sir Ralph. He was a changed man after it. Some people thought that seeing such a dreadful catastrophe happen close to the door, actually inside of it, set him thinking about his spiritual concerns, for he had lived hard in his youth, you know, and was a call to a better life; for he quite changed after it, as I say, and went away from the Park, and didn't seem to take an interest in anything except securing the poor young wife's pension, for she hadn't a penny, you know. Captain Hartley's family had quite cast him off, on account of his marriage, I believe it was, and he was nothing but a second son, and had nothing in his own right. And for all the pains Sir Ralph took, he couldn't get the pension for her. He was a long time at it; but, somehow or other, the papers were wrong, and so there she was, quite destitute, poor thing, with her little girl. Miss Hartley was about three years old then. When Sir Ralph found that he couldn't get anything out of Government for her, he married her himself. And although I always thought and said that he had married her out of pure compassion, yet he certainly was very fond of her afterwards, and it wasn't wonderful either, for she was and is the handsomest woman I ever saw."

"But about Captain Hartley's death," interposed Mrs. Arden.

"Oh, yes, to be sure—poor young man. How little I thought when I saw him at church on Sunday, that before the week was out he would be brought in his coffin into that very church for burial. And the church was full. Sir Ralph was chief mourner. His face was as white as a pocket handkerchief, and his eyes were sunk all into his head. He looked as if he hadn't closed his eyes since. And when the earth was cast into the grave on the coffin, for it wasn't put

into the Tremyss tomb, as every one expected it would be, he shook all over as if he had the palsy. No one had thought he was a man of much feeling before, but after that, people began to think that they had done him wrong, and he stood much higher. And he hadn't known Captain Hartley so long either. He met him at Gibraltar, where Captain Hartley was in garrison, only a few months before, and it was then that he gave him and his wife the invitation to come and stay with him whenever they came to England. And he treated them as if they were the greatest people in the world; there was a dinner party or something every day, ladies' dinner parties for Mrs. Hartley. She used to dress very simply in those days. She used to wear white muslins, with colored ribbons; and though she was married, yet she looked so very young that they did not seem at all inappropriate. The ladies couldn't tell what to make of her at first, she was so still and silent, but she always had a very fine manner, much the same as it is now, and any one could see that she was clever, though she didn't talk, and they soon liked her. Sir Ralph, as I said, used to treat her as if she were a princess; you know when he chose, and he always did choose in his own house, he could be delightful."

"But how long had they been staying there when the accident happened?" asked Mrs. Arden, abandoning the system of direct questioning, and attempting to bring Lady Chatterton to the point by a change of tactics.

"Oh, they had been there, let me see, it must have been two or three months; it is so long ago that I can't exactly remember. I know that the leaves were on the trees when they came there, and that they were gone the day he was buried. I remember thinking what a sad day it was for a burial, a cold, gray sky, and a drizzling rain and bare branches. They said he looked as if he were only asleep when he was lying in his coffin—people who die of gunshot

wounds always look so, I have heard. I suppose they don't have any time to be afraid. And it was a most extraordinary thing, and shows how careful people always ought to be—neither Sir Ralph nor any one else knew that the gun was loaded. The very next week he had all the others taken down, I suppose from fear of some other accident. You see, Sir Ralph and Captain Hartley were sitting over their wine after Mrs. Hartley had left the table, and the conversation seemed to have turned on fowling pieces, for Captain Hartley took one down and began to examine it. There was something peculiar in its construction, so people said, and Sir Ralph prized it very much; and it was that very piece Captain Hartley was examining, and it went off and shot him through the heart."

"How dreadful," exclaimed Edith.

"He fell where he was standing, just in front of the great sideboard, and never moved again. They sent for the doctor; though from the first moment they knew there was no hope; but Sir Ralph would have everything done."

"And his wife?" asked Edith.

"She was the first in the room. She never shrieked nor fainted, but knelt by him and held his head. And when the doctor had examined the wound, and said that death must have been instantaneous—it was an awful wound, people said—then she got up without a word, and went upstairs to her room, where Miss Hartley was asleep, and locked herself in. Sir Ralph left the house that very night and went over to Mrs. Hammerthwaite's, and got her to go and stay there, and the day after the funeral Mrs. Hartley went away with her little girl and stayed with Mrs. Hammerthwaite all through the time Sir Ralph was trying to get her pension. He was working about it for months, and at last when it couldn't be got, he offered himself to her, and she married him. That was about sixteen months after Captain Hartley's death."

"It seems strange that she could have loved another man so soon after the death of her husband," said Edith.

"Nobody thought she was in love with him, my dear Miss Arden; but you know marriages are made from a great many causes. Mrs. Hartley had really no choice. She couldn't have gone on staying with Mrs. Hammerthwaite for ever, and she hadn't any money to go any where else. It was the only way out of her difficulties."

Lady Chatterton was here seized with a violent fit of coughing, such as her harangues usually ended in, under cover of which Mrs. Arden and Edith took their leave.

"What a dreadful story that was," said Edith, as the carriage took the road to Houston Lacy. "No one that knows it can wonder at Lady Tremyss' stillness and reserve. Such a shock as that must be enough to turn a woman into stone."

"Yes, my dear, I dare say it might have been, but I believe she was much the same before her husband's death. Didn't Lady Chatterton say so?"

"Yes; but I can't help thinking that she was mistaken. She could not have always been as she is now. It would be unnatural that such a thing could take place, without changing every feeling she had. To have the person she loved snatched from her in such a way! I wonder it did not kill her outright."

"Dear me, that would have made it a great deal worse—don't you think so? It was quite bad enough as it was, I'm sure; and what with her daughter and Sir Ralph, both so fond of her, I think she did much better to keep on living, and I've no doubt you'll think so some day yourself, my dear," replied Mrs. Arden, who was capable on occasion of taking a practical view of things.

Edith, who had not yet reached the age of common sense, made no response, and continued to gaze out of the carriage window, thinking what would become of her if a gun should

go off and kill Walter; until unable any longer to endure her imaginings, she was forced to take refuge in conversation with her aunt.

"How is it that I have never seen Mrs. Lacy?" she inquired. "Houston Lacy is not very far from the Hall, is it?"

"Only about seven miles. She has been paying some visits; she's always paying visits."

"What sort of person is she? It seems to me that I have heard the name before."

"Very likely, she always goes up to London for the season. She's a pretty woman, though she was prettier once than she is now, and she dresses remarkably well."

This was not exactly what Edith wanted to ascertain, but she knew that her aunt was not strong on analysis of character, and so pursued the subject no further.

"We are not far from Houston Lacy now," continued Mrs. Arden. "It's a very fine place, very."

The commendation was merited. Houston Lacy was in truth a very fine place. A connoisseur's eye might have been shocked by the irregular architecture of the house, but the general effect was decidedly imposing. The carriage-road ended under an enormous porch of glass, which was commanded by the windows of a most luxurious room, too large to be called a boudoir, too small to be called anything else. In this room sat Mrs. Lacy in the most elegant of morning dresses, consulting the pages of the little memorandum book she held in her hand. On a couch, at a little distance, lounged a *blasé* looking man of about thirty-six, her brother, Ormanby Averil. Brown hair, whiskers, and moustache, regular features, sallow complexion, indolent eyes, tall, rather slender figure, perfectly dressed; and an air of contemptuous indifference; besides these, a large fortune in hand, an earldom, and fifty thousand a year in prospect, only one life in the way, and that one which

might disappear at any moment, for the present earl was very old;—such were the possessions, present and prospective, of Mr. Averil. These were not alone sufficient to have given him his autocratic position in society; for his word was the law of fashion, from his judgment there was no appeal. Why he was thus able to tyrannize over the fashionable world, no one knew. Perhaps his fastidiousness, his *nonchalance*, his scarcely-veiled insolence, were the elements of his success. The fact was indisputable. Society had chosen him its dictator, and obeyed his behests.

"I am sure I don't know what to do," said Mrs. Lacy, laying down her memorandum book. "I invited these people on purpose to please you, and now you say it will be dull."

"Excuse me, I did not say precisely that."

"What did you say then?"

"I said it would be insufferably dull."

"I don't see how that mends the matter," responded Mrs. Lacy, shutting the clasp of her book with a snap.

"I don't see that it does," replied her brother, in a tone of exasperating indifference.

"Do you know, Ormanby, you are getting atrocious. You don't seem to think that a person exists worth looking at."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. I should think you would die of sheer ennui."

"Perhaps I may. It's not unlikely." He suppressed a yawn.

"Why don't you do something to wake yourself up? Why don't you fall in love?"

"Every one does not find it so easy—" He paused. His mocking smile pointed the sentence.

Mrs. Lacy pushed her chair back from the fire. He had stung her, but she did not dare to express her vexation.

"You have had a good deal of experience, nevertheless," was all she trusted to herself to say.

"You surprise me. I was not aware of it."

"Do you mean to say that you have not had more flirtations than I can remember?"

"Possibly, but I thought you were speaking of falling in love."

"People have no business to flirt except they are in love," rejoined Mrs. Lacy, who had a private code of morality of her own.

"I know that is your maxim," said Mr. Averil.

"Don't be so provoking, Ormanby, now don't. I am talking seriously, and you don't seem to know it."

"I desire nothing better than to please you. I will be as serious as you like," answered her brother, looking at her for the first time during the conversation.

"Well, then, seriously, why don't you try to find some object, great or small, in life; something to hang an interest on? It is really melancholy to see you going on from year to year, with just that same indifference and carelessness, as if you didn't care if the world came to an end the next moment."

"You express it admirably. That is precisely the case."

"Then why don't you try to fall in love? It is time you were married."

"I have never seen a woman I could fall in love with since I was twenty-two."

"And a pretty affair you made of it," retorted Mrs. Lacy, incautiously. "Poor Clara!"

Her voice trembled on the name.

"Take care, Ellen," said her brother.

The sudden expansion of his eye, the quivering of his moustache, showed that the capability of violent emotions lurked under the languid calm of his manner.

Mrs. Lacy was silent a moment, then she answered, in a low tone:

"I am sorry. I didn't mean to vex you, but I was so fond of her."

It was the remembrance of that affection which now softened Mr. Averil's manner, and unclosed his lips.

"I will speak frankly to you, Ellen, if you wish. I am nauseated with women: their unveiled eagerness to attract me, not for my own sake, but for the sake of what they will get by marrying me; their coquetry, the systematic way in which they trample down everything like genuine feeling—those of them that were born capable of it—their jealousies, their appetite for admiration, their selfishness, their duplicity, all that I see low and base in them, has fairly sickened me with the sex."

"You are unjust, Ormanby; you go into extremes. I dare say they want to marry you, but I don't see that you have any right to say it is only because they want the position they would get."

"I have the right given by long experience of women. I know them."

"Then why not try political life? You know you could command a seat in Parliament at any time you chose."

"To succeed there, a man must have faith. He must believe in what he says. I should not."

"There is diplomacy."

"The greatest bore of all."

"Mrs. Arden, Miss Arden," proclaimed the footman, throwing open the door. Mrs. Lacy rose to receive her visitors.

Averil's name was not new to Edith. She knew that he was very much looked up to, that her father always invited him, and that he never came. She turned her eyes frigidly upon him, as Mrs. Lacy named him to her, forced so to do by the smallness of the room, which left him no means of escape, and withdrew her momentary gaze with an expression of haughtiness. She did not like him, he looked cold

and selfish; Mrs. Lacy was better. And she directed her look to her hostess, apparently unconscious that there was any Mr. Averil in the room.

Left to himself he employed the leisure thus afforded him in studying his sister's younger visitor. He deliberately examined her delicate features, noted the color of her hair, the length of her lashes, the grace of her attitude, the peculiar and becoming style of her toilette, and the general distinction of her appearance. She was a beautiful creature, there was no doubt about that. Who could she be? Mrs. Arden had no daughter. But John Arden, the millionaire, he had heard that he had a daughter, not yet out, who promised to be a great beauty. Could this be she? Strange if it were so. Such a man could hardly have a daughter like that, he thought, recalling Mr. John Arden's attempt to entrap him into breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, concerts and balls. At any rate, he would find out.

"You have heard recently from Arden Court?"

"Yes," with a slight inclination of the head, and a downward droop of the eyelids.

"Mr. Arden was quite well, I hope."

"Quite well." There came no "thank you" to close the sentence.

"A charming place it is, I am told."

Averil's tact was at fault. The "I am told," pointed too plainly to the fact that he had never been there himself.

"It pleases me, of course," was the only reply he obtained, and the long lashes maintained their inclined position immovably.

Averil tried all those subjects to which he had hitherto found young ladies lend a willing ear. He obtained but a coldly courteous attention. He could not succeed in interesting her. She actually looked bored, as he perceived with indignant surprise.

"She will be an irreparable loss, I assure you. She is the

best natured creature in the world, and really clever maids are so apt to be disagreeable; don't you think so?" addressing the last part of her sentence to Edith.

Edith gave a full assent.

"I want to get her a good place. Don't you want her, so close to London as you are? I think your father would be quite willing, my dear; I feel quite sure he would," said Mrs. Arden.

"I hope he will," replied Edith, firmly.

Averil listened. Then, with all that keen penetration and cold decision, she was docile. Had he not made a mistake in his mortifying treatment of her father? He would accept his next invitation. He wanted to study that girl; he liked to see something so peculiar, so different from other people.

"Very *distinguée*," said Mrs. Lacy, as the door closed upon her visitors.

"Who, the old lady or the young one?"

"The young one, of course; but it is time to dress for dinner."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ORANGE-COLORED DIAMOND.

COULD Edith have but known that the business which called Walter to London resolved itself into the search of paintings of North American flowers, she would have felt a little consoled for his abrupt departure. She had expressed before him a wish that she had some of Mr. Hungerford's to copy; and when the sleepless night that succeeded Lady Tremyss' ball had convinced young Arden of the impossibility of remaining under the same roof with his cousin, at

least until he had been able to bring some order and calmness into his thoughts, he had decided on going to London rather than anywhere else, because in London he might be able to do Edith that one small service.

Walter's quest through the print shops proved unsuccessful. Everything was to be had, save what he wanted. In the midst of his difficulties a happy suggestion shone in upon him. Mr. Hungerford might possibly be in London. If any one could give him information, it would be he. His address would probably be at the Travellers' Club; and at the Travellers' Club Walter found it,—“Number Three, Pe-tryon Court, City, second story.” And accordingly, on the next day, he went to seek out Mr. Hungerford, in the extraordinary locality in which he had thought fit to establish himself.

The driver drew up before the entrance to a small paved court, at the end of which stood a large and gloomy structure.

It had been a building of more than common importance in its day. The windows of the ground floor were strongly barred in foreign fashion; but the addition was of recent date.

While glancing over the façade, Arden's attention was attracted by a young and handsome face, which suddenly appeared at one of the grated windows on the left. The dress of the owner of the face was peculiar, and yet not displeasing. A vest of crimson silk covered the upper part of her figure, her abundant black hair was bound in a massive braid around her head. Across her forehead hung a row of golden coins, her neck was clasped by a heavy chain of the same metal. She stood looking forth from the darkness beyond, with a haughty stare. As Walter gazed at this unexpected apparition, an old gray head appeared behind the handsome stone monolith, for such she looked, a wrinkled hand clutched her shoulder, and, with a sullen scowl, she disappeared.

Young Arden ascended the broad and uneven steps. Directly before him was a ponderous door, heavily studded and plated with iron. It formed the only opening on that floor; all the other doors had been walled up. As he was about to mount the staircase, a man, in the dress of an abbé, descended. Walter made his way up stairs, guided more by feeling than by sight, and knocked at a door, the brightness of whose handle seemed to point it out as the probable abode of Mr. Hungerford.

After a moment's pause, it was opened by an individual, in whom, after an instant of perplexity, he recognized the person of whom he was in search, and whom he had last seen dressed in correct European costume, doing the honors of his album of sketches and paintings in Mr. Tracey's drawing-room.

Mr. Hungerford's keen eyes now sparkled from beneath a red fez, his spare figure was enveloped in a Persian caftan of quilted silk, and his feet were encased in Russian boots of soft undressed leather. He looked very comfortable, but decidedly grotesque.

"Glad to see you, very glad to see you," said Mr. Hungerford, shaking Walter by the hand. "Didn't know me at first, nobody does. It is the most convenient dress in the world, though it spoils one for anything else. But come in. You find me in my den."

He conducted Walter through a small ante-room into the apartment beyond.

Young Arden turned an astonished eye around as he crossed the threshold.

"A curious place," said Mr. Hungerford smiling. "A sort of visual Babel, is it not?"

The room into which he entered was of great size. The prevailing hue around was dark. Time had sobered the colors of the frescoed ceiling into sombre repose, and had deepened the tint of the floor and walls into a general hue

of warm, rich brown. Against this sober background stood forth an innumerable multitude of objects of the strangest and most incongruous nature.

"It's a very odd place," responded Walter; "the most so that I ever saw."

Mr. Hungerford looked around complacently on his treasures, then motioning Walter to a seat, he placed himself opposite, and leaned back with an air of perfect content.

"It must have taken you a long time to get these things together," said Walter, "for they are not at all in the style of what one usually finds in the curiosity shops."

"That is just it, and it is that which gives them their value to me," replied Mr. Hungerford, looking much pleased. "I obtained every one of them myself of the original owners. There is not an article here that hasn't a story."

"You should write a catalogue," remarked Walter, "and give descriptions."

"I had that idea once, and began it, but it bid fair to be like that of the British Museum, the end cut off; so I gave it up after I had written two volumes and a half. The fact is that I made my catalogue volumes of travels, essays on manners and customs, etcetera, and it was too much for me."

"So much the worse for the rest of us," said Walter.

"You are not so sure of that; you might have found it dry," replied Mr. Hungerford, with a smile that openly contradicted his words. "But apropos of travels, you should have come in five minutes earlier to have met the Abbé Hulot."

"Was that he?" exclaimed Walter. "I met him going out. I wish I had known it."

"You have read his work, of course?"

"Yes; my aunt was wild to get hold of it, and when she obtained it she found her French too rusty."

"So you translated, I understand? His conversation is

still more interesting. I am sorry you missed him, especially as he is just leaving London. But I'll tell you how I can arrange it. He comes back in a few months, and then I will invite you to meet him at dinner," said Mr. Hungerford, stimulated to an unusual departure from his present hermit life by the liking he had conceived for young Arden.

"I should be glad to meet him. That book isn't much in my line of reading, but I enjoyed it immensely."

"I'm sure you'll like him. He is as simple as a child, and yet the influence that he exerts over savages is something wonderful. You know he is an extraordinary linguist; the only man living, in fact, who has mastered the dialects of the American continent; but that isn't sufficient to account for his power over them. How he does it, I can't imagine. I've none of that power myself."

"Many persons would call it magnetism, only I don't believe in magnetism," remarked Walter.

"Neither does he, nor I either, for that matter. No; it is one of those incomprehensible things that one must be content to leave uncomprehended. It is a great pleasure to have him come in upon me as he did just now."

"You have abundance of companions," said Walter, glancing at the book-cases.

"Yes, I'm not badly off there; and my pencil, too, is a great resource."

"You must have given a great deal of time to it. I never saw such beautiful paintings as those you showed us. I have searched London in vain for paintings of the same flowers."

"I dare say. What did you ask for?"

"Painted engravings of North American flowers."

"Where did you go?"

"To every print-seller's in London."

"You should have gone to Hall and Henderson's, and asked for 'Audubon's Birds of North America.' He gives all the finest varieties of trees and flowers as well."

"Thank you; I shall go."

"You will find it there, if anywhere, and a magnificent work it is. Are you going to send out for plants to America? You'll scarcely succeed, I fear. They don't flourish in our climate."

"No; I was not thinking of that; they were for my cousin, Miss Arden, to copy."

"Oh, then she liked them so much? I feel quite flattered. A very charming person, that young lady. I think I have never met with equal sweetness and decision combined."

Walter made no reply.

"And she has, I fancy, what is rare—tenacity," continued Mr. Hungerford. "Not the common kind, but that valuable sort which comes from a well-founded confidence in her own judgment."

"You have studied her well, I see," said Walter, with effort.

"It is my *métier* to study character. I should have had my brains dashed out a dozen times if I hadn't. Yes, I quite know that young lady, and, little as I know of her, I count her a valuable acquaintance. There is no weakness in her, I should say—no fear of her ever 'changing her mind,' as women call it. I wish there were more like her," said Mr. Hungerford, who was not a general admirer of the sex.

With those last words came an electrical revulsion in Walter's mind. How or why, he knew not, but he felt that he had been mistaken. He had judged her by a few cold words—by a few, perhaps, imperfectly comprehended actions. He had allowed these to triumph over and cast into the shade all the many evidences of friendliness—no, he would call it by the right word—of affection, that he had received from her before. And how had he acted? He turned on his chair as if from a sudden spasm;—but he must listen. What was it that Mr. Hungerford was saying? something about somebody on the ground floor.

"He has really a magnificent collection. Between the anxiety of taking care of his gems and of a young wife whom he brought with him from the Levant some two or three years ago, he seems to lead a miserable life enough. I never saw a more starved-looking object, and he is worth thousands."

"Was that the young woman whom I saw at the window below?"

"It must have been. He keeps no servant, he is so afraid of being robbed. She lives there alone with him. I pity her, poor thing. He tried locking her up in the back rooms when she first arrived, but she refused to eat, and starved herself into the front ones. I believe the grates are as much to keep her from getting out, as thieves from getting in."

"He does not literally keep her a prisoner there, does he?" asked Walter.

"Pretty much the same thing. She only goes out on Saturdays, when he takes her to the Synagogue."

"I should think her dress would draw a crowd on such occasions."

"She looks like a street beggar then. He makes her put on the shabbiest clothing."

"How she must hate him!" said Walter.

"I think she would be glad to do him any ill-turn she could. But to return to his jewels—he has some of the finest sapphires I ever saw, two or three stellated, really unique."

"I think I will step in as I go down, and see whether I can find anything that pleases me," said Walter, recollecting that he had promised his aunt to choose for himself some trinket the next time he went to town, in anticipation of his approaching birthday.

"You will do well," said Mr. Hungerford, "and be sure that he shows you the stellated sapphires."

Walter took his leave. Descending the dusky staircase, he knocked at the steel-plated door.

A sliding shutter was pushed aside, revealing an iron grating, through which peered the same grey head which Walter had seen before. The Jew studied young Arden's appearance for awhile; then the shutter was returned to its place, there was a rattling, clinking sound within; the door was opened, and the dealer, bowing low, signed to Walter to enter.

No sooner had he crossed the threshold than the Jew again barred and chained the door, then conducted him into a small chamber, lighted from above. Around the walls were iron safes, in the centre stood a small table.

"Vot does de young shentlemans blease to vant?" asked the old Jew.

"I wish to see some stones."

"Sall it be diamondsh?"

The old man lingered on the last word, as though each separate syllable imparted to his palate some delicious savour.

"No."

"It ish many or von?"

"One."

"Ay, for a ring. Vell, ve sall zee."

Locking the door of the room, and opening a safe, he produced a tray, containing several small parcels.

"But I cannot see," objected Walter, glancing at the aperture above.

"Vait von leetle minute," said the Jew, in his detestable jargon. "Ve vill have light—goot light, light enough."

He produced a lamp from a corner.

"Day-light is not goot for zeeing vith," he said, lighting the lamp and placing it on the table. Then seating himself opposite Walter, he began to unfold his papers. The stones flickered and sparkled as he held them up to the

lamp; the old man's eye shone as he handled them and expatiated on their separate beauties.

"Look at dese emerald. Ish not anoder like it in all Creat Pritain, so dark; and dese zapphiresh. Dey ish plocks of peauty—velvet, plue velvet dey ish, and full of shtars. And dese rubish. Dropsh of blood—zo bright, zo clear."

"Show me something in its setting," said Walter. "I suppose you have things of the sort."

"Oh, yees, every sing de young shentlemans vants."

The Jew replaced the papers and tray, and opened a second safe much larger.

"It ish von ring all de zame?" he said, turning to Walter.

"Yes."

"Den here ish vot sall satsify any von."

He unlocked the box, and opened one ring case after another. Walter gazed with an indifferent eye on their contents. He had seen such things before. He wanted something quite different from all these. The dealer watched his face observantly. He opened another safe, drew forth a box, with small pincers detached a stone from its setting, and presented it to Walter.

"Look," he said. "Vas ever any sing zo fine ash dat?"

He held up a stone, not large, but of peculiar hue and vivid brilliancy.

"What is that? It is very fine."

"Ish it not fine? Ish it not zuperb? Ish it not zblendid?" said the old man, raising his voice at each consecutive word. "Dat ish unique. Got has made no more like it."

The gem was of a deep orange tint, but brilliant as a diamond. It fairly blazed in the light.

"You sall know it by de tashte. Ish von creat zegret. Ish as cold as von diamond, shust ash cold ash de finesht diamond. De young shentlemans sall zee for himself."

He produced several diamonds, and urged Walter to press them in turn to his lips. The stones were cold in exact proportion to their brilliancy. The orange-colored diamond, as the Jew called it, was as frigid to the touch as the most sparkling of them all."

"Dat ish de zingle way to know. Ish de Russian vay. No mishtake dere. Zo a plind man sall tell ash vell ash I."

"What is its price?" said Walter.

"Put, my young shentlemans, it hash no brice. It ish beyond a brice—so beautiful a shtone."

"How much do you want for it?"

"Vot sall I zay? It ish de only von."

"If you do not want to sell it, why show it?" inquired Walter, impatiently.

"Oh, de young shentlemans ish in too creat hurry. It ish dat I musht konzider. De shtone ish vorth—ish vorth—all of two hundred poundsh, but I sall zell it to de young shentlemans for von hundred and twenty poundsh, zo dat ven de young shentleman's ish married he sall come to me for de diamondsh of his lady."

—One hundred and twenty pounds—that was a round sum to pay for a fancy. He would not take the stone at that price. His aunt had told him to spend a hundred, and that was a great deal too much. The old broker tried expostulation and persuasion in vain. Walter turned on his heel. The Jew called him back.

"It ish von pargain; it ish von creat pargain," he said, heaving a sigh. "Put de young shentlemans vill come to me for de diamondsh. Of dat I am sure, ven I give it for von hundred poundsh."

On the way to the bookseller's, Walter passed Hunt and Roskell's. He stopped there to choose a setting for the stone.

"Pray, excuse me, sir," said the shopman to whom he addressed himself, "but I should like to call one of the

partners. This is quite out of the common way; a very extraordinary stone for its tint."

He summoned one of the heads of the firm, who examined the gem with interest.

"A very fine stone, Sir, very fine indeed. Might I inquire where you obtained it?"

"Of a dealer in Petryon Court."

"Precisely—of Ishmael David. He has a good collection, perhaps the best in London. This stone is extraordinarily fine. You were fortunate to obtain it."

"What is it? He called it an orange-colored diamond, but I know nothing about stones. It was handsome, and so I bought it."

"It is not surprising, Sir, that you did not know it. Few persons would. It is a zircon, and the finest I have ever seen, with one exception. Mr. Daubenay, of Daubenay Manor, has a very old one, almost precisely similar. I remember it distinctly. It was brought here to have the setting made firmer."

As he spoke, the jeweler carefully examined the stone anew. He seemed to find something unexpected in it.

"Very strange," he said, as if to himself.

"What is it?"

The jeweler pointed out an almost imperceptible fracture.

"Mr. Daubenay's stone has a mark like that. I was on the point of discharging the workman into whose hands it was put, for I thought him to blame in the matter; but Mr. Daubenay stated that the mark had always been there. Though so long ago, I remember it distinctly, for I was much annoyed at the time."

"That is very odd," said young Arden. "Can this be the same?"

"It seems impossible that the family should allow such an heir-loom to pass from its hands. But it would be easy to verify the fact. As I said, Mr. Daubenay is one of our customers. Should you desire it, Sir, I can write to him."

"Pray, do so at once," said Walter. "I can't say that I like the coincidence. What is the character of this dealer?"

"He is a Jew; but I never heard of his getting into any trouble."

"No fear of his being a receiver of stolen goods?"

"Not the slightest, I should say. That he sold it for double what he gave for it is probably certain."

The jeweler cast an inquiring glance at Walter.

"I gave him a hundred pounds for it."

"That would be a fair price for a diamond of that size and water, for the stone is not large."

"I wish I had insisted on seeing the setting."

"Oh, then he had the setting?"

"Yes. He took it out of its setting before he showed it to me."

The jeweler pursed his lips together.

"I think, sir, it might be as well to telegraph at once to Mr. Daubenay."

"Then I beg you will do so. You have my address, I think. I leave London to-day."

"Arden Hall, Warwickshire. Certainly sir. I will write immediately on receiving the answer."

"Disagreeable business," Walter said to himself, as he drove to the bookseller's.

"'Audubon's Birds of North America?' Yes, sir, we have it."

And the shopman began to explore the highest shelves. Apparently he found some unexpected difficulty in discovering the whereabouts of the volumes. He called some other shopman to his aid. They disappeared into inner recesses, whence they returned with blank faces. At length a middle-aged man was appealed to. He spoke a few explanatory words, then came forward to Walter.

"Very sorry to detain you, sir. We have only a mutilated copy down-stairs. The rest have not been unpacked."

but I will have one got down directly. Can I not send it to you?"

"Send it to Fenton's hotel. It must be there by two."

"It shall be there in half an hour, sir."

Walter gave his name, and began to turn over some books. A large, red-faced man came out from behind a great desk.

"I thought we had one down here," he said, in a low voice, to the middle-aged man.

"So we had; but they sent from Lumbwell's, saying that they had received a telegraphic message for painted engravings of American flowers—order unlimited as to price. There were none in the market, so they sent to us for the plates of an Audubon. I cut them out, and sent them."

"Ah, very well. Do you know where they went?"

"No; but I have the message."

The middle-aged man explored among some papers.

"There it is."

He handed it to the red-faced man, who read aloud:

"Lady Tremyss, Ilton Park, Warwickshire."

Though conducted in a low tone, Walter had overheard the dialogue. Rather strange; what could Lady Tremyss want of those plates when she had already such a number as Edith had seen and described to him? But these were old and time-stained, Edith had said. Perhaps she wanted a fresh set. An inexplicable prompting made him accost the bookseller.

"When was it that you sent down those engravings?"

"About the middle of last month, sir, I think it was; but I can tell exactly, I have the date." He referred to a book.

"It was on the sixteenth, sir."

The sixteenth! His aunt's dinner party had been on the fifteenth; and the perception of something strange came strongly upon Walter.

When he reached Fenton's, the books were already there. He unfastened the parcel, and began to look through them. As he turned over the leaves, he started and remained fixedly gazing upon a brightly-colored page. Those blue-jays, he knew them, Edith had drawn them the morning after the dinner at the Park. But she had said the engravings were old and time-stained; and yet they had been sent down only the day before. What did it mean? Walter knit his brows and compressed his lips, as the perception of something strange deepened upon him.

By the action of some of those finer processes of thought which defy explanation, the remembrance of the catch in the story of the little boy who had watched beneath the bridge on the night of Sir Ralph's death, rose upon young Arden's mind. Where was the connection? He could not see it. And yet the two stood side by side before him, with vague and uncertain outlines, shifting as wind-tormented clouds, yet with something palpable lurking beneath their misty shroud. Something was there. What was it?

CHAPTER XIV.

A DETECTIVE'S INVESTIGATION.

It was on the fourth evening after Walter's departure that he reached again the Hall. As he drew near, he glanced at Edith's window. It was dark. The drawing-room was lighted. She was there, with his aunt. He found Mrs. Arden only.

"Why, Walter, is it you? You gave me quite a start."

"Yes. I got through, and here I am back again."

He looked around. How cold, and blank, and dismal, the great apartment looked.

"I'm glad you've come back, very. I was getting quite dismal, all alone. Edith went back with her father, yesterday."

Walter walked to the fire-place, and leaned over the mantle-piece.

"Was it not rather sudden?" he asked, after a moment.

"Yes. I hadn't any idea of it at all. He hadn't sent any letter, or anything, and down he comes, quite unexpectedly, and says Edith is looking nicely—and I'm sure she wasn't—and says that he's going to take her back. It has quite upset me. I had got to be so fond of her, you don't know."

Mrs. Arden proceeded, as Walter made no answer:

"I know it was the best thing for her. She was home-sick, I know she was home-sick."

"Did she say so?" asked Walter, harshly.

"Oh, no; she said she had never been so happy before, as she had been here, never in all her life, she said."

"Then why do you say such a thing?" he demanded, impatiently.

"Why? Because I'm sure of it, of course," answered Mrs. Arden, a little resentfully, "any one might see it. She has been pining for home all by herself, until her nerves are quite shaken, quite. She cried when I told her that I was afraid she found it dull here with only you and me, though she answered she had never been so happy before, and she cried the night before she went. And it isn't her way to cry, not at all, and her being so upset showed that something had got on her nerves, and it couldn't have been anything but home-sickness, you know."

Walter was silent. Self-reproach was sharpening Mrs. Arden's every word. She went on,—

"And I blame myself, I do indeed, for not having seen before what the matter was. I ought to have known, when I saw her so quiet and grave, after having been so gay and cheerful as she was some weeks ago, you remember?"

"Yes," said Walter, and something like a groan came with the word.

"When I saw her change so, not but what she was always gay at table, and pleasant and bright whenever I spoke to her, but, as I say, when she began to look so sad when she was left to herself, I ought to have seen that she needed change, and to have said so. But I did not think of the home-sickness at first, I only thought she was getting a little tired of being so much alone with us; and afterwards I felt unwilling to say anything about it, you know, for fear it should seem like advising her going away. Perhaps I made a mistake, and let her spirits get quite run down; for, as I said, she certainly was not at all like herself at the last, I do not mean the very last, for she drove away with her father, smiling, though she had cried so much the evening before, when she came into my room, that she looked as pale as a ghost, she did, indeed."

A wild desire to blow his brains out rushed through Walter's mind, at this second reference to Edith's anguish at leaving the Hall.—What a brute, what an idiot he had been.—Before he slept that night, he had written a long letter to Edith, the outpouring of a young man's heart.

As Mrs. Arden had said, Edith smiled up at her father as she drove away from the Hall. She chatted with him on the journey, telling him all that she fancied would amuse him. When she mentioned the name of Ormanby Averil, her father's face assumed an expression of great interest.

"Ah, a very distinguished man in society, Mr. Averil, very distinguished. So you met him. How did he strike you?"

Mr. Arden would have asked, "how did you strike him?" could he have done so, but that was inadmissible.

"I did not like him."

"That surprises me. Did he talk to you?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He asked me if I had heard from you lately, whether you were well, and said that he heard Arden Court was a fine place."

There was a certain cool, cutting intonation in Edith's voice, as she uttered the words, that made her father feel somewhat uncomfortable. But his pleasure at this indirect advance from a man he had so long courted in vain, triumphed over the momentary annoyance. "Ah, really," he said, in a tone expressive of high gratification, with which, despite himself, mingled the unmistakable alto of surprise.

It was surprising. What could be the reason of so sudden a change? Ormanby Averil had been as haughty and distant as ever when he had last met him. He glanced around as if seeking from the sides and top of the railway coupé the explanation of so unexpected a phenomenon as politeness from his powerful social enemy; his eyes chanced to fall upon his daughter's face. He started. Was it that? It must be. He looked at her as if he had never seen her before. How beautiful she had grown! What a sensation she would produce! Pity that every one was in the country, and that there would be no chance of bringing Edith and Mr. Averil together for so long a time.—

He was still pondering when Edith spoke.

"Papa, if you please, I should like another maid."

"Certainly, if you wish it," replied her father, "but really I don't see how you can find occupation for two at a time."

"I don't mean that—I would like to send away Brenton."

"That is not to be thought of," said Mr. Arden, with a certain harshness in his tone new to Edith's ear, though not to her imagination. She had always known that vein to exist in her father's character, though she had been so uniformly docile that she had never touched on it before.

"Brenton is invaluable—not to be parted with on any account. Pray what has put this in your head?"

"Mrs. Lacy asked me if I did not want her French maid."

"Mrs. Lacy; ah, that is different." Mr. Arden's voice softened at the name.—Mrs. Lacy was noted for her tasteful toilette. Then, too, she was Ormanby Averil's sister. Perhaps, after all, this French maid might be better for Edith than Brenton.—

"Why does she leave her?"

"To be near her sister, who is in London."

"What did Mrs. Lacy say of her?"

"That she was a perfect treasure."

All Brenton's past services counted as nothing in the eyes of Mr. Arden. He valued every one in proportion to what he could get out of them. Brenton he considered an estimable servant; but if some one else could fill her place better, Brenton must go. So, after brief cogitation, he signified his assent, and gave Edith permission to write to Mrs. Lacy, to engage the services of the French woman.

Edith had left the Hall after luncheon. It was dark when she reached Arden Court. As she drove up the sweep of the avenue, she experienced a strange novelty of sensation. It appeared to her as if she had never seen the house before, as if it were not her home. Her heart sank as though she were entering a prison when she ascended the marble steps which led to the circular, statue-lined hall. She felt the magnificence that surrounded her to be hostile to her happiness.

Her father led her through the drawing-rooms, all white, and gold, and crimson, to a smaller room beyond, which had formerly been all white, and gold, and crimson also.

"This is yours, 'Do you like it?' he asked. The room was newly furnished with blue and silver. It looked the perfection of comfort and luxury, and Edith poured out her gratitude.

"Yes. Gillow has done it very well. I gave him *carte blanche*, and told him to make it as handsome as he could."

Edith felt a pang of disappointment.—She had thought—but how foolish and ungrateful she was, and again she commented on the beauty of everything around.

"Yes, when we get some music on the pianoforte and a drawing on the easel it will do very well. I am quite in a hurry to examine your portfolio," he added. "I see from your letters that you have been busy lately."

It was a favorite desire of John Arden's that Edith should be distinguished for her accomplishments as well as for her other advantages, and though she had shown little aptitude for music—hers not being that impulsive Southern temperament which craves an easy vent for its every emotion, but belonging rather to the deeper and more passionate Northern type, which can die for what it loves, but feels no need to say so,—her talent for drawing was such as to promise full gratification to his ambition in that direction.

Mr. Arden possessed some knowledge of art, quite inadequate, however, to the sums he had expended in obtaining it; it was accordingly with an important and magisterial aspect that, when the pompous ceremonial of their *tête-à-tête* dinner was over, he opened his daughter's portfolio and commenced his examination of its contents.

"That is not bad—not bad at all," he said, holding up to the light a sketch of the Roman bridge near the Hall. "It is supposed that our family takes its name from that bridge. We formerly owned it. The derivation is very plain. The mixture of Saxon and Latin in which it originated is interesting, at least in Sir William Digwell's opinion. *Dea arcus*, *Denarc*, *Arcden*, *Arden*."

"But isn't *arcus*, arch?" inquired Edith.

"My dear, I give you Sir William's opinion. Arch or bridge, it is all the same thing." Edith was silent. Mr. Arden turned over the sheets.

"So you do figures, too. Those are well touched in," he resumed, espying a sketch of the little church with two figures in the foreground, the one a girl sitting on a tombstone, the other a young man standing before her. Edith did not think it worth while to inform him that those figures represented Walter and herself.

"Ah, Mrs. Arden—good, very good indeed," he remarked as he inspected a sketch of that lady.

He lifted another sheet.

"What a shocking thing, my dear. What could have induced you to make this?" And he held up a hastily but powerfully executed crayon head, the head of a negro, seamed with a ghastly scar.

"I did it because I wanted to get used to it," replied Edith.

"What is it; some character in a book?"

"No. It is Goliath, the butler at Ilton Park."

"Ah! it seems to me that I remember. Was there not something about him at the time of Sir Ralph's death?"

"Yes; he went into the river to save him."

"Yes; I remember now. I heard it spoken of at a dinner at Lord Plowden's; a friend of Sir Ralph's was there. He had thrown something at the man and laid his face open. That must have been the way he got that scar," and Mr. Arden glanced again at the drawing. "The trouble was about the key of the wine cellar. It was one of Sir Ralph's freaks that Mr. Manning told of. He had dug a wine vault down to an absurd depth in order to have the wine at the same temperature, summer and winter, and it was that key which was lost."

Mr. Arden continued to turn over the drawings.

"Why, Edith, did you do this?" he exclaimed as he came to a water-colored sketch of a horse's head. "It is admirable, admirable. I shall show that to Landseer." And, despite Edith's deprecatory entreaties, he separated it

from the rest. "Where did you find your model? I never saw so much character in an animal's head." He turned it, and saw a name written on the back of the sheet, "Moira."

"One of Lady Tremyss' horses. Isabel lent her to me."

"But who wrote this name? It is not your writing?"

"It is Walter's," replied Edith.

There was an indescribable something in the tone that caught her father's ear. He looked at her. She stooped over the drawings.

Mr. Arden, gifted though he was with "business tact," as it is called, was not an acute man with regard to women. Had not his suspicions with regard to Walter been already aroused, it is not probable that he would have paid any further attention to so slight an indication as that conveyed in his daughter's voice. With that blindness which seems unaccountably to affect some parents, especially good-looking men not much past their meridian, he had always continued to look upon Edith as a mere child. Her singularly youthfulness of appearance had maintained and confirmed him in this error; and it was with astonishment almost equal to his indignation that he had gathered from Lady Tremyss' letter, that Edith was considered of an age to receive the serious attentions of young Arden. When he met her, and saw in how surprisingly short a time she had expanded into womanhood, his self-condemning reflections grew still more poignant. Mr. Arden now determined to go to the bottom of the matter, as he mentally termed it.

"You saw a great deal of young Arden, I suppose."

"At first."

"Not of late?"

"No."

"What did you think of him?"

"I don't know precisely what you mean," replied Edith quietly, her heart beating the while almost to suffocation.

"Did you like him?"

"Yes."

The word was low but firm. Mr. Arden, having arrived at this stage of his enquiries, began to feel perplexed. He did not quite know how to pursue his investigation. He found himself fearing that Edith cared more for her cousin than he had apprehended; and his wrath against Walter rose like a spring tide.

"Curse him, has he dared to make love to her!" he silently muttered.

Before he put away the confiscated drawing of Moira's head, he attentively examined the hand writing it bore.

The second day's post brought a letter directed to Edith. As usual, the letter bag had been brought into the library where Mr. Arden took his solitary breakfast before starting for the City. He scanned the superscription and post-mark. "Wodeton." And the hand—

He drew out the water-colored drawing and compared the characters, frowned, took up the letter as if about to break the seal, laid it down again on the table, walked up and down the room, then, again taking up the letter, dropped it into the fire.

As the flame caught the enclosure it crackled and unfolded. The last lines became visible. John Arden read—

"But if indeed it be so, do not write. I could not bear it. Your silence will be enough."

"WALTER ARDEN."

Mr. Arden started when the butler came into the room a few moments later. He turned a hasty glance upon the fire, as if fearing that the impalpable ashes might form themselves into an accusing phantom of the letter. He did not look at the man as he gave the orders he had come, according to custom, to receive; and he omitted going up to his daughter's room that morning before leaving, saying to him—

self that he feared to disturb her, that perhaps she was asleep.

The return mail brought to the Hall no letter from Edith; the second came in,—still silence. Walter's hopes expired in all the anguish of a violent death.

"It's all over," he said to himself, after he had been sitting a long time without moving, on the second and last day. The words seemed spoken by another person; they had an unreal sound. He raised his head and looked around, as if to assure himself where he was, then took his hat and left the house.

The wintry day was drawing to its close. The great black branches of the old chestnut trees stood clearly defined against the pale reflections of the western sky. He turned, half unconsciously, into the path that he had followed on the evening that Edith had arrived. The quiet lane blossomed no longer, no green leaf met his eye. He came out on the open hill-top; he bared his head, and looked around. The desolation of winter rested on the fields;—drear stretches of frozen ground, brown thickets, and skeleton woods. The flush and glory of summer had passed; the earth lay dead before him. There was a hard and rigid look on the young man's face as he gazed. The sun sank, the red glow of its setting paled into dusk, the stars came out; but the hard and rigid look still remained on Walter's face when he turned to retrace his steps.

As he left the lane and passed along the road, two mounted figures met him—Lady Tremyss and Isabel, followed by a groom. They stopped. Lady Tremyss held out her hand. It was not her wont so to do.

"We meet you *à propos*; I want to engage you for next Monday evening. Will you come?"

Walter's first impulse was to refuse; then he remembered that Isabel would probably have heard from Edith. He

accepted. Isabel had not spoken; she only bade him good-bye as she loosened her horse's rein. She was riding Moira.

"Oh, Walter, a telegraphic message has come for you. A man brought it over from Wodeton. What can it be about? I can't possibly imagine," said Mrs. Arden, eagerly, as Walter came in.

"From London," he answered, opening the envelope. It was the first time since his return that he had thought of the jeweler's promise to find out from Mr. Daubenay whether the family jewel was still in his possession.

"Mr. Daubenay has arrived in London—will be in Wodeton to-morrow."

On the morrow Mr. Daubenay arrived. He was a tall spare man, with delicate features, and courteous address. The deep lines on his forehead showed the frequent presence of anxious thoughts, the sad compression of his lips indicated that whatever his grief might be, it sought no relief in expression.

"We are scarcely strangers, though we have not met before," he said with a grave smile, in answer to Walter's greeting. "My boy has often spoken of you."

"The best fellow in the world," responded Walter, with a warmth which brought a momentary look of pleasure over the father's face.

"You are aware on what business I come," he said, after a pause.

"With reference to the stone, I presume."

Mr. Daubenay bowed. The lines on his forehead deepened. When he next spoke, it was in a constrained and somewhat harsh voice.

"You may be aware of a very painful circumstance affecting my family, which occurred in Canada many years ago."

Walter made a gesture of assent. Unmistakable sym-

thy was stamped on his face. Mr. Daubenay's tone softened.

"That ring my brother always wore on his watch-chain. He took it with him to Canada. Since then, with him, every trace of it has been lost. You see of what moment it is to me—to all who love him"—his voice grew husky, "to trace back this clue."

"Certainly," exclaimed Walter, "most certainly. If I could be of any use"—he looked inquiringly at Mr. Daubenay. "If there be anything that I could do—"

"You can be of very material use, if you are willing to come with me to London and confront this Jew."

"We will have luncheon at once," said Walter, ringing the bell. "If we take the next train we shall be in London this evening. Of course you wish to lose no time."

"Certainly not. I was away from home, so that the message was two days in reaching me. I have travelled all night. To-morrow I can procure a search-warrant, and shall probably be able to find where the Jew obtained the stone. It will be a difficult affair to manage," he continued, with a sharp contraction of his brow. "You are aware of the danger."

"If this were spoken of, certainly," answered Walter.

Mr. Daubenay sat silent, gazing into the fire.

"Of course, so long ago, they wouldn't maintain—" Walter stopped. He could not risk the words, "the sentence."

"No similar instance of clemency has ever yet occurred," returned Mr. Daubenay. "It would be rash to expect it." And he fell to musing again.

"Who is it that he looks like?" thought Walter. "Where have I seen those straight delicate brows?" He racked his memory in vain.

The next morning Mr. Daubenay and young Arden, accompanied by a detective, stood outside the iron-plated door of the house in Petryon Court.

The sliding shutter had no sooner been pushed aside in answer to Walter's knock, than it was hastily returned to its place, and no further answer vouchsafed to the repeated summons of the party without.

"Curse the old fox," said the detective, a low-bred but acute-looking man, "he's gone to 'ide it."

"Then that settles it," said Mr. Daubenay. "It must have been stolen."

"No ev'dence, Sir. He may 'ave come by it 'onestly, and 'ide it hall the same, for fear of gettin' hinto a scrape. He got hinto 'ot vater in Paris vunce, and that makes 'im shy."

And he thundered again at the door. This time the appeal was to some purpose. The bars and chains were unfastened and the old Jew appeared,—his eyes looking sharper, and his stature smaller, than when Walter had seen him last.

"Now, Mr. David, you vill be so good as to let us see the setting o' this 'ere stone that this gen'l'man bought o' you four days ago, and that vill save you and us a great deal o' trouble." And so saying, the officer displayed his search warrant. "You see vot ve've got to back us. Now be quick."

"Put, my tear shentlemans, I 'ave not got de shetting. I never did 'ave de shetting. Zo as I showed de slitone, zo vas it zold to me by Abraham Shebbard, vot ish now in Riga. He zold it to me vour montsh ago. Zo true as Got himself, zo true ish vat I zay."

"There's no use in talking to the old rascal," said the officer, with a look of disgust. "He'd svear hissself black afore he'd give it up. So, Mr. David, be so kind as to shove yerself out o' the vay."

He pushed by the Jew.

"Are you not going to demand his keys?" enquired Mr. Daubenay.

The detective cast back a compassionate glance.

"Lord love you, Sir, the keys wouldn't be of no use. He knows better nor that."

So saying, the officer began to rummage in every place most unlikely to be chosen as the hiding-place of the ring.

"It's lucky there isn't no fire," he remarked to Walter, as they made the round of the apartments, which seemed quite uninhabited. He cast a stealthy glance at the Jew as he said it. An exulting, quickly repressed gleam caught his practised eye. "Let's go back to the front," he said quietly to his companions. They returned to the door of the room where Walter had seen the Jewess. It was a large, desolate looking chamber, into which they had as yet merely glanced. As their steps echoed on the floor, they heard a sound like that of the grinding of a coffee mill. The detective glanced around. The Jew was shrinking out of sight.

"'Ere, Mr. David, don't be so himpolite as to leave your comp'ny to thesselves," said the officer. "Just come hin agin, hif you please."

As the Jew reluctantly returned, the officer locked the door, and put the key in his pocket.

"Now, Sir, hif you vill please to lend a 'and, I think ve shall come to summat a leetle more hinteresting."

Aided by Walter, he pulled away a large wardrobe, which, being empty, proved to be much less heavy than it looked; and displayed a narrow door.

"But his wife, where is his wife?" said Walter, remembering the Jewess for the first time.

The Jew muttered a curse between his teeth.

"It's a pity to hinjure a gen'l'man's premises ven it can be 'elped," said the detective, smiling triumphantly. "Vould you be so hobliging as to favor us with the key?" he continued, addressing Mr. David, who sat sulkily silent. "Hall the same to us, Sir, ball the same. Ve can break down the door, if you vishes."

The grinding sound continued all the while he was speaking, and appeared inexpressibly to exasperate the old man.

A few vigorous charges and kicks from the officer brought down the door, and they perceived before them a narrow flight of stairs which descended to a room, half cellar, half kitchen, lighted by a guttering candle. The Jewess, in her foreign dress, sat beside a small stove, a coffee mill in her lap.

No sooner had the detective espied the stove, than he sprang forward, upset it, and scattered the coals all over the brick floor. The sound of an outlandish oath came from the top of the stairs. Walter, glancing up, saw the Jew's grey head peering down, his features distorted with rage and fear. The Jewess sat unmoved, watching the party with her bold and haughty stare, behind which glittered a treacherous exultation.

"Give us a poker, somebody, quick," exclaimed the policeman, kicking apart the coals, and looking sharply around him. "The hold rascal 'as been and put it in 'ere."

The Jewess rose. As she moved she knocked down a poker, which rested against the wall behind her. The officer seized it, and raked carefully among the coals. The fire had been but recently kindled, and had been apparently smothered by the premature shutting off of the draught.

"'Ere it is," he exclaimed, triumphantly, drawing forth on the extremity of the poker a smoke-blackened circle.

Mr. Daubenay and Walter stooped over it as he held it to the candle. They saw the outlines of two eagles' heads supporting an empty rim. Walter heard Mr. Daubenay's hurried breathing.

"Hadn't we better go upstairs?" he asked.

They left the cellar, the Jewess, and the overturned stove; and ascended to the room above, where the old Jew was sitting, gnawing his nails.

"Now, Mr. David," said the detective, "you see ve've

got it. I could get a warrant and harrest you in 'alf an 'our if I chose—harrest you as a receiver of stolen goods. And that's vot I am going to do." The Jew wrung his hands. "Hunless you tell us this werry minute vere you got the ring; for has to Habraham and Riga, and hall that—it's bosh!"

The Jew looked wildly about the room.

"Praps you can trust the lady down below to take care of your walluables vile you're gone, for gone you will be; praps you vould prefer to leave that remarkably good-looking young 'ooman in the red silk dressing-gown to take care of herself. I don't vant to meddle with any gen'l'man's private concerns. If you vishes it so, it's werry easily managed. Hall you've got to do is jist to 'old yer tongue, and I'll come with a nice wan and carry you away in style."

The Jew kicked on the ground, then rose, and struck forcibly on the door.

The detective opened it, and followed him into another room, the same into which Walter had been introduced on his first visit. The old man opened a safe, took out a greasy day-book, and turned over the pages until he came to an entry, which he silently pointed out. The officer beckoned to the gentlemen. They advanced, and bending over the old man's shoulder, read, deciphering with difficulty the crabbed characters and distorted spelling of the entry.

"One ring set with orange colored diamond. Mrs. Williams. No. 35, Chadlink Street."

The Jew tried to hide the last part of the entry, but the officer tapped on the back of his hand and he removed it.

"Paid £65."

"Now, Sir," said the officer, as they left the house, "ve'd best go to the 'ooman's afore this ere David can give her a 'int to get hout of the vay. I'll keep out o' sight. You'd better begin vith a little coaxing—that suits vimmen best; you can get more out o' them that vay, and then there's

more chance of vot you do get being true. They'll lie as soon as they're frightened, lie right and left, every vun o' them." And having expressed this rather derogatory opinion of the intrepidity of the feminine mind, the officer turned his attention to the passengers in the streets.

"There goes a precious rascal," he said, pointing out to his companions a large well-dressed man with a fat white face, and a broad-brimmed hat, who was carrying a well-worn book under his arm. "He's a solicitor of subscriptions for a Horphan Hasyllum for the children of Burrumerapoota, or some sich place as nobody never 'eard of before; and he makes a pretty leetle business out of it too. He 'ocussed a hold lady hout of a bequest of two thousand pounds for it. She died a vwhile ago, and the heirs vent to law about it. He got Tangleton, paid him five hundred pounds, got the suit, and pocketed the other fifteen hundred. I was in court that day. You should 'ave 'eard the vay Tangleton laid it on to the 'eirs; 'snatching the grains of rice from the starving mouths of the horphans and fatherless, who vere stretching their little brown 'ands 'out for 'elp from the brethren of Christ,' that's vot he called it. It set all the other lawyers sniggering, but it made the jury vipe their hies, and got the verdict."

"Why isn't the man taken up?" asked Walter.

"Lord, sir, if ve vere to take up hall the knaves, the fools vouldn't be hany the better for it; they'd turn into hout-and-out hidiots if there vits weren't sharpened hup a leetle that way now and then. The knaves are a reg'lar providence for them, sir."

A view which, though novel to his hearers, was apparently a received doctrine of the officer's.

They stopped at the door of a dingy house, number thirty-five, Chadlink Street. A dirty servant girl opened the door.

"She's gone, Sir; she went a fortnight ago," she answered to Mr. Daubenay's inquiry.

"No, sir, I don't know where. Perhaps missis does; won't you walk in, gentlemen?"

And she ushered them into a small, thoroughly-smoked parlor, whose dingy carpet, discolored paper-hangings, and shabby furniture, bespoke it to belong to one of the meanest of so-called respectable lodging-houses.

The girl ascended to the story above, whence she promptly returned, looking much discomposed.

"Missis says, sir, that she doesn't know nothing about her, and she doesn't want to. That she went as she came, and nobody knows where."

"But, my good girl," said Mr. Daubenay, "it is of great importance to me to find out. Tell your mistress that we beg she will be so good as to speak with us one moment. We will not detain her."

The girl disappeared, but with a face ominous of ill success. The event justified her previsions.

"Missis says, sir, that she's been worried enough, and that she won't hear no more about her."

"This is singular," said Walter, in a low voice. "It looks as if there was something behind. Had you not better question the girl?"

Mr. Daubenay put a crown piece into the girl's hand.

"Now be so good as to answer me a few questions, and answer them carefully."

The girl looked deeply impressed, but whether by the sight of the crown piece, or by the earnest tone of Mr. Daubenay's voice, was not so apparent.

"Yes, sir. I'll tell all as I knows, sir."

"What sort of person was this Mrs. Williams?"

"She was a very nice sort of a lady, sir."

"Describe her, if you please."

"She was tallish, and very pale and sickly like, and didn't never go out, hardly."

"Her husband was not here with her?"

"I don't think she had any, sir. She always wore widow's mourning."

"Did she seem to have any acquaintances?"

"Nobody never came to see her, sir, while she was here, except a Frenchwoman. She came three or four times. The last time she came was the day before Mrs. Williams went away."

"Do you know the name of the Frenchwoman?"

"No, sir."

"Nor her address?"

"No, sir."

"What sort of woman was she?"

"She was short and pretty, and was dressed very fine."

"You are sure you don't know her name?"

"No, sir. I only heard her first name once. Mrs. Williams called after her as she went down stairs. It made me think of aniseed tea, I remember; but what it was I can't say."

Mr. Daubenay looked completely bewildered.

"Was it Anaïs?" asked Walter, who had read French novels.

"Yes, sir. I think that was it, sir. It isn't so much like aniseed as I thought it was, but I think that was it, sir."

"That's one thing gained," said Walter.

The girl slipped the crown into her pocket. She seemed to consider that her last answer entitled her to it, a point on which she had before felt doubtful.

"Did Mrs. Williams appear to have money?"

"No, sir; that was the trouble between her and missis. She got out of what money she had, and though she used to sew and embroider from morning till night, and half the night, too, yet she couldn't get along. She had to sell what little jewelry she had. It wasn't much, only two rings and a locket."

"Can you tell me where she disposed of them?"

"Yes, sir. She had a pearl ring, and a black and gold one. I saw them only a few days ago at Mr. Pritchard's window, the jeweller in the next street, sir."

"Do you know anything about a ring with a stone of an orange color?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever hear of a Mr. David?"

"No, sir."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did Mrs. Williams go away?"

"She had some trouble with missis, sir. She hadn't paid for two or three weeks; the lodgers always pay by the week here, sir. Missis was very loud, and Mrs. Williams cried a great deal, and the next morning she got up and went out early, and when she came back she paid missis and made up her clothes in a bundle, and went away."

"That is all you know?"

"Yes, sir."

"I think we had better call in the officer," said Walter.

"Oh, Lor', sir, I hope you haven't got nothing against me," exclaimed the girl. "As sure as the sun's in the sky, sir, I've told the truth, all I knows of it, sir."

Leaving Mr. Daubenay to quiet the girl's apprehensions, Walter summoned the officer.

"Jist tell your missis not to discompose herself, my dear," said the officer to the girl, "but say as how these two genelman and I would feel very pertiklerly hobliged if she would come down stairs for a leetle friendly chat."

In a few moments the mistress of the house appeared. She was a hard, brazen-faced woman, her broad shoulders enveloped in a faded shawl. A dirty cap, with flaunting cherry-colored ribbons, was set sideways upon her head; it formed obviously a recent and hurried addition to her toilette.

"Well, gentlemen, and what do you please to want of me?" she asked angrily, as she flounced into the room.

The officer measured her with his eye for a moment, then advanced.

"Now, ma'am, as you are a person of good sense, you vill perceive that ve shouldn't have come in this vay hexcept on serious biz'ness. The best thing you can do is to hanswer our questions as far as you are hable, and that will save you from vot might praps be rather hunpleasant to a lady."

The mixture of indirect menace and implied compliment seemed somewhat to subdue the woman. Mr. Daubenay followed up the impression thus made by laying a sovereign upon the table.

"I do not wish to take up your time unnecessarily," he said.

The woman's face changed suddenly at the sight of the gold. She became fawningly obsequious at once.

"Oh, sir, it's not that, but a poor lone woman like me, sir, is so worreted and hustled about, what with people going out and coming in, sir;—and what is it that you are pleased to want to know, sir."

"Simply whether you can give us any information respecting a person by the name of Williams, who has been lodging with you."

"I don't know much, sir. She was a decent sort of body enough, only it was all I could do to get my money out of her. She seemed to have been better off. She could talk French, for I have heard her with a French woman who came two or three times to see her, but she was chary enough of speaking English."

"When did she come?"

"In the beginning of August, sir."

"And when did she leave?"

"A fortnight ago."

"Did she receive any letters while she was here?"

"No, sir. The lodgers' letters are always given to me, and she never got any."

Do you know where she was before she came here?"

No, sir. She came here one day and asked to see the room, and the next day she came in a cab with her trunk."

"Where is that trunk? She did not take it away, I believe. Perhaps her former address may be on it."

"It was an old worn-out box, sir, and I think she must have burnt it up for fire-wood before she went, for she only took a bundle with her when she went away, and there was no box or anything left in her room. She had sold all the rest of her clothes that was in it, little by little, I expect."

"Thank you, I will not detain you any longer," said Mr. Daubenay.

"I am sorry I can't give you any more satisfaction, sir," said the woman, following him to the door. "I never thought of any one's taking an interest in such a poor-looking body, else I'd have found out more before she went away."

Mr. Pritchard, the jeweller, in the adjacent street, to whom they next had recourse, perfectly remembered the orange-colored stone, though he had forgotten its setting. He had declined buying it, as it was not what he wanted. He had given, at Mrs. Williams' request, the addresses of several dealers, among them that of the Jew. Further than this he knew nothing.

"Now, sir, the honly thing to do is to hadwertise in the 'Times,'" said the officer. "That is the way to bring her hout. I don't fancy she stole the stone. I think she came by it 'onestly. Ve 'aven't learnt much, but vot ve 'ave learnt goes for and not against her. Hif she didn't steal it, she vill be glad enough to tell ow she came by it, and get the money."

The advertisement was accordingly sent to the "Times."

CHAPTER XV.

SIR RALPH'S GHOST.

It was on Saturday that Walter had returned to the Hall. On Monday evening he roused himself from the depression which had sunk upon him, mounted, and took his way alone to the Park. Perhaps he should hear something of Edith.

As he galloped up to the gates of the Park, a woman shrieked from within the lodge.

"What's the matter there, Joseph?" he asked, as a man came out and threw open the gate. "Is any one ill?"

"No, sir; thank you, sir," replied the man in an embarrassed voice. "It's only my old woman, sir, as was afeard."

"Afraid—afraid of what?" returned young Arden. "Not of me, I hope?"

"Oh, no, sir, not if she'd ha' know'd it. But she thought—" He stopped abruptly.

"Thought what?"

"She thought as how it was Sir Ralph's ghost, sir."

Walter laughed. The sound rang out on the frosty air an instant, then suddenly ceased. Its echo smote with a painful discord on the young man's ear.

"I tell her so, sir. I tell her that every one, gentle and simple, would take her for a natural, to be thinking ghosts rode on horseback."

The lodge-keeper at the park was a friend of Walter's; he had made many a trout fly for him in former times, and invented for his benefit—and to the great injury of the rabbits, many a snare. Young Arden had often chatted by the hour with him. He knew him to be a man of more than average intelligence, and yet his objections to his wife's apprehensions arose apparently not so much from her

believing in the possibility of the apparition of Sir Ralph's spectre, as in that of the impossible phantom of a horse. What could such a belief be supported by? Walter's curiosity was piqued; moreover, he was glad to have his attention distracted a moment from the gnawing heart-ache within.

"Now, Joseph, tell me frankly, do you, such a reasonable fellow as you are, believe in ghosts?"

"Well, sir, I heard Sir Ralph's ghost twice, the night he was drowned, and my old woman did too, sir, and that's the reason she's been so scary ever since."

Walter recalled the boy's account of the cry that had sounded down the river by night. The lodge-keeper had heard the unfortunate man's shriek as he fell in.

"I don't see the necessity of supposing any ghost in the matter. You heard Sir Ralph's cry when he fell."

"Well, sir, granted I did, when Sir Ralph was in the river, he couldn't shout in two places at once, I take it, sir."

"Certainly not."

"Well, sir, after that first screech, as I was lying awake, wondering what on earth such an awful sound could have come from, I heard another just like it come from the house, only it wasn't so loud as the first one, for the house is further off a long ways than the river. And it was his ghost, sir, gone to tell them at the house, sir. And there's no disbelieving what one hears with one's own ears, sir."

The man's obstinacy was impenetrable. He had obviously made up his mind to believe in a ghost, and believe in it he would. But what was that story Edith had repeated about the maids at the Park having been awakened by a shriek that same night—a shriek that he had thought must have come from some one in the house that had a nightmare. It was strange that the lodge-keeper should have been able to hear it, and, moreover, that he should assert it

to be the same voice that had sounded from the river. There was no use in thinking of it. There had been some coincidence, some dog had chanced to howl, or owl to hoot, just at the time. He was about riding on, when he remembered the woman's shriek at the sound of the horse's hoofs.

"But, Joseph, what had all this to do with the galloping of a horse?"

"Why, sir, it was just after that first screech that a horse went galloping like mad along the road."

"Kathleen running away after she had thrown Sir Ralph into the river."

"Perhaps it was, sir; but my old woman puts it altogether, sir, and when she hears a horse galloping in the night, she thinks a ghost is close by, sir."

"Well, good evening, Joseph. Tell your wife from me, that Sir Ralph will never come back to frighten anybody."

And Walter rode up the avenue. "A capital site for a ghost story," he said to himself, as he came out from the shadow of the trees, and crossed the lawn on which the house fronted. He stopped his horse for a moment, and looked around him. The sky was almost black. The stars gazed fixedly down upon the long, grey house, with its pine bordered terrace, its tall chimneys, its projecting gables, and heavy windows. As he turned his eye around, it rested on an unformed object crouching beside the house, near the extremity of the terrace. He watched it. It did not move. Could it be some burglar who had stolen there to study the premises prior to some nocturnal attempt? He threw himself from his horse, and sprang down the terrace. The figure rose to gigantic height, turned the corner, and disappeared. Walter was close behind it. He reached the end of the house, and glanced hastily down the western side. Not an object was in sight.

Very strange. It looked as tall as Goliath, but, of course, it wasn't he. What could it have been? He stopped before

the place where the figure had been crouching. In the dead silence, a faint, distant sound, constantly reiterated, met his ear. He drew nearer and listened. It sounded like a hammering, deep down at the foundations of the wall.

"It puts one in mind of stories about coiners of false money," he thought to himself. "I have often heard such sounds, and never have been able to trace them. It's strange that people stopped at the death-watch, and didn't go and call these coffin makers."

He returned to the front of the house, and entered. As he was taking off his outer coat, Goliath passed through the hall. He saluted the young gentleman with that smile which is characteristic of his race, an open, frank smile, expressive of fulness of satisfaction quite impossible to northern physiognomies.

"It could not have been he," thought Walter; "but who then was it?"

Lady Tremyss and Isabel were alone. Lady Tremyss was sitting before a table covered with books and pamphlets. He shook hands with her, and turned towards Isabel, who was seated on a sofa at a little distance, holding Mimi on her lap.

"Why, Mimi, how long it is since I have seen you," he said, as the cat jumped from Isabel's arm, and came rubbing against him.

"Isabel kept her shut up all the time Miss Arden was at the Hall. Miss Arden is afraid of cats," said Lady Tremyss. "I believe Isabel would have shut me up too, had the same cause existed," she added, smiling.

Walter had rarely heard so long a sentence from Lady Tremyss; and her manner was altered, how, he knew not, but there was a certain change—more grace, a greater variety of intonation, a sweeter fall at the end of the phrases, a gentle persuasiveness of accent.

"Oh, Mimi, you must not do that," exclaimed Isabel, as

Mimi, after rubbing round Walter, retired to a little distance and began to sharpen her claws upon the carpet.

"You had better carry her away," said Lady Tremyss.

Isabel caught up the animal and took it out of the room.

"I have a favor to ask of you," said Lady Tremyss.

Walter expressed his readiness to obey her every wish.

"Isabel is so depressed by the loss of her friend that I am quite concerned. I did not expect that she would care so much, and I want to try to amuse her, and so I am planning getting up some little vaudevilles, and I want your help, not so much for the acting," she continued, watching Walter's face, "as for general supervision, and assistance of that sort. Perhaps I am too *exigeante*, you will think, but I know you better than any one else, and I think you will not refuse me."

Walter was very much tempted to decline having anything to do with the thing, but a multitude of reasons conspired to force him into acquiescence.

"Your mother has been engaging me," he said, to Isabel, as she came back. "What is my post to be?" he added, turning to Lady Tremyss.

"Manager," she answered.

"It's very kind of you, I'm sure," said Isabel.

"The first thing to be decided upon is the play," continued her mother. "I have here an abundance to choose from."

Walter rose and looked them over. Nearly all French.

"What sort of French will your actors speak, do you think?" he inquired with a half smile.

Lady Tremyss was turning over the books. She did not immediately reply.

"They would do very well if they all spoke like Mamma," said Isabel. "My French governess said that she talked the language to perfection. Nothing would convince her that she wasn't a Frenchwoman."

"I must ask Lady Tremyss how you speak," said Walter. "I suppose you won't tell me yourself."

"Oh, it's quite natural that I should speak well. I always talked French with Mamma when I was a child, even after we came here."

Lady Tremyss raised her head and shot a glance at Isabel. Isabel's face was turned towards Walter; she did not catch it.

Lady Tremyss bent her head again over the books.

"Strange that it should have been possible in England," returned Walter.

"But we weren't at first in England; we were ever so far off; it's so long since I've thought of it, that I can't remember the name. Where was it, mamma?"

"In Gibraltar," replied Lady Tremyss. "Now, Isabel, I want Mr. Arden to tell me which of these two plays he thinks the best, 'Le Secret d' Eulalie,' or 'Le Revenant d' Outre Mer.'"

Lady Tremyss' accent was indeed perfect, as Walter perceived from the few words contained in the titles.

"I like the first best," he said, after looking them over. "Our English private performers always fall through when they try tragedy. They are comic against their will."

"Then it is the 'Secret d' Eulalie' that we are to have," said Lady Tremyss. "There are some very amusing situations in it; and there being two heroines, Eulalie and Isabelle, is a great advantage."

"There is one thing for which I must depend upon you," continued Lady Tremyss, "a little serenade that I want you to translate. I will write off the original at once."

"I will do what I can with it," said Walter, "but I've not written verses since I was at school."

"I shall not be hard to please," she answered, while a smile glittered over her features like a flash of distant lightning.

She drew a portfolio towards her, and began to copy the verses.

"I've had a letter from Edith," said Isabel to Walter.

"Have you?"

"Yes, and have felt so dull ever since."

"Why?"

"It makes her seem further away instead of nearer. She seems so contented, thinking of nothing but her father."

"That is right, is it not?" asked Walter, uttering one of those prodigious falsehoods, by implication, into which we are all forced at times.

"I suppose so; but you see I can't bear to have her happy when I am not. I was so happy going over to the Hall and seeing her every day, and now the time seems so long. I miss my rides with her, and all that, so much, you know."

"Yes. I can imagine how changed—" Walter stopped, then resumed—"You must let me ride with you sometimes; not that I can hope to take her place."

Lady Tremyss raised her head.

"Indeed I wish you would, Mr. Arden. I have sprained my side, and can't go out with her, and she does not care to go alone. It will be only for a day or two."

It was arranged that Walter should call for Isabel the next day.

As Lady Tremyss gave into his hand the copied verses, he rose to take his leave.

"By-the-by, perhaps I ought to tell you that I saw something rather odd as I rode up."

He described the crouching figure, and its inexplicable disappearance.

"It was as tall as Goliath; but, of course, it could not have been he. Perhaps it would be as well to have a good watch kept to-night. Clapham House was broken into not long ago, you know."

"I have no doubt but that it was Goliath," returned Lady Tremyss. "The house is old, and infested with mice and rats, and I believe he takes them for evil spirits. I have seen him more than once listening in that way."

"Yes," said Isabel. "Edith and I heard them once in the old dancing-room, and we called Mamma, and Mamma called him, and I believe they frightened him so that he has hidden the key, for it has been lost ever since."

"Strange," remarked Walter. "He looks like a man of such resolution."

"I don't think him a coward, in the common sense of the word, but merely timid and superstitious, like all blacks," said Lady Tremyss, leaving her seat and going towards the fire. The flame sent up a crimson glow over her black dress and statue-like face as she stretched her slender hands towards it.

"Warm yourself well before you go out," she said. "It is cold, very cold." She smiled exultantly.

That smile haunted Walter as he rode down the avenue. He saw Lady Tremyss' face, as she stood on the white marble hearth before the fire, the shadows all inverted by the light from below; the mocking curve of her lip; the fierce gladness in her eye. Why should she rejoice at the biting cold that was chilling him to the bone, even through his furred riding coat? He wondered in vain.

When Walter called at the Park the next day, Isabel was not quite ready. Lady Tremyss received him.

"I am sorry that you are kept waiting; but, now that you are here, I mean to profit by it to ask you to draw me a plan of the fixtures for the curtain and the lights. The carpenter was here this morning; but I found it difficult to make him understand what I wanted. Perhaps you will be so kind."

Walter, who was a good draughtsman, in a few moments

executed what was required of him. He sat absently drawing figures upon a blank sheet of paper, while Lady Tremyss examined the sketch he had made.

"That will give a very pretty effect," she said, laying it down. "But what have you here?" she asked, taking up the sheet on which he had been sketching.

As she glanced over it, she started as if struck by a ball. Walter looked quickly up. He beheld only the calm, impassive face he was accustomed to see.

"This branch is very graceful, you should make use of it in drawing. And this ring setting, how peculiar it is. Two eagles' heads, is it not? Where did you meet with it?"

"In London," answered Walter, who felt himself bound to secrecy.

"What stone was it set with?" she asked carelessly, as she laid the sheet upon the table.

"An orange colored diamond," said Walter rising to shake hands with Isabel, who entered at that moment in her riding habit.

On the next evening he came. He found Isabel alone, leaning back in an easy chair before a window whence she had drawn back the curtains. She was pale and serious. He seated himself near her.

"Are you star-gazing?" he asked.

"I wish I could read them," she replied; "I wish that I could read about Mamma."

"Do you want to know what is going to happen to her?"

"Not so much that." She hesitated a little, then seeming to yield to some urgent impulse, continued, speaking more rapidly, "I want to know what has befallen her already. I want to know all about her. I feel so lonely sometimes. I did not use to think about it or care; but now I wish she would talk to me, and tell me all about her past."

There was a mournful tone to the girl's voice that moved Walter. In truth were this so, what a lonely life Isabel's must be. How sad the isolation that she described.

He sat silent an instant, then said,

"It is not unnatural that she shrinks from looking back. You know that your father's death—"

"Yes, I know," answered Isabel; "but—" And she seemed to carry on her thoughts silently. Walter looked at her attentively.

"You are tired, I fear. Did I take you too far yesterday?"

"Oh, no; it is not that. If I am a little tired, it is because I had such a disturbed night. I am sure Mamma is working too hard at that translation. She talked in her sleep a great deal. The door between her room and mine is always open at night, and she kept me awake. She was talking to one of the characters, Mrs. Williams, half the night, and begging her to hide her so that nobody could find her and take her away."

"Mrs. Williams!" ejaculated young Arden.

"Yes. When I told her of it this morning, she did not know anything about it; but she said she had changed the names of the people from French to English, and that Madame Duvernay she had altered to Mrs. Williams, and that she must have been dreaming about that. But here she is."

Lady Tremyss came into the room with a roll of paper in her hand.

"I have been busy, you see," she said, unfolding the sheets as she seated herself by the lamp.

"Have you done all that to-day?" he asked.

"No, I began it yesterday." She turned to the table.

"May I see it?"

He took the sheets which she held out, and looked over the list of *dramatis personæ*. There was the name, "Mrs. Williams." He glanced at her anew. He might as well

have scrutinized an iron mask. The beautiful features rested immovable in the lamplight. His look sought in vain to penetrate her eyes. It was stopped just below the surface as by an adamantine wall. He looked back to the paper, "Eugenie," "Adeline." "I thought the names were Eulalie and Isabel. I must re-write my translation."

"First let me see it," she said.

Walter drew a folded sheet from his pocket book.

"This is far better than the original. I am much obliged to you. I shall show it to all my friends," said Lady Tremyss.

"Indeed, I must beg that you will not," said Walter, quickly, "as it was to be sung, I thought no one would pay any attention to the words. I am not at all satisfied with it."

"Very well, since you request it, I will keep it secret. Mind, Isabel, that you tell no one, not even Miss Arden. But it is not at all worth while to re-write it merely because of the change of name."

She carefully locked the paper in her desk.

"Now we must decide whom we are to ask to fill the parts. There is a gay widow—I think of Mrs. Lacy for her; and a lively young lady whose part Isabel ought to take; and a quiet young lady, for whom Miss Wharnbligh would do very well."

"And the men, Mamma?" asked Isabel. "It will be much harder to find the men."

"There is a sporting young gentleman,—Mr. Renson would scarcely need to study the part; a student, for whom we must find as much of a bookworm as possible; a guardian—"

"A cross guardian?" enquired Isabel.

"No, an amiable guardian, quite in the style of Mr. Tracy; and a wicked cousin, for whom we must choose some remarkably good young man."

"Why so?" asked Walter.

"No one else would take the part."

"Then Mr. Milcum will do," said Isabel. "I know he would take it if I asked him."

"I have no doubt he would," observed Walter, whose principal remembrance of Mr. Milcum was that of seeing him on a tall black horse, trying in vain to keep up with Isabel; who, ably seconded by Moria, was maliciously leading him through a dangerous bog, under pretence of shewing him one of her favorite points of view.

The conversation turned upon the several merits of the performers proposed; others were suggested, canvassed, and finally rejected; and when Walter took his leave, matters were not much further advanced than they were before; except that it was decided that he should see Mr. Renson the next day, and ride over in the evening and report his answer.

So the preparations and arrangements went on day after day. At the end of the second week Walter had been every evening at the Park, and as yet, Miss Wharnbligh had not made up her mind, so in consequence nothing had been settled.

Walter's time was entirely taken up by the multifarious responsibilities which pressed upon him. It required as much time and management to gather together the materials for a troupe, as to construct a Cabinet when the two sides of the House of Commons are evenly balanced.

The multiplied and never-ending annoyances which arose day by day were borne by Lady Tremyss, however, with an equanimity most edifying to behold; Isabel's spirit seemed to improve; Walter, though wearied out with the whole matter, yet felt himself bound to go on with it; and Edith, sitting in her blue and grey room at Arden Court, read Isabel's constant letters,—sent, by her mother's advice, in the form of a diary,—followed Walter in his daily visits to

the Park, pictured him absorbed in the projected gaiety, and could not refuse to see how entirely he seemed bound to the service of Isabel. She had hoped to find consolation in devoting herself to her father, but that expectation had been defeated. Her mind and character had developed like her body. She had new wishes, new thoughts, new aspirations; and to all these her father was blind, and deaf, and cold. She looked upon him with new eyes. The mantle of habit had been rent away; nor did its folds close again over his foibles and faults. He loved her, but his pervading selfishness tainted even his love, as she felt with unspeakable sadness. She strove in vain for a time to close her eyes against her new perceptions; she blamed herself, accused herself of coldness, ingratitude, irreverence; she recalled the many instances of his affection, his anxiety for her well-being; but she struggled in vain: the balance would right itself, no matter how strongly her will might weigh it down. By an immutable law, the superior character recognized its own superiority; and Edith was slowly and sorrowfully compelled to acknowledge to herself that her father was other than what she had thought him to be.

So the days went on. She read good books, she worked for the poor, she devoted herself none the less conscientiously to her father, and she grew paler day by day, and week by week, until one morning a letter came which blanched her cheeks so that they could grow pale no longer.

The envelope was directed in Lady Tremyss' hand. Within was a copy of verses in Walter's writing.

I lie beside the half heard, murmuring stream,
And watch the white wreaths on the dark blue sky;
Circling in ceaseless sweep they trace thy name,
It fills the whole broad heaven to mine eye,
Isabel.

I seek the quiet of the solemn woods,
To lose me far from sight and sound of men;

Thy name runs whispering on from leaf to leaf,
It fills the silence of each forest glen,
Isabel.

I wander forth beneath the roof of night;
Writ there in characters of trembling flame,
Soft quivering through the purple darkness, still
I see, for ever see, oh love, thy name,
Isabel.

There was a ringing sound in Edith's ears as she finished; the outlines of the objects around grew dim. When her thoughts cleared again she was lying on the floor. Her consciousness of misery seemed not to have been obscured by the sudden giving way of her physical forces, she awoke to full perception. The blow had been so overwhelming that at first she could not rally. She did not know how she had clung to hope till now that all hope was wrenched from her.

Again she read the verses, shaking in every limb as she did so. There was no possibility of mistake. Walter loved Isabel. She did not care to discover by what accident the lines had come into her own possession. It did not interest her to know. Her mind was filled with her misery; it had room for nothing else.

The hours passed unheeded as she sat, scarcely conscious of anything, deadened with pain. At last the sun sank. Habit reasserted its power. She remembered that she must dress for dinner; that her father would soon return. She went up-stairs to her room.

"Dieu! que Mademoiselle est pâle," exclaimed Félicie. "Mademoiselle est souffrante."

The maid rolled a berceuse to the fire, and gently slipping a pillow beneath Edith's head, removed the comb from her mistress's hair, and loosening her long curls, began silently to bathe her temples with aromatic water.

Félicie, that marvel of the nineteenth century, a Parisian

not devoid of heart, had in the short space of time she had been in Edith's service, become attached to her; and so it was with a gentle, compassionate touch, and in considerate silence, that she performed her office.

The sympathy, blind and narrow as it was, brought yet a tinge of consolation with it. It lessened that first bewildering sense of utter isolation. Edith raised her eyes gratefully to her maid as she thanked her, and rising, moved towards the toilette table.

"Mais, Mademoiselle ne pense pas à se faire habiller!" exclaimed Félicie. "Mademoiselle est blanche comme une linge. Mademoiselle fera mieux de se mettre au lit et de boire une infusion de tilleul. C'est cela qui fera du bien à Mademoiselle: ça calme."

But Edith was regardless of Félicie's exhortations, and she made her toilet as usual. As she was about to leave the room the maid said:

"I had something that I wanted to show to Mademoiselle; not only because it is so pretty, but because if Mademoiselle would buy it, that would be a veritable act of charity."

Opening a flat box, she displayed a handkerchief, wrought with exquisite skill.

"It is beautiful; but how is it an act of charity to buy it? Is the workwoman in distress?"

"I am going to tell it to Mademoiselle. My sister is première demoiselle to try on at Madame Julie's in Regent Street, and she knew Madame Guillaume, who is not an ouvrière, but used to be a lady, and was very kind to her when in Malta, when Anais had the fever coming from Rome with her mistress, and was so ill that they had to leave her at Malta, and Madame Guillaume was so good to her and nursed her so well. And when she came to London a little while ago her husband had died, and she had no money and no friends, and she had old debts to pay, and so

she has to work, and Anaïs sells her work in the shop, and she could sell this for two guineas and a half; but when she showed it to me I told her I would take it home, and that I would make Mademoiselle see it, and Mademoiselle has si bon cœur that perhaps she would give more for it than the shop price."

Edith gave five guineas for the handkerchief, to Félicie's great delight; and charging that personage to obtain from her sister Madame Guillaume's address, that she might give her an order with which she had been entrusted by Isabel, she went down to meet her father.

Mr. Arden had been more occupied with business since Edith's return than she had ever known him before. He returned late from the city, and often spent the evening in writing. She had fancied that he seemed anxious as well as pre-occupied. But on this evening all that harassed him appeared to have cleared away; he was in high good humor, and much more jocose than was his wont. It was a cumbersome sort of gaiety, not quite to Edith's taste, although she did her utmost to smile and respond to it.

"You have been living like a nun since you returned," he said, as the dinner at length ended, he sat in the library over his cup of coffee, "Now I must make you amends." And deaf to Edith's protestations that she liked living quietly, and did not want any company, he began to lay plans for a series of entertainments, at the prospect of which Edith's courage well-nigh failed her. A sensation of desperation came over her as she listened.—How was she to endure all this? Why was her father so anxious for her to see company? What good did he hope to obtain?—His next words told her.

"I was speaking about it to Lady Charlotte Estbridge just before you came back. She talked very well. She said that a girl's success depends more on what is said of her before she's out, than most people think; and that she

had known many a young woman fail, simply because people didn't know that they were expected to admire her. She has consented to be your *chaperone* next season. I think I have done very well to secure her."

Mr. Arden did not think it necessary to mention that it had been a business transaction, certain of Lady Charlotte's depreciated shares of the ——— Railway having been purchased by him of her man of business, at par, as a preliminary to his request.

"But, Papa, I don't care to be admired," said Edith, raising her eyes mournfully. "It won't make me any happier."

He looked at her as she sat in profile, her hands folded on her knee, her eyes fixed on the hearth. How pale and listless she appeared. He hoped her health was not going to fail again. His affection for her, selfish though he was, rose uppermost for the moment.

"Do you want to go back to the Hall?"

"No," she answered with sudden vehemence. "Anything but that."

We are occasionally more perplexed by answers to our queries than we were by the uncertainties which led to our questions. Mr. Arden found himself in that condition. He had thought a while before that Edith had rather a liking for her cousin, and now here she was passionately protesting her dislike of the Hall. He didn't understand it. However, one thing seemed clear, there was no danger to be apprehended from that quarter. He had been needlessly alarmed. Perhaps it would have been as well to have given her the letter after all. And yet,—no, it was safer as it was.

Edith slept late on the ensuing morning. When she awoke her father was gone to the City, and a letter was waiting for her, a second note directed in Lady Tremyss' handwriting. Within were a note from Isabel, and a few lines from Lady Tremyss, wherein she explained that she

had offered the day before to enclose and direct the accompanying note, Isabel having been called away, and that she had taken another sheet by mistake. She begged Edith to send back the enclosure of the day before by return of mail, requesting her to speak of it to no one, and to write to Isabel as if she had not seen it. "Mr. Arden desires that it should not be known," the note concluded, "and I have promised him to keep it secret."

Edith re-enclosed the lines. She added a brief note.

That done, she set herself resolutely to work on a *vide poche* which she had begun for Isabel. She had nerved herself to endure. She worked on with a steady, mechanical motion till she was interrupted by the announcement of a visitor, Mrs. Lacy, who appeared in her purple dress and bonnet, her long white camel's hair shawl, all border, and her small sable muff, looking exceedingly as if she had stepped in on her way to the Park.

"You see I was not discouraged by finding you out when I called at the Hall," she said, smiling on Edith and on everything about her at once. "You ran away from me, but I have followed you, you see. I am staying a few days at Woodthorpe, quite near you. What a perfect room this is," she continued, ensconcing herself in an easy chair, and gazing complacently around. "I shall be fairly jealous of it."

"Nothing could be prettier than the room you were in at Houston Lacy," replied Edith, who felt a certain liking for Mrs. Lacy, as no one could help doing, despite her endless list of faults.

"Ormanby is always abusing it, and he had almost got me out of conceit with it. But then he is never pleased with anything, you know."

"I came upon business as well as upon pleasure, and I am forgetting all about it. I want to ask you a great favor."

Edith expressed general willingness to oblige Mrs. Lacy.

"It is about Félicie."

"I hope you don't want her back."

"She would not come if I did; but she is the only person who ever dressed my hair to suit me, and I want to know if you could be so kind as to let me send over my maid to learn her way. I have come up for four days, and that would give her quite time enough."

Edith assented.

"I suppose you hear constantly from the Hall."

"Not very often. Mrs. Arden is not fond of letter writing."

"We are quite gay at Wodeton, you know, for a wonder. You have heard of the theatricals at the Park, of course."

"Yes."

"I have come up to order my dress. It will be charming. I am to be a gay widow."

"So I hear."

"I fancy that the play will end in a marriage."

"Most plays do, I think."

"Oh, but I mean a true marriage."

"Indeed."

"Yes. Every one is talking of it. It must be delightful to you, so fond of her as you were; and a match very gratifying to Lady Tremyss, I imagine, it keeps her daughter so near her."

"She is very much attached to her daughter," said Edith, pressing her hands tightly together.

"Yet how different they are. I must say that I should not have liked Lady Tremyss for a mother."

The conversation turned a while on indifferent subjects, and then Mrs. Lacy took her leave.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN INVITATION TO ALBANSEA CASTLE.

WHEN Mr. Arden entered his drawing-room that evening it was with an air of irrepressible satisfaction. He kissed Edith, then stood before the fire awhile, slowly rubbing his hands together as if enjoying in silence some pleasurable subject of thought.

It was not Edith's practice to question her father, and on this, as on other occasions, she waited for him to speak. He turned at length towards her, and said in a tone which he vainly endeavored to render careless,

"Well, my dear, I suppose you will be ready by next Tuesday."

"Ready for what, papa?"

"Albansea Castle. I had a note from the Duchess this morning inviting us for a fortnight, and I have accepted."

"There is nothing to be done, papa. I have everything I need."

Mr. Arden looked discontented. He would much rather that Edith had demanded three new dresses for every day, as if she had been going to Compiègne.

"I will see your maid about it, my dear. I wish you to appear well, of course. It is a very distinguished party. I saw Colonel Dive to-day, and he told me who would be there; Lady Masterton, and Lady Sophia, Lord and Lady Melby, Prince and Princess Wosocki, General and Lady Emmeline Horsmantle, Miss Tellinghurst, Ormanby Averil, Lord Skeffington, Lord Prudhoe, Sir Francis Lister, and one or two others. It will be very pleasant."

Mr. Arden's face shone complacently.

"I don't know anyone except the Duchess and Lord Skef-

ington," replied Edith, apparently finding the prospect less agreeable than did her father.

"And Mr. Averil."

"I scarcely spoke to him," she answered, in a tone which sufficiently implied dislike.

"I hope, my dear, that you will not allow any unfounded prejudice to render your manners disagreeable toward a gentleman for whom I have great esteem."

Edith looked at him inquiringly.

"I mean Mr. Averil. I particularly desire that you should treat him with politeness."

"Am I ever rude, papa?" she asked, somewhat astonished by the implied accusation.

"No, my dear, I hope not, but you are very cold. It is not unadvisable to have a certain hauteur to people in general, it looks well; but it is out of place towards such a person as Mr. Averil. You understand me. I wish to be on good terms with him, and that I cannot be unless you are so too," said Mr. Arden, in conclusion, leaving Edith much perplexed at the novel position of importance assigned to her by her father, yet determined to second his wishes as far as possible.

"How can I ever try to please that man!" she thought to herself again and again during the evening.

The next morning was signalized by a battle royal between Mr. John Arden and Félicie, if such an expression be applicable to a contest where all the forces were superior on the side of the weaker party. He had required the presence of Edith's maid in the library after his breakfast. Félicie entered, courtesied, and stood by the door waiting to learn his pleasure. Félicie had already twice seen her employer, and being of a sharp, discriminating turn of mind, had, during those two brief glimpses, sounded, weighed, and judged him, coming to certain conclusions not altogether complimentary to the pompous gentleman who now stood on

the hearth-rug with his back to the fire, warming himself preparatory to his departure.

Contrary to his expectations, Félicie did not seem at all oppressed by the honor he considered he had done her by summoning her to a conference. On the contrary, he began to feel himself incommoded by the keen glance with which she stood eyeing him.

"I have sent for you because I wish to speak to you," he said at length, in a magisterial kind of tone, calculated, as he fancied, to bring the Frenchwoman to fitting sense of his own personal importance.

"E'es, sare," responded Félicie, audibly, inwardly adding, "Je le savais déjà."

"Your young lady is going to pay a visit."

"E'es, sare." "Mais allons donc," to herself.

"And I want to know if there be anything she wants."

"For how long time sall Mademoiselle be gone, sare?"

"For a fortnight."

"Sall Mademoiselle be en toilette of Eenglish demoiselle, or of French demoiselle?"

Mr. Arden hesitated, not thoroughly appreciating the difference involved. He thought it best to say French.

"Den, sare, Mademoiselle do need some evening's dresses, tree or four, and morning's dresses as mush."

"I will order them to-day, then."

"Vat, sare?"

Mr. Arden bent his brows portentously. There was a latent rebellion in the Frenchwoman's tone that must be suppressed at once.

"I said I would order them to-day."

Félicie's eyes shot fire.

"Has Monsieur de habit to command de dresses of Mademoiselle?"

"Certainly," with an imposing glance.

Félicie's indignation exploded, mindless of Mr. Arden's angry glare.

"Den, sare, I ave de need to tell you dat you not comprehend de leetlest ting of vat Mademoiselle should vear."

Mr. Arden perceived that the Frenchwoman was in no wise afraid of him. He thought it expedient to temporize.

"I have always ordered them of Madam Deschamps, and with no regard to cost."

There was an implied apology in the reply which Félicie was quick to perceive and take advantage of.

"Madame Deschamps!" she ejaculated, with an accent of scarcely veiled contempt.

"They always looked very rich," answered Mr. Arden, who was beginning mentally to look about him for means of retreat.

"Dieu de Dieu!" muttered Félicie. I ave de honor to inform Monsieur dat Mademoiselle can *not* be dress riche. She must be dress simple, distingué, élégante, but for to dress her riche, nebare."

"What should she wear?" asked Mr. Arden, vanquished by the authoritative tone of the soubrette.

She sall vear no flounce, no ruffle, no lace, no nossing as is for dame mariée. She sall vear robes fraiches, couleurs clairs, nuances tendres, tout-à-fait jeune fille; and she sall vear no parures, not von sing sall she put on of bijouterie. No von ave understand Mademoiselle's genre de beauté. I vill make her so dat every von who see her sall say—'C'est un miracle de beauté et de bon goût.' It is so dat I understand it."

Félicie folded her hands before her, and eyed her master with the air of a general delivering his orders to an aide-de-camp.

Mr. Arden, who dared risk no further encounter, being by this time effectually cowed, considered it expedient to end the interview by conferring upon Félicie unlimited powers as to taste and expense, only exacting that her young lady should be the best dressed of all the young ladies who were to be at Albansea.

Much as Mr. John Arden pondered, he could not arrive at the solution of so unexpected a phenomenon as the arrival of the invitation to Albansea Castle. True, the Duchess frequently honored his balls and dinner parties with her presence, and invited him to balls and dinner parties in return; but he had never before been invited to stay even three days at the Castle when it was the fullest; and now that the Duchess, who was in mourning, had but a comparatively small circle about her, (an invitation being consequently far more of a compliment), here he was, with Edith, invited to pass a fortnight.

His perplexities would have been dissipated could he have overheard a conversation which took place between the Duchess and Ormanby Averil, the day on which the invitation was dated.

"Averil," said the Duke, a fat, good-natured man, coming into the billiard-room, where Averil stood watching the play between Maurice Westood and Frank Prinne. "Averil, won't you go to the Duchess? She wants you; something has gone wrong, I believe.—Well done, Westwood," as a sharp, double rap was heard. And the Duke took Averil's place, while the latter betook himself to the Duchess.

"Oh, Mr. Averil, I am so annoyed. There was never anything so provoking. Do sit down, and advise me what to do," said that lady, greeting his entrance in a manner that proclaimed him what he was, *l'ami de la maison*.

"First I must know what your Grace wishes to be advised about."

"Here is a note from Miss Telfrey, saying that her grandfather is so ill,—he is really dying, you know, poor old man—that she can't come. I always have a beauty, I have never failed; and here I am left without one. The party will be spoilt."

"But Miss Telfrey is not the only pretty girl," replied Averil, apparently unconvinced of the magnitude of the dis-

aster, and inclined to look upon it more slightly than suited the Duchess.

"She is the only available one," responded that lady in an aggrieved tone. "I don't want a girl whom everyone has seen. I want something new. I always have had it, and I must have it now. And I can't think of any one. Now tell me, what am I to do?"

Averil pondered a while.

"There is Sophy Marginford; she is pretty, very, though she is too tall."

"I don't want her, she is not to my taste. That foolish aunt of her's has turned her head already."

"There never was much weight to balance it.—Lady Emmeline Forrest."

"She would do, but she's at Witherspee."

"Have you thought of Harriet Bywell?"

"She is stupid. I must have a clever girl—one that can talk, when the party is to be so small."

"Then, if I understand aright, your requisites are beauty, novelty, and intelligence."

"Yes, and now I think you must perceive what a difficulty I am in. Where am I to find them?"

"Let me see," he answered, speaking slowly. "I saw some one at Houston Lacy, a girl not yet out—a positive beauty, blonde"—he glanced at the Duchess's yellow curls; he had a point to carry—"lady like and clever."

"But if I don't know her,—" objected the hostess.

"I think you have seen her. You know her father, John Arden."

The Duchess pursed up her lips and sat contemplating the carved ivory handle of the paper-knife she was holding. She did not want to ask John Arden, but she had seen the girl at Arden Court, and been pleased with her. She was not so handsome then as Averil described her, but girls alter fast, and she could trust his taste. Yet she really could not

make up her mind to ask John Arden; what was she to do?"

"What a pity that I can't ask her without her father," she said, regretfully.

"Yes, but I don't think you can."

She sat weighing the matter. How provoking that Miss Telfrey could not come. It was very difficult to make up her mind about it. She would not decide at all. She would leave it to Averil.

"Now tell me, if you were I, what would you do? It shall be as you say."

"Ask them."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GUESTS AT ALBANSEA CASTLE.

THE country around Albansea was not remarkable for beauty; in fact, as Edith approached the castle, her eyes rested on a wilderness. On either side of the carriage she saw a bleak, desolate plain, over which the sea wind wandered. Before her, on a rugged eminence, overhanging the leaden waves which came rolling in from the German Ocean, rose the gray front of the castle, flanked by two enormous round towers, with narrow loopholes and battlemented tops. The dark mass of the building stood out from a background of heavy, white-edged clouds, which rose sullenly from the far distance of the sea.

As Edith gazed upon the frowning pile which she was rapidly nearing, her heart sank within her. She felt that she might be even more unhappy than she was now. That strange uneasiness which steals over the strongest and least apprehensive amongst us at times, and which may always,

when looked back upon, be found to have heralded some crisis in our fate, invaded her mind. She turned her eyes imploringly on her father, as if seeking refuge from some vaguely perceived danger. His face was averted; he was looking intently towards the castle.

"See, Edith, here comes a riding party—two ladies and three gentlemen. How fast they come on. Ah! this one on the chestnut horse is Ormanby Averil. How well he sits. Look up and bow to him, my love."

Edith looked up. She saw the cold, regular features of Ormanby Averil, and bowed in reply to his salutation; then sank back shivering as the party passed. She felt cold, even beneath her sable cloak and robe.

"Ah, you will soon be comfortably at the castle; we are not ten minutes from it," said Mr. John Arden, as with his most affectionate look he folded her wrappings more closely around her. "Now, my pet, I shall hope to see a little more color in your cheeks, and hear a laugh now and then. You have been dull, very dull, at the court, lately. Very opportune this invitation. I would rather your first visit should be at Albansea than anywhere else."

His face beamed with satisfaction as the carriage crossed the bridge over the dried-up-moat—in summer a flower-garden—belting the fortress, and rolled into the courtyard.

After her reception by the Duchess, Edith was ushered up stairs to her room.

It was one of the oldest apartments of the castle, and had been assigned to Edith by the Duchess's command, from a motive which she would not have cared to analyze, but which, if laid open, would have been found to have sprung from a desire to display to the eyes of the daughter of the modern millionaire something which money could not buy.

The walls and vaulted ceiling were lined with blue leather, whereon were stamped ivy leaves of gold. The bed

was of satin, embroidered with curious needlework. Great coffers of carved oak, black with age, were placed on either side of the one narrow window: the toilette glass was mounted in ivory yellow with age. Ancient silver candlesticks were placed on the toilet table, and from the centre of the vaulted ceiling hung a silver lamp, of corresponding age and style. The cumbrous chairs were of ebony, cushioned with damask. The floor was covered with a carpet woven to imitate dried rushes mingled with crimson autumn leaves.

There was something bewildering in the consistent antiquity of the apartment. Edith closed her eyes as she leaned back in the great arm-chair that Félicie placed before the fire, and tried to recover her sense of time and place. She thought of Walter. All her consciousness rushed back in a flood. No need for anything else. She was Edith Arden, come to pay a visit at Albansea. She rose with that restless desire for motion that a sudden stab of pain, mental or bodily, always brings with it, and walking to the window, looked forth upon the sea.

The great waves came rolling up to the shore, driven before the wind. She stood and watched them. She would have turned from the summer landscape, with its glad fields and smiling sky, but in the stern scene before her she found a strange delight. The pain within seemed dulling as she gazed on the rising and falling of the waves. So—and so—and so—for ever—ever rising, ever falling, sweeping on unceasingly, rushing without stay. Thus they would rush, when she was gone, when all who were living were gone; sweeping, rushing on for ever. Her reverie was broken by her father's knock at the door. Félicie hastily arranged her toilette, and Edith descended.

Averil had thought often of Edith since he had seen her. Her singular and delicate beauty, contrasting with her keen penetration and incisive speech, had given him a

sensation to which he had long been a stranger. The quiet sarcasm of her manner had galled him at the moment, the searching glance of her eye had made him uneasy whilst it rested upon him; yet when she was gone, he recalled sarcasm and glance with something like pleasure. They were so different from what he was used to meeting. It seemed to brace him to remember them.

He had been abominably cross, as Mrs. Lacy assured him, all the day after an unsuccessful call at Arden Hall, and he had even contemplated going to town and putting himself in John Arden's way, in order to get another of those invitations to the Court which he had formerly, as a matter of course, rejected. An urgent letter from the Duchess had interfered with the execution of this half-formed project, by calling him to Albansea ten days earlier than he expected. Now that the invitation had been sent and accepted, he found himself awaiting Edith's arrival with an impatience which brought back to him some of the long-forgotten memories of his youth.

"A very fine-looking man, mais il lui manque l'air noble. But what a lovely creature that is with him. Who are they?" said the Princess Wosocki, a young woman of twenty-six, married to a man of seventy, as John Arden and his daughter entered the room.

"Mr. John Arden, a millionaire, and his daughter," replied Averil, turning so as to watch the quiet grace with which Edith made her *entrée*.

"I like her; she has ideas; I read it in her face," said the Russian, "but she is cold, colder than our snows."

"Then you think her devoid of sentiment?" inquired Averil, who had, and justly, a high opinion of Princess Wara's penetration.

"Did I say that?" she returned, quickly. "I said she was cold, and so she is cold to all but two or three. But look at her eyes, there is fire in the centre, though they are

so soft. When you see an eye like that, clear and profound, soft, with one ray of light steady in the darkness of the middle, then you see one capable of *une grande passion*, a woman who will love, and only love once."

"I have heard you say that in looking at a new face you aim at detecting the strongest and the weakest points of a character, and that these, once ascertained, the rest follows of course," said Averil, after a pause, during which he had been watching Edith.

"Precisely, that is what I do when I find anything worth the while," she replied.

"I fancy, however, that such a rule could scarcely apply to so undeveloped a character as that of a girl of seventeen," he continued carelessly.

"You call that character undeveloped? I do not know what you can mean. That young girl has as much strength as either you or I. I am not sure that she has not more."

"Then the two points are discoverable?"

"Most certainly they are."

"I know your insight is wonderful. I am going to put it to the proof. What is the strongest, and what the weakest point of Miss Arden's character?"

The Russian turned her eyes upon him with an inquiring glance. He met it gravely, impassively.

"I do not like such questions," she replied, "but since you ask me, I will tell you what I think."

She inclined her head and watched Edith from under her prominent, oblique eyebrows.

"If she were a Catholic she would be *dévôte*, very likely make herself a nun," she said, as if speaking to herself; then raising her head she answered, "they are one,—self-sacrifice."

"How do you know?" asked Averil, scanning Edith's features.

"It is written on her face; besides, it belongs to the type.

I do not often see a young girl like that. I shall ask the Duchess to present her."

Before many moments Edith was engaged in conversation with the Russian lady, while Averil stood talking to her father, to that gentleman's great gratification.

In the general move to lunch, Averil approached Edith, to whom, as yet, he had only bowed.

"I am happy to meet you again. You left the Hall quite unexpectedly, I believe."

"Quite so."

"Yes, there was the same cold intonation, the same level inclination of the eyebrows, the same quiet hauteur of manner. They were as pleasant as ice in summer.

Mr. Arden's admonitions had been of no avail. Edith could not be other than chill to people whom she did not like. Averil saw that he did not please her. It was an attraction the more. He took his place beside her at table, and tried to draw her into conversation. He asked of her journey, spoke of the weather, touched on various topics, and was met everywhere by the same courteous, distant reserve. He betook himself to studying the beauty of her little ear, perfectly modelled, but almost too transparent. She wore no ear-rings,—he was glad of that. She was dressed with peculiar simplicity,—that was in good taste. She scarcely tasted anything,—he detested to see a woman with a good appetite. But he must say something.

"It will not be gay here at all, I am sorry to say."

"I am glad," replied Edith, with a look of relief.

"Really!"

A tinge of his accustomed sarcasm was in his tone.

She did not answer, but he felt as it were a cold breath float from her and envelope him. He saw that she had perceived his incredulity, and resented it with contempt. He felt his anger rise. They left the table ere he had recovered his equanimity; and the Duchess taking possession of

Edith, carried her off to set her at ease with the younger members of the party.

She was received by Miss Tellinghurst, a handsome, heavy-looking girl, with a stiffness that seemed habitual to her; and by Lady Sophia Bentwell, a slender, sallow brunette, who presented a general likeness to a sparrow, with voluble affability. She told Edith she was delighted that she had come, and said that she had often heard of her; an assertion which reposed on the solitary fact of the Duchess having announced her expected arrival, and Ormanby Averil having been heard to say that she would be the beauty of the coming season.

Miss Tellinghurst soon retired to her room to write letters, the afternoon proving so stormy as to render walking, driving, or riding impracticable; and Lady Sophia ensconced herself in a recess with Edith, and devoted herself to amusing her.

"I suppose you don't know all the people here," she said, turning her quick glance down the spacious room, with its scattered groups.

"I know none of them," replied Edith.

"Except Ormanby Averil; I heard him say he knew you; and Lord Skeffington—I wonder where he is, by-the way. Oh, I remember, he'll be back for dinner."

"I know Lord Skeffington slightly. I scarcely know Mr. Averil at all."

"However, he's the best worth knowing of them all—perfectly delightful when he chooses. Don't you find him so?"

There was an almost imperceptible upward motion to Edith's eyebrows, as she answered:

"I have seen him only once before to-day."

Lady Sophia caught the momentary expression. It impressed her profoundly.—Here was some one that did not care for Ormanby Averil!

"May I ask you to tell me the name of the lady in the dark blue moire; the duke is speaking to her. I did not catch it."

"Oh, the lady who was talking with you before dinner. That is Madame Wosocki. She's immensely clever and accomplished, and very good-natured. It's quite delightful to see the way in which she treats her husband. There he is in the furthest window, wiping his spectacles."

"What, that little old man! He looks old enough to be her grandfather."

"So he is,—old enough, I mean. She was married to him at sixteen, and they seem very fond of each other. You never saw anything so splendid as her diamonds. That tall woman with black eyes is Lady Masterton. They say she worried her daughter-in-law to death. I don't know about it: but one thing is certain, and that is that her son won't speak to her. She is talking to Lady Melby; isn't she sweet, with her brown hair, and eyes just of the same color, and that lovely smile. She is a cousin of Ormanby Averil's, and l'amie intime of the Duchess. That stiff, sensible-looking woman crocheting lace is Lady Emmeline Horsmantle. Nobody would imagine it to see her sitting there so quietly, but she is a perfect heroine. She has done such things. She went with the General when the troops marched against the Sikhs."

"Oh yes," said Edith, "I read of it in the papers. Is that really she?"

She gazed on the plain, quiet, rather sad-looking lady in a black silk dress and simple collar, who was so intent upon her delicate work. "How sad she looks."

"I don't think she has anything to make her unhappy, I mean now-a-days. She had a great deal of trouble when she was young."

"And where is the General?"

"There he is, that oldish man, with great black eye-

brows and white hair, talking to Frank Westwood at the end of the room; he looks as if he were lecturing him. Frank is his ward, and is always getting into scrapes. That pale young man, with sandy hair and a great forehead, is Lord Prudhoe. He is immensely clever and rich; but so bookish, that every one is afraid of him. He writes reviews, and cares for nothing but sanitary reforms, and poor-houses, and all that sort of thing. His mother is very pious, as they call it. She put all that into his head. It's a great pity."

Lady Sophia's eyes rested disapprovingly on the young man who would have been such an unexceptional parti, had it not been for his oddity. Edith looked at him also, but with a very different expression. Lord Prudhoe, as people always do when they are looked at, turned his glance suddenly towards the two girls. He averted it almost instantly, but not before he had perceived Edith's sympathetic look. He was not used to appreciation. He did not expect it. He knew that, despite his silence and reserve, he was looked upon with an evil eye, and stigmatized as a radical by all his own set. He felt keenly the isolation in which his heretical convictions had placed him; yet was too manly and conscientious to swerve one iota from his allegiance to what he considered political truth, no matter how painful the forfeiture he thereby incurred. So the earnest look of approbation which he had seen on Edith's face gave to him a novel delight. Again and again it recurred to him.—What could have caused it? Lady Sophia could not have been saying any good of him. She was gazing at him at the same moment with an unmistakable expression of reprobation on her sharp little face. What could it have been? So powerful a magnet did his mingled curiosity and admiration prove, that when Ormanby Averil returned from the stables where he had been to inspect a recent purchase of the Duke's, he found Lord Prudhoe deep in conversation

with Edith. He took up a review, seated himself in shadow, and watched them unobserved over the top of the pamphlet. Lord Prudhoe's usually stiff and reticent demeanor had changed. He was talking earnestly—to judge by the countenance of his listener—eloquently. For Edith possessed that rare and peculiarly feminine power of drawing out, as it is called, those who conversed with her.

"I am very glad I took your advice," said the Duchess, coming up behind Averil's chair. "She is really an exquisite creature, too pale you would say of anyone else, yet it seems to suit her style. And she must be clever; look at Prudhoe, how interested he seems. I never saw him talk that way to any one before; and whatever his faults may be, lack of brains can't be counted among them. I wish he would marry a quiet, amiable girl like that, and settle down rationally."

The Duchess moved away and left Averil to his review.

The day began to darken; the rain, which had pattered unceasingly upon the window panes, fell faster and faster; the ruddy glow of the fire triumphed over the paler illumination of the fading daylight. Work was folded up, and books laid aside; the guests drew nearer the fire in a general causerie, preparatory to the anticipated summons of the dressing-bell; still Averil sat watching; still Lord Prudhoe talked on, quite unconscious of the lapse of time, and still Edith listened.

When the dressing-bell rang, Lord Prudhoe's habitual reserve rushed back upon him.

"I must beg your pardon," he said, looking much disconcerted. "I had no idea I had been talking so long. You must excuse me. I fear I have been boring you."

"Not at all. I have enjoyed it extremely."

Edith raised her eyes to his disturbed countenance with one of her rare smiles. Averil, looking up, saw the radiance which for a moment overspread her face, fully revealed by the firelight, and saw it with a thrill of jealous anger.

"Conceited coxcomb!" he muttered between his teeth, glancing at Lord Prudhoe; and drawing his tall figure to its fullest height, he went up to dress for dinner in a mood which did not tend towards his valet's peace of mind.

His place at the dinner table was nearly opposite Edith, who was seated between young Westwood and the General. Lord Prudhoe was at a safe distance, taking his soup with his customary grave countenance, and replying at times, apparently much against his will, to Lady Sophia's incessant rattle. No danger that Prudhoe should engage in any conversation. He was disposed of for the next two hours at least. Solitude, temporary though it had been, had brought counsel to Mr. Averil. He proceeded with judgment. For the first half-hour he did not open his lips. He left Edith's attention to be claimed by Frank Westwood, a dandy of the first water, as inane and affected as befitted his pretensions. He noted the increasing silence and reticence with which Edith met his advances; he marked the growing look of ennui on her face; and when he perceived that she was thoroughly *dégouté* with her neighbor, then, and not till then, did Mr. Averil skilfully engage the General in conversation, and by means of adroitly putting questions, and artfully expressed uncertainty, enticed the unsuspecting veteran into a detailed and graphic account of some of the most interesting episodes in the Indian wars. Edith's face roused from its look of listlessness; her eye, which had hitherto avoided his, at length rested on Averil's face as he plied the general with his apt queries. At length, as if reading Edith's wishes, Averil spoke of Lady Emmeline. Here the General grew less communicative—he obviously did not like to bring before others those traits which rendered his wife so dear to him; but Averil's respectful attitude and Edith's imploring look overcame his first reluctance, and he recounted, with glistening eye, the story of her courage, her endurance, her self-devotion, and tireless exertions, in all that time of danger and distress.

With such tact did Averil manage and prolong the conversation, that it lasted until the Duchess gave the signal for retiring. He had gained his point. Edith had been pleased and interested, if not by him, at least through him. "Give me but time," said Averil to himself, as he watched her retiring figure. "I never yet tried to please a woman in vain." And Ormanby Averil drank his sherry and dissected his nuts, and thought what a beautiful creature Edith Arden was.

"What do you find to talk about with Prudhoe?" asked Lady Sophia, seating herself on a bergère near Edith, as the ladies spread themselves through the drawing-room; "I can't imagine. I think him so stupid. He tires me to death."

Edith suppressed a half smile, inspired by the doubt on which of the two, Lady Sophia or Lord Prudhoe, the burden of weariness had pressed the more grievously.

"I did not find it necessary to talk much. I preferred to listen."

"Did he not bore you?"

"Not at all. I found him very pleasant."

"Really? How strange! I can't understand it, at all." And Lady Sophia shook her head incredulously.

"What is it that Lady Sophia cannot understand?" asked Princess Wosocki, coming forward. "May one inquire?"

"I was saying I did not understand Lord Prudhoe; but he is one of your favorites, I believe."

"Yes; I like him much, though I cannot agree with him at all. He was born too soon or too late. He does not belong to the world as it is," she added, turning to Edith.

Lady Sophia took advantage of the movement to effect her retreat. With all her admiration of Madame Wosocki, she never dared talk to her, being haunted by an uneasy suspicion that the Russian was looking through her all the time.

"You would ask me why," continued the Princess, taking her place beside Edith. "Is it not so?"

Edith smiled.

"It is because he believes too much. He has made an Utopia as you call it—an ideal; and he would hurry on the world to that. The world is not ready. It must have time."

"But would the world ever advance were it not for such men as he?"

"I think it would. The march of an army does not depend upon that of its vanguard."

"But are not reformers the sappers and miners, rather, of that great moving mass?" asked Edith, looking up earnestly. "Do they not make straight and easy the ways which would else be hard to tread? do they not hew down forests, and bridge over rivers, and make that progress possible, which, for lack of them, might else come to a standstill? Can the world do without such men?"

"Do not think that because I do not agree, I cannot sympathize," said Madame Wosocki, "but here comes Lady Masterton."

Lady Masterton, in her imposing amplitude of crimson velvet, her haughty head thrown back, its every feature inflated by habitual pride, her hard, defiant eyes seeming to smite all they looked upon, swept towards them.

"We were just discussing one of your compatriots," said Madame Wosocki, moving so as to make room for Lady Masterton on the sofa, "Lord Prudhoe."

Lady Masterton fanned herself vindictively.

"Prudhoe is a conceited, meddling fool," she said, harshly. "If he and those like him had their way, they would make a red republic of us at once. It is bad enough when tailors, and shoemakers, and weavers, get their heads turned with talking their own abominable trash, but when it comes to a gentleman's wanting to level everything, and throw away

everything that's worth having, I think he ought to lose his position. I had a great mind not to come when I heard he was to be here," and she glared angrily around. "But I wanted to ask the Duchess something, there she is."

Lady Masterton, still fanning herself, as if to keep down the combustion of her indignation, swept away.

"That is what Lord Prudhoe has to meet in his own class. He is a man born to disappointment. I am sorry for him, for I like him much."

She rose as if to break off the conversation, and seating herself at the piano-forte, began to run her fingers over the keys. Her eye roved at random over the room awhile, then rested on Edith, as she sat near the foot of the instrument, her face turned from the groups beyond. Every sound ceased through the room, every ear was inclined to catch the notes. It was seldom that the princess played. The Russian's look grew deep and grave, as she gazed on the countenance before her, her touch more searching, more powerful. The instrument sighed and moaned inarticulately under her fingers for a few moments in a plaintive prelude, then the scattered notes of its recitative gathered and formed themselves into the harmony and rhythm of a low, soft chant. Into its modulations stole the whisper of running brooks, the rustling of leafy boughs, the trills and warblings of the spring-time birds, while still the chant kept on, full and deep, its tender burden mingling with the woven brilliancy above. A murmur of delight broke from the listeners, but as silence again stilled around the song, a wild plaint as from afar broke across its happy measure, gradually coming nearer and nearer, until the sunny gladness was drowned in the slow and solemn echoes of a dirge for the dead.

Edith's eyes had rested as if fascinated upon the Russian's. She sat spell-bound, fixed to the spot, while that mysterious music translated and sent back on her ear the secret anguish within her. She longed to rise and flee, but she could not move. She must stay and listen to it all.

As the music ended, the peculiar look left the Princess's eyes. It was replaced by an expression of regret, almost of remorse. She left the piano-forte, and seated herself by Edith's side.

"Forgive me," Edith thought she heard her whisper, but when, in her uncertainty, she glanced at her companion, she saw Madame Wosocki's eyes fixed upon the carpet, her lips pressed firmly together as though no word had passed them. She did not perceive Ormanby Averil, who had left the dining-room before the rest, and who, leaning in the shade of the great curtain of the doorway, had been watching them both. He left his post, unnoticed, spoke a few words to Lady Melby, then advanced to where Edith and Madame Wosocki were seated, still in silence.

"Will you not play something else?" he asked; "something to quiet the pain such music gives?"

Madame Wosocki looked at him an instant, then rose and resumed her place at the piano-forte. He seated himself on the sofa, at a little distance from Edith.

"I cannot bear to hear such music," he said, as if half to himself.

She glanced at him. He was looking down. His face was grave and overshadowed. He said no more.

As the polonaises and mazurkas succeeded each other with their capricious changes, the tension of Edith's nerves relaxed. When the music ceased she had regained all her self-command.

"How pleasant it is to hear music like that once in a while," said Averil. "One gets so horribly tired of such music as one usually hears, that you're tempted to believe that you never cared for anything of the sort; when, all at once you meet with something like this, and you find out that it isn't music that you've been villifying, but only a base imitation."

"I don't know much about what music one usually

hears," replied Edith; "but I am glad to know that I shall not often listen to such as Madame Wosocki's."

"There's Madame Wosocki herself. It certainly wasn't her fault that the man she was to have married was killed in a duel a week before the wedding day. But, nevertheless, she has been consistently miserable about it ever since."

"How could she have married, then?" Edith asked.

Averil looked at her as if he found her very naïve.

"I suppose she thought she did enough to prove her constancy in choosing a man of seventy. Her being miserable doesn't interfere with her seeming very contented, as you see; and her diamonds are magnificent."

Edith turned a glance upon Madame Wosocki.

"Shall I give you the true *mot d'énigme* of Madame Wosocki's marriage?" he asked, in a different tone from that he had first used in speaking of the subject.

"I wish you would," she said earnestly.

"Her parents gave her the choice of three lovers, after a suitable time; and she took the one for whose character she had the greatest esteem. It's very simple, you see. The Prince is the most attentive of husbands, and she gets on very well with him, in spite of her early troubles."

Averil was interrupted by the entrance of the gentlemen. Lord Skeffington, who had come in too late to speak to Edith before dinner, and who had been seated at a distance from her at the table, came towards her.

"So you have really come. I didn't half believe you would. I'm immensely glad, I am, indeed."

Edith expressed her pleasure at again meeting Lord Skeffington, who forthwith took the place which Averil vacated much against his will.

"It's alarmingly quiet, though, you know," continued Lord Skeffington. "The Duchess's brother, whom she detested, died last month, and we're all invited down here to grieve for him. We can't dance because of the lacerated

state of our feelings, and we can't act charades or anything of that sort, because we are overpowered by our grief. We're a little more cheerful now, but when I first came down all the dogs had weepers on, and a puppy was solemnly turned off the estate one day and left to starve on the high road, because in an access of unfeeling gaiety he had torn off his crape. I don't know when I've been so impressed. You should have seen the dinner table that day; every one spoke in whispers."

"I am glad that the general key is a little raised," replied Edith, smiling. "I'm afraid it might have had serious consequences had it continued as you describe it."

"Oh, but the serious effects were produced, I assure you. I began to write a serious poem, 'Beyond Despair.' Rather striking the title, don't you think so? I began it to keep my spirits up. Everything goes by contrast, you know, and it was quite cheerful and exhilarating compared to the company in the drawing-room. But as I said, things are a little better now; we have begun to return to our normal condition."

"There is a lady who seems to have remained in a rather stern mood," said Edith, glancing at Lady Masterton, who, upon seeing Lord Skeffington take his place near Miss Arden, had raised her eye-glass and deliberately examined her, inclining to consider the girl in the light of an enemy, because her awful scrutiny had caused no sign of embarrassment.

Lord Skeffington turned his eyes in the direction of the glance which accompanied Edith's remark.

"Remain—well, yes, perhaps remain is the word, for there's no chance of her getting out of it. They say that she struck out right and left as soon as she was born, and she has never stopped that exercise up to the present moment. She is a dreadful woman, quite dreadful. Lady Sophia, there by the window, talking to those black whiskers, she's her daughter you know."

Edith made a sign of assent.

"You see how thin she is; that comes of Lady Master-ton's having kept her on bread and water so much. People say that for everything she did when she was a child she was put on bread and water, and I believe it, for I've watched her, and she hasn't touched bread nor tasted water since she has been here. Fortunately some one died, and left her a pretty fortune in her own right not long ago, and she has grown quite brisk since then, for Lady Master-ton changed her tactics at once, and began to call her 'dear Sophia.'"

"Really you are quite scandalous," said Edith, laughing.

"What nonsense are you talking now to Miss Arden?" said the Duchess, coming up, somewhat to Edith's relief, for she didn't quite like the turn the conversation was taking.

"I was talking of literature, your Grace," replied Lord Skeffington, demurely; and the Duchess, after a few words to Edith, moved away, stopping a little further on to speak to Miss Tellinghurst.

From memoirs, Lord Skeffington diverged to various of the guests, concerning whom he communicated much extraordinary information, all of which Edith found diverting, and a small portion of which she believed.

Meantime Averil had retired to the other side of the room, where the Princess was sitting alone.

She glanced up as he approached, and motioned him to a seat beside her. She looked depressed.

"You are tired," he said, fixing his eyes upon her.

"Yes, a little."

"You have been reading."

There was a certain meaning in his tone.

"Comment?"

"I saw you."

She slowly made a sign of assent.

"What did you discover?"

"*Que vous êtes amoureux de cette jeune fille.*"

The blood rushed to Averil's face.

"Granted I were," he replied, after a pause, "what should you then say?"

His voice vibrated nervously as he spoke.

"Mon ami, I do not think she will ever marry you."

"Why?"

"Are you in earnest? Shall I really tell you? Will you not be angry?"

"No. Speak."

The Princess turned and looked at Edith where she was standing by a shaded lamp, whose subdued reflections played over her dress, and made a sort of moonlight around her.

"All her wishes are aspirations; she tends upward. She craves the beautiful, the good, the noble. Could you make such a woman as that happy were she your wife?"

Averil's face darkened.

"I do not say that you are worse than other men; I think, on the contrary, that many men are worse than you; but I ask you fairly, are you worthy of that young girl?"

Averil made no reply.

"You think I am bizarre and extravagant. I am not. I see every day young women who marry riches, and titles, and place, and I say to myself, it is very well. They are educated for that; it will make them happy. But when I see a nature such as I see there, I say—it is not for these that she must marry; she must have more."

"What must she have?"

"She needs a heart unstained, a soul the home of noble thoughts, a mind broad, clear, and deep, fit to develope and expand her own. She needs love, such love as men feel before they have learnt to make a lie of truth and a jest of sin. And so I say again I will not help you; I will not tell you what I read just now. I will not put into your hand the key to her thoughts."

The Princess's eyes flashed, and her nostrils spread. A look of determination settled over her face. Her resolution was obviously one not to be altered.

"I see I cannot hope that you will be my friend," he said. "Promise me, at least, that you will not be my enemy."

There was no anger in his voice. He was too politic for that. He must not have Madame Wosocki for his opponent.

"Promise me at least that," he reiterated, "You have thought only of her; think a little what this might be to me. It might make a different man of me."

The Russian looked down a few moments thoughtfully before she spoke. She said at last:

"I feel I am doing wrong, yet I promise. Don't thank me."

She rose abruptly and joined a group at a little distance.

Was he really at length in love? he who had thought his every possibility of loving had been destroyed long ago, had withered out of existence, when he had stood by that bedside, had heard that faint voice murmur: "Don't be afraid to tell me; if you knew how glad I am to die;" and had seen those gentle eyes close on the life he had blighted, close too soon to allow him to offer the one insufficient reparation. He lived it all over again as he sat in the solitude of the peopled drawing-room. Again he stood by that white tombstone, again he read the accusing words: "Clara, wife of the Hon. Henry Hilesday, aged twenty years." Again he turned his face from that grave; but this time not as then, not with that hard, bitter grief, that seemed to poison all he looked on, that remorse which had refused to be forgotten, or stifled, or crushed, that had haunted him for thirteen years, dogging his footsteps, whispering at his shoulder, obtruding itself when most unwelcome, never so distant but that one moment could summon it before him. To-night that ghost of memory seemed laid, sleeping with Clara in

her far-off grave beside the Adriatic. But he could not sit there dreaming all the evening. He must rouse himself and do as others were doing; and he talked with Prince Wosocki and the Duchess, and listened to a French romance, shrill and sentimental, from Lady Sophia; and to an English ballad, monotonous and pathetic, from Lady Melby, and learnt from Mr. John Arden how timid Edith was on horseback, and won a look of gratitude from her by offering to drive her with Lady Melby in a pony carriage the next day; and burnt three letters in a woman's handwriting, letters of no very distant date, when he went upstairs that night.

Edith lay in the ancient chamber and listened to the hollow murmur of the waves, and drew in a patient courage from the sound;—the time would come when all pain would be over,—and she fell asleep in dreamless slumber, unwitting how closely her fate was pressing upon her unconscious steps.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AVERIL SEEKS LADY MELBY'S CO-OPERATION.

EDITH could never clearly recollect how the first days of her visit to Albansea had passed. Her outer and inner consciousness were so at variance as to give her, at times, a distressing sense of unreality. The remembrance of her misery lay like a leaden weight upon her, and yet she must dress, and speak, and listen, and smile through it all, as if she were happy, as if nothing had happened, as if Walter loved her still.

Lord Prudhoe, Madame Wosocki, Mr. Averil, Lady Melby, and Lord Skeffington were those she liked best to talk to. Mr. Averil was never cold or disagreeable now. He

was kind, and attentive, and entertaining. He never tired her. Lord Prudhoe was very nice. She had a great respect for him; but he seemed, she did not exactly know, perhaps she was mistaken, but she feared he was beginning to care a little too much about talking with her. She preferred to talk with Mr. Averil, and Lord Skeffington, who was, always amusing. Madame Wosocki was delightful; Edith felt as if she had known her all her life; and Lady Melby was very gentle and lovely. She often talked with Edith. She seemed to have a great liking and esteem for Mr. Averil. She had told Edith of many kind deeds that he had done, such things as one would never have dreamed of coming from such a man, and all calculated to raise Ormanby Averil in her esteem. Every man does, as it were perforce, a certain amount of good in his life, and all that Averil had ever accomplished was in these conversations duly chronicled by his cousin. She had spoken of him once to Edith as a person much to be pitied. What could it have meant?

It meant that Mr. Averil had been far too prudent a man to attempt to play, single-handed, the game he had undertaken. He knew the world too well not to be fully aware of the necessity of an ally, and an able one. He would have preferred the Princess for his advocate could he have engaged her, but as it was, neutrality was all he could hope from her. Lady Melby could serve his aims almost as well, however, and Lady Melby he would lose no time in securing. Accordingly, on the second evening of Edith's visit, after circling through the various groups and making himself universally agreeable, he at length approached his cousin.

"I have come here to rest," he said, casting himself indolently beside her. "I have been on duty for two hours."

"I have seen and admired you. Really you made yourself as pleasant as if you had not been Ormanby Averil," replied Lady Melby, from whom Averil was in the habit of

hearing *ses vérités*. To his credit be it spoken, he never took offence at her plain speaking.

"So I am a monster in general, am I?" he answered settling himself comfortably in the corner of the sofa.

"Something of that sort."

"Monsters have many different characteristics; would you humanely inform me which are mine?"

"You know them as well as I do. Why should you ask?"—Lady Melby was too much a woman of the world to attempt to reform any one.

"But should I tell you that I wish to get rid of them?"

Lady Melby replaced in its saucer the tea-cup she was on the point of raising to her lips, and gazed at Averil in amazement.

"I shouldn't believe you," she replied, after a pause. "But you won't say so."

And she drank the tea and gave him the cup to set down on the console beside him.

"You think me an insufferable egotist."

What could he be aiming at?

"Precisely."

Averil's tone of levity changed.

"Do you remember what made me so?"

Lady Melby gave an imperceptible start. He had never, friends and cousins though they were, never before referred in her hearing to that chapter of her past.

"Blame me," he continued, "blame circumstances, fate, anything you will, but don't think that what I am is what I wished to have been?"

"You are not old, Ormanby, you are but in the prime of life. Why say wished to have been?"

"What is there that could change me now?" he answered moodily.

She looked at him wistfully. She was fond of him. She had always regretted the aimless life he led. She thought

him capable of something far better. She wished, yet hardly dared to speak.

"Speak—that is, if you have anything to say."

"My answer would only be what every one who has dared has said to you for the last ten years."

"You mean to say that I should marry?"

"Yes, Ormanby, that is what I mean."

"Perhaps you would be so good as to go a step further and give me your advice as to the choice of a wife," he said, with something of his usual sarcastic inflection.

Lady Melby drew back.

"You cannot think I would be so rash."

"Then you are willing to see me caught up by some adventuress in her teens, married for money, prospective rank and position. Thank you, I prefer my existence as it is."

"Is there no alternative between such a marriage and no marriage at all?"

"What girl do you know that would not weigh these in the balance before she rejected me with them for some other man without them? Can you mention one?"

"There are scores, I have no doubt."

"Then you can easily bring them up to refute me."

Lady Melby hesitated; it was not quite so easy to think of scores of totally disinterested young ladies.

"There would be no use in naming them, you wouldn't believe me."

"Do you think Lady Sophia would accept me if I were to offer myself to her this hour?"

"Yes, I suppose she would."

"Or Miss Tellinghurst?"

"Probably."

"Do you think Miss Arden would?"

Averil could not succeed in rendering his tone quite as

unembarrassed as he desired, but Lady Melby did not perceive the change.

"That is more doubtful," she replied. "She impresses me differently from other girls."

"And you think that a man of thirty-five cannot hope to win the affection of a girl of seventeen."

"Not at all. That is not what I meant."

"What is it, then?"

"I don't think that she would marry, except from strong personal preference, and I do not believe she would feel that preference for any one who was not in love with her."

"But if I tell you that I am in earnest?"

Lady Melby looked eagerly in his face.

From that moment her active co-operation was secured.

CHAPTER XIX.

ORMANBY AVERIL'S OATH.

"THAT is a pretty stamp," Edith remarked, as the letters which fell to her father's share in the division of the contents of the post-bag passed her on their way up the breakfast table. "What is it?"

"That's Greece," replied Lord Skeffington, who was seated next her. "It's touching to see such candor on the part of a government, isn't it?" They've chosen the head of the god of cheats and liars as a device, you see."

"Immensely profitable affair the loan that Greek house is negotiating just now," said Lord Masterton, a little higher up the table. "If I were a capitalist, I think I should engage in it largely. I see it was taken up at once."

"It promises well," answered Mr. Arden, somewhat constrainedly; and he betook himself to sorting his letters.

"What a heavy letter," exclaimed Lady Sophia, passing along the line a voluminous package, directed to Mr. Averil, the last of the general distribution. "Any one would say that a poor author had sent you a manuscript."

Averil glanced at the post-mark, then carelessly tore open the envelope.

"It is from Houston Lacy," he said. "It gives an account of the theatricals, I see. But why should she sign herself Mrs. Williams?"

"That was to be her character in the play," said Edith, who had been kept informed by Isabel of every detail.

"I wish she would apply and stop this advertisement," remarked the Duke, who was unfolding the *Times*. "I am tired of seeing it. It is the first thing that meets my eye every morning when I open the paper;" and he read aloud:

"Mrs. Williams, recently residing at No. 35, Chadlink Street, is earnestly requested to apply at the office of Pettyman and Kelson, 40 Bulton Street, where she will hear of something greatly to her advantage."

"I knew a Mrs. Williams once," said the General, meditatively, plunging his spoon into an egg; "but that was in India, let me see, nearly twenty years ago. It can't be she."

"Was she a pretty woman, General, that you remember her so long?" asked Lord Melby, a fresh-complexioned, round-faced man, with droll eyes and grey whiskers. "She must have made an impression on you; and you were a bachelor then, if I am not mistaken."

"Right in one thing, wrong in another," responded the General, good-naturedly. "I was a bachelor; but she wasn't a pretty woman, chaplain's wives never are—it's a curious fact. However, that puts me in mind that she had

with her, under her care, as you might say, the handsomest woman I ever saw, the wife of Captain—Captain—'pon my word, I forget his name,—a fine young fellow he was, too."

"How came she to be under anybody's care if she were married?" enquired Lady Sophia, whose pleasantest anticipation connected with matrimony was that of complete and sovereign independence.

"She was learning to speak English, for she was a French woman, I believe. It was a hill post, and I could look from my verandah across to theirs. She seemed a quiet, modest, silent young woman enough. No one to have looked at her would have guessed what she was."

"What was she? Anything queer about her?" asked Lord Melby, helping himself to a muffin.

"Faith, I scarcely know myself. All I can say is that troubles suddenly broke out in the hill country, and we received marching orders. All the women were sent to a place of safety, except this Mrs. —, I forget her name; but she refused to stir. She insisted upon marching with us, and she went. 'Pon my soul, I believe she was the devil. The first skirmish we had I saw her in the hottest of it. Her eyes were all in a blaze. I shouldn't have known her but for her dress. She seemed to revel in it, and it was brisk work,—they were five to one of us. She killed three natives that day with her own hand. One of them had struck down her husband. She galloped up just in time, put her pistol to the fellow's ear as he had his arm up, and blew his brains out. I saw it. 'Pon my word, I believe I was afraid of her, and the men were afraid of her, too. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw her the next day, riding along as quiet and still as if she had never smelt gunpowder."

"What a dreadful woman!" exclaimed Lady Sophia. "I wish I could have seen her."

"At a safe distance," suggested Mr. Averil. "Not quite the person one would like to meet tête-à-tête. Do you feel

any draught, Miss Arden?" he asked, as Edith shivered. "But, General, one is inclined to fancy a person possessed of the pleasing characteristics you mention, as rather of the hag order, grisly and grim. Are you quite sure she was so young and handsome?"

"I never saw any one so handsome in my life," stoutly asseverated the General. "Her husband doated on her. Though she could be such a tigress on occasion, she was as gentle and submissive to him as a slave."

"I say, General, you seem to have devoted a good deal of time to studying that household," said Lord Melby, laughing. "Wasn't the young captain jealous of you?"

"He hadn't any cause to be," returned the General. "I never exchanged a word with the woman in my life. It was an odd thing, she never would speak to any one except her husband and Williams and his wife."

"How very odd! What a pity you can't remember her name. Where did she come from?" asked Lady Sophia, whose curiosity, always simmering, had now reached the boiling point.

"'Pon my word, I can't tell. I knew once, but it is so long ago that I have forgotten. All I am sure of is that she was the handsomest woman I ever saw," replied the General, whose memory seemed but indifferently good on all minor points, though sufficiently clear on what he evidently considered the main one—the exceeding beauty of the Captain's wife.

Edith had listened with breathless attention. Could the name have been Hartley? She longed to ask, but an inexplicable reluctance held her silent. She did not dare to identify this beautiful Amazon with the person to whom her presumptions pointed. She shuddered at the idea of having pressed so recently that blood-stained hand. She could not think of it. She would drive it from her mind. She wished she had been at the other end of the table so as not to have heard the conversation.

She was standing idly by the window an hour later, trying to interest herself in the gambols of some black and tan terriers, which, in a state of ecstatic delight from some cause unknown, were exhibiting their gymnastic accomplishments on the gravelled walk that skirted the empty moat, when Mr. Averil came towards her with a letter in his hand.

Averil had carefully studied Edith's character during the days they had been together. The easy intercourse among the guests which naturally resulted from the smallness of the Duchess's circle had offered him opportunities by which he had sedulously profited; while at the same time he had strictly avoided making his attentions so marked as to put her on her guard. He had beheld with carefully concealed delight the departure of Lord Prudhoe, who had suddenly disappeared the morning after a conversation with Edith in the conservatory; and Averil had even carried his diplomacy so far as to praise that young man in Edith's hearing, and to wonder what had caused his abrupt leave-taking, thereby inexpressibly relieving her mind, and convincing her that she was the only person in the circle who had any idea of the circumstances which had brought about his defection. She enjoyed talking with Mr. Averil. She was sorry when he would leave her to chat with Lady Sophia or Miss Tellinghurst, but he seemed to like to talk with them as well as he did with her.

Averil studiously maintained this impression in Edith's mind. He had made his approaches cautiously, feeling his way, making sure of each step. He saw that he must exert every best faculty he possessed in order to win her; and the task of so doing was not difficult. With her he felt himself a different man. His passion for her heightened his powers, refined his sentiment, and sharpened his mental sensations, blunted as they had become through long contact with the world. He grew young again while conversing with her. All the glow and ardor of past years came back,

through her he lived again. All was not soft in the feelings she inspired. The thought of failure thrilled him with fierce pain. He resolutely averted his eyes from the possibility of a rejection.—He must, he would succeed.—As he said it his brow lowered heavily, and his look grew cruel in its intensity. There was more passion than tenderness in Ormanby Averil's composition.

As he now approached Edith with the open letter hanging from his hand, all traces of these stormy midnight reveries had fled. His forehead was unruffled, and his look breathed only that calm composure which gave him so great an ascendancy over those with whom he associated. Nor was this the result of any violent effort on his part. By some apparent contradiction, Edith's presence had the power of quieting the emotion that the thought of her raised within him when absent. There was something so delicate, so pure, so noble, in the young girl's nature as to for the time exalt and refine every sentiment of those who approached her. So it was that Ormanby Averil found himself living two separate existences, as the higher and the lower powers of his mental constitution alternately held him under their sway.

She looked up as he came near.

"Do I interrupt you?" he asked.

"Not at all. I was only watching the dogs," she answered; "and I don't find it very interesting," turning from the window.

"Then perhaps you may feel inclined to hear a part of this letter. It gives quite a detailed account of the amusements at the Park."

Edith would very much have preferred not to have heard the letter, but what reason could she give for refusing? She must say that she should be very glad. And she said so, and seated herself in the deep embrasure of the window where she could turn away her head and watch the clouds, while

Averil drew a chair near her and arranged the sheets in order.

"You have reason to be alarmed," he said, as he completed the task, "but I beg that you will stop me as soon as you begin to feel tired. Mrs. Lacy is not often so prolix, but, as I judge from the aggressive style of her opening, she was in remarkably high spirits at the time."

"Please don't skip the first," said Edith, as she perceived him about to lay down the first sheet. "I should like to hear, that is if you are willing."

In fact she felt a little curiosity to know how any one managed to be aggressive, as he termed it, to so very dignified a person as Mr. Averil.

He glanced at her, uncertain whether to consent. A momentary gleam of girlish mirthfulness played over Edith's face as she caught the glance. It arched her pensive lips, danced in her large, deep eyes, and seemed to ripple in the soft gold of her hair. It was a new expression to him, bewitching, inexpressibly alluring. He bent his head over the paper to hide the flush that rose to his cheek, the quick fervor that glowed in his eye, but instead of reading as she requested, selected another page.

"I think this passage about Miss Hartley would be more interesting to you," he said. "She had to act unexpectedly, it seems." He began to read—

"I never saw anything so lovely as she looked. Lady Tremyss and her maid had hunted up some old dress. It was of stiff white silk embroidered in silver. There hadn't been time to powder her hair, but it had been raised a little, and covered with a Marie Stuart cap of point d'Angleterre, and round her neck she wore Lady Tremyss' splendid row of pearls.

"We all crowded round her, admiring and complimenting her, but she did not seem to care for a word we said. She

only asked Arden if that would do, and when he said yes, she went and sat down by herself. I do wonder why they try to make a secret of that engagement. Isn't Arden there all the time?"

Miss Tellinghurst came up at this moment.

"We are going in twenty minutes. Had you not better put on your habit?" she said.

"I will read it later," said Averil, rising as Edith rose.

A few days earlier Averil would not have thought of reading this letter to Edith, but he had now insensibly placed himself upon a footing that he felt emboldened to try the effect of this half confidence. He had made use of the knowledge he had gained of her character to attack her on her most undefended side. He had approached her through her father. Her own perception of his deficiencies had rendered her painfully sensitive as to the estimation in which he was held by others. This Averil soon discovered and turned to account. With his own peculiar tact he chose every occasion of bringing out Mr. Arden in conversation. He paid respectful attention to his every utterance, and by the authority of his opinion reinforced that of Edith's father on all disputed points.

Mr. John Arden's native abilities and great accuracy of special information, joined to that keenness of apprehension and command of language which belong to men whose mental powers are habitually kept in a state of activity, rendered it no difficult thing to Averil to accomplish what he had undertaken—the raising John Arden in the estimation of the guests at Albansea. The effect on Edith was all that he could have hoped. Thence gentle looks and friendly converse, and rare radiant smiles, reaped by Averil; delicious rewards, but all insufficient, as he felt, with growing passion, day by day. He longed with impatience that he could scarcely curb, to break down the barrier of sweet re-

serve that shut him out from all nearer approach. He felt the reticence imposed upon him by their mutual position all but intolerable. He had never been thwarted in his life. Satisfaction had followed so closely on his every wish as to leave him a prey to satiety. Patience and self-control had in no wise entered into his plan of life. His cold and composed demeanor at once concealed and indicated indomitable will. Now that the hours were so rapidly passing that were to be the last of Edith's stay, he felt the impulse to risk a declaration to be almost uncontrollable. Hence it was that he had sought the opportunity of reading to her his sister's confidential missive, hoping to feel his way through Edith's reception of it to a still closer advance.

Sir Francis Lester came towards Edith as she reached the door.

"Now, Miss Arden, don't forget that your father has promised for you. It's very fine now, but I think it will cloud up later. We shall just have time for the ride, I fancy."

"I hope I shall have a gentle horse," said Edith, "I am not a good horsewoman."

She mounted the great staircase and proceeded to the antique chamber where Félicie stood busily brushing and arranging the riding habit and small plumed hat.

Meantime Averil took himself to the stables, and carefully selected the easiest saddle and the gentlest horse. This accomplished, he sought out Mr. John Arden, whom he found writing letters in his room, important letters, if one were to judge by the absorbed expression of his face. The interview was brief. The two men shook hands as they parted.

"At any rate she will be safe," said Mr. Arden after a long pause.

And chatting volubly, Félicie proceeded to dress Edith in the closely fitting habit, carefully knotted up the curls under her hat, and buttoned on the dainty little boots.

Edith escaping from Félicie's hands, ran down stairs, her heart cheered by the affectionate embrace and kiss her father bestowed upon her as she left her room.

The party proceeded much in the order that Averil had anticipated, and ere long Lady Sophia and Miss Tillinghurst, with their respective cavaliers, were out of sight. Sir Francis would gladly have remained near Edith, but his horse was restive, and fretted the other horses so much as to visibly distress her; for though a graceful she was not an expert horsewoman. Accordingly Sir Francis executed himself, as our French neighbors say, and dashed forward to regain the rest of the party.

"Where are we going?" asked Edith, as they turned into a narrow path which seemed to lead directly to the foot of a steep and wooded hill, gay and green doubtless in summer time, but now sad and dismal enough.

"We are going to the ruins of Merlton. They are not much in themselves, but they command a fine view of the sea and the plain between."

They made their way up the precipitous path which led to the crest of the hill, Averil leading Edith's horse by the bridle. Passing through a broken archway, they entered upon a plateau of narrow extent, bound by ivy-grown masses of crumbling stone. Beneath them stretched far and wide a brown and withered plain; beyond rolled the surges of the sea. The sky, fair in the morning, was becoming overcast. Clouds were gathering in the distance. A hollow sigh waivered from the distance, ominous of an approaching storm.

"We have moralized and sentimentalized until we are quite blue, while we have been waiting for you," said Lady Sophia, as Edith and her companion appeared. "You have no idea what you have lost."

"Then are we to have none of the benefits of those moralizings and sentimentalizings?" asked Averil with a pro-

voking smile; he wanted her to go. "Are you going to leave us to our feeble resources? Certainly you will not be so uncharitable. Pray take compassion on us and favor us with a repetition."

Miss Tellinghurst giggled, Sir Francis looked awkward, Westwood and Prynne exchanged smiles, and Lady Sophia turned red. The moralizing and sentimentalizing had consisted in a brisk discussion of the respective merits of the horses ridden by Lady Sophia and Sir Francis, and an exchange of bets as to which would first reach a certain heap of stones some half mile distant.

"I won't stay to be made fun of," she exclaimed with an embarrassed laugh, "I shall take advantage of what is left of fine weather for a gallop."

Leading her party she took her way down the path. The sound of the clattering, slipping, and scraping of the horses' hoofs and the echo of the voices of their riders gradually sank in the distance, and Edith and Averil were left on the plateau alone.

For a time neither spoke. Edith's eyes were fixed on the heaving ocean and on the darkening sky. As Averil glanced at her he saw an inscrutable expression on her face. Her lips began silently to move. What could it be that sent its shadow outward from her mind, and drew so strange a veil of hidden meaning over her face?

"Do not think me presumptuous, I beg," he said, in his gentlest tone; "but may I ask you, as they ask in the old game, what your thought is like?"

"I was repeating to myself some lines."

"May I hear them?"

"They would not please you."

"Independently of any poetical merit, I should like to hear them."

Edith reluctantly complied.

"Thou gentle one,
God's mystic messenger,
When, 'gainst the sinking sun,
On some glad hill top, shall I see thy feet?"

"Where tarryest thou?
Above what silent couch
Bend'st thou thy shadowy brow?
To what sad ear speak'st thou his message sweet?"

"Into what caves
Of dreamless sleep dost thou,
Far from Life's storm-tost waves,
Lead the expectant ghost thou summonest?"

"Look where I stand,
And wait. Oh, Death, come near,
Stretch forth thy misty hand
And lead my soul into those halls of rest."

As she spoke, Edith's voice grew fuller and deeper; a smile of mournful exultation settled on her face. Never had Averil felt himself so overmastered by her peculiar beauty as now that he saw it illumined with that mysterious smile. Never had he felt himself so madly in love with her as now.

He spoke. His words came with difficulty.

"Not only death, life also may be called a Silent Land," he said. "How many of us dare not speak our deepest wishes, our dearest hopes, but keep silence until silence becomes too hard to bear."

Edith turned her eyes upon him with a bewildered, half-terrified look.

"This morning I have spoken to your father; and it is with his full consent that I come to ask you if you will become the angel of a hitherto worthless life; if you will aid me to be what I ought to be; if you will save me from pain and disappointment that I dare not think of; if you will make me at length worthy to gain your affection."

Edith sat with pale and parted lips.

Mr. Averil loved her. Her father wanted her to marry him. She could not marry him. She did not love him. Averil read it all on her face. He changed his ground.

"I do not ask for any response save the liberty to try to make myself acceptable. Our acquaintance has been too short to give me any hope of having gained your preference. I do not ask for a promise, a pledge of any sort. I only ask to be received as a suitor whom you remain at liberty to reject at will."

He paused and fixed a look, intent, burning, upon her.

"I am more sorry, more grieved than I can say," she said. "But I should be doing wrong—I cannot—I must not offer you any encouragement. I never thought of it before, but I feel it impossible."

Her voice grew stronger as she proceeded. There was no maiden timidity, no concealed gladness, no restrained triumph to be read upon her face. It was full of sad and grave concern—nothing more. Averil was silent. The volcano within him gave forth no sign.

"Forget this," she said kindly, almost affectionately. "I, too, will forget it. Let it be between us as if it had never been. Will you not promise me that?"

And she held out towards him her gloved hand. Averil took it, and bowed his face over it, and in calm, measured words promised as she requested, and in his heart the same instant swore an oath that, willing or unwilling, Edith should be his wife.

All that was good in the man went to the ground before this shock of disappointment, was engulfed in this shipwreck of his hopes. Within him was but a seething hell of jealous rage and passion. The savage who has his den in the heart of every one of us, rose triumphant within the high-bred gentleman, astute, cruel, vindictive, violent; all the more dangerous because concealed from sight. Averil gazed upon

her; he noted every girlish charm, and said to himself, "All this shall be mine;" while Edith, grateful to him for the quiet self-command with which he had listened to her rejection of his suit, and for his abstinence from all outpouring of regret, congratulated herself that though she could not care for him in the way he wished, she had yet secured him as a friend.

Madame Wosocki met them in the hall as they came in. She saw Averil's face more sallow than usual, all the lines harder, the eyes filled with pale light, and marked the friendly glance Edith threw him as she turned to ascend the staircase. It was enough.

"He has proposed, and been rejected. Now I may speak—and I will.

She followed Edith upstairs and overtook her in the gallery. She placed her hand on the girl's arm.

"Beware of that man," she said in a low voice.

"What man?" returned Edith, surprised and startled.

"Ormanby Averil."

And Princess Wara vanished into her own room.

As Edith entered her chamber, she saw not Félicie, but the tall figure of her father. She was taken in his arms and pressed warmly to his heart.

"My pet, my dear child, I am truly happy," exclaimed Mr. Arden, kissing her with overflowing affection.

Edith's heart sank at the sight of his beaming face. It would be a great disappointment to him. She had not known that he cared so much for it. Even had she known, it could not have altered anything.

"But, papa," she began timidly, "you do not know—"

"Yes, my dear, I know. I saw Mr. Averil this morning. Just what I should have wanted for you. Everything that could be desired, and one of the best titles in England in prospect."

"But, papa, I have refused him," she uttered reluctantly.

Mr. Arden looked stunned.

"Refused him!" he repeatedly mechanically, then with sudden and angry vehemence, he exclaimed, "Is the girl crazy!"

"Papa, papa, don't look so," pleaded Edith. "I don't care for him in that way. I could not."

"Care for him in what way? Is there anything against him? One of the best matches in England. And all out of sheer folly!" burst from Mr. Arden's lips as he stalked the room with agitated strides. In fact he had not once contemplated the possibility of Edith's rejecting such an offer. He was utterly unprepared for this check to his ambition. He was exasperated, and like most men when angry, somewhat brutal.

Edith stood like a guilty creature in the middle of the room. Her father had never been angry with her before, and she was bewildered by this sudden outbreak of indignation. She could not at the moment collect her thoughts to reason upon it. She only felt a confused sense that she must have done something very wrong, else her father would never have spoken in such a way to her.

"And pray, what reason did you give to Mr. Averil?" asked Mr. Arden, confronting her.

"I said I could not give him any encouragement."

"You seem to have forgotten that you have been giving him encouragement ever since you come here."

"Oh, papa!"

"Have you not treated him with marked preference? Have you not always shown yourself ready and willing to talk with him when you would scarcely speak a word to other men? You have drawn him on, and now you throw him over in this way. Most unworthy treatment for a gentleman of his claims."

"Papa!"

"Don't speak to me in that way as if I were ill-using

you, when I am merely telling you the truth. You have not the right, no girl has the right to trifle so with any man, especially of such a position."

"You would not have me marry him if I don't love him," she said imploringly.

"What is there to prevent your loving him?"

She made no answer.

"Do you want to marry any one else?"

"No, no!" she exclaimed hurriedly.

"Then why should you refuse him leave to pay his addresses? How do you know whether you can love him or not until you have tried?"

"I feel I could not," she answered in a low but steady tone.

"Feeling has nothing to do with it. Marriage is a serious thing; a great deal beside feeling is involved in it. I tell you, Edith," he broke out with increasing vehemence, "that you don't know what you are doing; you don't know of what importance this marriage may be to you."

He walked hastily about the room, then stopped before her.

"I shall tell Mr. Averil that he must not take your refusal as a final one, that you were quite unprepared, and need time for deliberation."

"But, papa, thinking of it will make no difference. I couldn't marry him; I couldn't."

She looked beseechingly in her father's face, but it was closed against her. John Arden only saw menaced ruin on one side, and on the other Edith's hand blindly pushing away the support that would save herself, that might uphold him from totally sinking in the gulf below.

"Edith, this is no time for folly. I have told you what I shall do, and I shall do it. If you have any sense of duty you will not oppose me. I know of more than you do."

Mr. Arden left the room as Félicie knocked to say that

her young lady would have but just time to get ready for luncheon.

Edith changed her dress and descended to the apartment below, where the other guests were already assembled, where, at the same moment, she was to meet Mr. Averil and her father.

Could it really be that she had treated Mr. Averil ill? If he had thought so, surely he would not have so frankly accepted her offered hand, and promised that they should always be friends. Yet her father seemed so sure!

She shrank into a seat in the most retired part of the room, behind a table, and bent her head over some books which lay upon it.

"Let me show you these. You will find them more interesting. They have just come down," said Averil's voice beside her, as he laid before her some water-color drawings.

She glanced up gratefully. His tone was as quiet and unembarrassed as if nothing had passed betwixt them; but her look sank back perplexed from its momentary scrutiny of his face. There was a change, subtle, almost imperceptible, but a change which filled her with undefined uneasiness. The eyes looked on her as from a stranger's face; the lips seemed rigid as they moved; remarking and commenting with ready fluency on the separate beauties of each sheet he turned over. She could not tell how, but it was as if, though present, he had suddenly been removed to an immeasurable distance from her. His body was there, but no soul seemed to inhabit it. The link between Edith's mind and his was broken; it had snapped at the moment of his silent, obdurate oath.

After lunch Averil disappeared, nor could Mr. John Arden find him anywhere. At dinner he was peculiarly affable to the banker, near whom he was seated, but as soon as the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room he engaged in a game of whist, which lasted till bed-time. If any fur-

ther advances were to be made, they must come from Edith's father. It did not suit Averil's policy to show any eagerness. The next morning, after breakfast, Mr. Arden, fulfilling Averil's expectation, requested the favor of a few words with him in Mr. Arden's own room in the course of half an hour. Then the banker retired to read his letters while awaiting Averil's appearance.

When Averil, punctual to the appointment, knocked at the door, no voice from within replied. It was strange. His own apartment was on that side of the house. He had heard Mr. Arden enter his room, and he was certain that he had not left it again. He knocked a second time—no answer. He turned the handle of the door and entered.

Prone on the hearth-rug lay Mr. Arden, his right hand resting on the fender. As Averil bent over him he saw a paper close to the fire, yellowed and scorched by the heat. He took it up and ran his eyes over its contents. It was a despatch, principally written in cypher. There were several names, Greek and Turkish, contained in it, which the writer had apparently not thought it necessary to disguise.

Averil placed the paper in his breast-pocket, then rang the bell violently.

The news spread quickly through the castle. In a few moments Edith, pale and speechless, was kneeling beside the bed, holding her father's unconscious hand, apparently deaf to the consolation and encouragement offered by the Duke and Lady Melby, who had closely followed her; the Duchess' feelings were too keen to allow of her presence.

Mr. Averil maintained his station in the sick room. As he leaned over the mantel-piece and fixed his eyes upon the fire from which he had just snatched the secret which had stricken down its owner, a look strangely out of accordance with the scene gleamed over his face, a look of cruel, crafty self-gratulation.

After a space, long as it seemed to Edith, but of whose

duration Averil had taken no heed, the physician who had been summoned in all haste, *en attendant* till Sir Joseph Slingsby's arrival, was announced, and Lady Melby came to Edith's side.

"Excuse me, but the physician is here. It would be better that you should leave the room for a few moments, my dear Miss Arden."

She rose, obediently, to her feet.

"I want to see the doctor afterwards."

"You shall do so. Now, may I take you to your room?"

Edith glanced around. Her eyes rested on Averil. He read their mute entreaty, and came forward.

"I will not leave him an instant," he said.

She looked her thanks, and left the chamber as Dr. Winter entered.

He was a tall, stooping, middle-aged man, with mild, undecided features. He advanced, bowing respectfully to the Duke and Averil; turned an uncertain look upon Wilson, apparently not sure whether he ought to bow to him or not, but by a happy inspiration decided in the negative; then began his examination of the patient.

—The case was simple enough, and he was happy to say did not present any very alarming symptom. The pressure on the brain did not appear extreme, and would probably be immediately relieved by bleeding. He did not approve of bleeding in general, but there were some cases where it was advisable, it might indeed be called strictly necessary, and this seemed to him to be one of them.

The vein was opened. The blood dropped slowly at first, so slowly that Averil frowned, while Dr. Winter fidgeted nervously with the lancet. At length the current flowed more freely, Mr. Arden half opened his eyes, groaned, shut them again, then opened them widely, and stared about the room.

"Don't be disturbed," said the Duke, placing his face

near that of the sick man. "You have had a fainting fit, but all is right now."

Mr. Arden did not seem to understand what was said to him, but the Duke's steady tone and look appeared to compose him; he closed his eyes and remained quiet.

"I'll go and tell the Duchess that he's better now," said the Duke, in a low voice, to Averil. And he left the room.

The physician watched silently by his patient until the color of his face paled to something like its natural hue; then he quitted the bedside, and Mr. Averil sent Wilson with a cheering message to Edith. When they were left alone, he drew Dr. Winter to the window.

"This must have had a cause," he said, in a low and somewhat confidential tone.

"Most certainly, most certainly," responded Dr. Winter.

"Such seizure as this may originate in several different things, I presume."

"Yes, indubitably."

"May I ask what you should consider most likely to have brought on such an attack?"

There was something exceedingly soothing and persuasive in Averil's voice, yet Dr. Winter, unaccountably enough, felt somewhat uneasy as he met the gaze of the sick man's friend.

"I should be inclined to mention too full habit, or some sudden shock, as the most probable cause."

"Yet Mr. Arden is not plethoric."

"No, he does not appear so; certainly not."

"In that case, since you reject plethora, you feel obliged to attribute it to some mental emotion of a painful character."

Averil's eyes gleamed like steel, as he fixed them on Dr. Winter's face.

"I think that plethora is not admissible under the circumstances; certainly not," said Dr. Winter, turning his

gaze upon the well-built and in no wise corpulent figure of his patient. "I think I must rather incline to some sudden strain upon the mental faculties; but even there I may be mistaken. It is difficult to pronounce at first sight clearly upon such a case. It is necessary to have some knowledge of the attendant circumstances, in order to decide; and here that knowledge is necessarily wanting, as I have not had the honor of any previous acquaintance with my distinguished patient."

"Perhaps, in the strictest confidence, and simply to afford you some hint that may be of use in your treatment of the case, I ought to say that Mr. Arden is, in fact, suffering under the influence of a very painful occurrence."

"Of recent date? No remote distress would be capable, you understand; that is to say, it is not probable."

"The event to which I refer is but a few hours old; in fact, it was in order to converse with him upon it that I came in just now, when I found him insensible."

"I think that settles the question," replied Dr. Winter, nervously turning from the gaze of his interlocutor. "At least it appears to me to do so, quite."

"It might then be well, since such is your opinion, to state it to Miss Arden," said Averil, in his most courteous tones; "it would tend to lessen her anxiety; only I should prefer that you should not mention our having spoken on the subject together, as it might be disagreeable to her, you understand."

Dr. Winter did not understand at all; but, as Averil seemed to expect that he should say he did so, he assented. And accordingly, in his interview with Edith, he informed her that he must state it as his opinion that the origin of her father's seizure was not to be attributed to any state of repletion of the arterial system, but rather to some sudden and violent action on the brain. He assured her that all danger for the moment was over, and that he hoped his

distinguished patient would soon be in his usual state of health. And rather uncomfortably impressed by Edith's pallid silence, Dr. Winter bowed himself out.

"Some sudden and violent action on the brain—some sudden and violent action on the brain—" The whole air seemed filled with voices repeating the words. Edith sank down, and rested her face on the chair whence she had risen at Doctor Winter's entrance. She could not think, she could not reason, she could but listen to those accusing voices repeating the physician's words.

It was an hour later when Averil, sitting in Mr. Arden's room, saw a white figure with fixed eye and blanched lips, glide into the chamber. Edith seemed walking in her sleep. She stood an instant by the bedside, then going to the table gathered up the letters and papers which were lying there, placed them in her father's desk, and bore it away. As she reached the door she turned and cast a searching glance around, as if to assure herself that nothing had escaped her; her eye passed over Averil, as if she did not perceive him, then she left the room.

Edith opened and read every letter, examined every document.

The possibility had suggested itself to her that some disastrous business complication might have caused her father's seizure; but she could discover nothing that gave any color of probability to the surmise.

After she had read and laid aside the last paper, she sat for a while motionless, then drawing towards her her portfolio, she wrote a few lines to Mr. Tleson, her father's confidential clerk. In them she communicated the fact of her father's alarming seizure, and urgently requested him to inform her whether there were anything in the position of his affairs which could have been its cause. This done, she returned to her father's room.

The mental work she had been through had roused her

energies. She had rallied from the first shock. She would not look forward, she would not look back; she would think only of what was to be done hour by hour. The answer to her letter would arrive the next day, till then nothing was to be gained by thinking where every ground of conjecture was so uncertain.

So Edith tended her father all that day; sitting at the foot of the bed, her eyes fixed upon his face all the time that she was not more actively employed. There was little, however, to be done. Mr. Arden scarcely spoke; he groaned from time to time; but when Edith asked him if he were in pain, he answered no.

Mr. Averil had left his post when Edith came to assume her station in her father's room; but each hour of the day he came to the door to learn from Wilson his master's state.

The day passed, passed with that stealthy fleetness which the sense of danger always brings with it. In the evening, the physician so anxiously expected arrived; but, after seeing him, Edith felt that she knew nothing more of her father's state than she had done before. She could extract nothing from him, except indefinite assurances as to Mr. Arden, and positive charges as to not over-fatiguing herself.

Edith, according to his orders, went to her room, drank the cup of tea which Félicie had ready for her, lay down, still dressed, and tried to sleep.

She had just completed her toilet on the next morning, when there came a light tap at the door.

"Madame la Duchess," Félicie announced, and the Duchess came in with a letter in her hand. She stayed but for a few moments, only long enough to express her sorrow and sympathy, then left Edith to the perusal of the letter.

Mr. Tilesen, in old-fashioned phrase, through whose formality appeared his very sincere distress, lamented Mr.

Arden's illness, and then proceeded to assure Edith that there was nothing whatever in the state of the house to have given its head the slightest uneasiness. On the contrary, its affairs had never been so prosperous; and the important foreign negotiations, recently undertaken, he would state in confidence, and only completely to reassure Miss Arden, promised to double the very large capital invested in them. He concluded with renewed regrets.

There are moments when we seem to have drank the cup of suffering dry,—when from the pangs of our mortal anguish is born a courage which fills us with its own unnatural strength, and drives us forward to action on whose consequences we dare not look;—moments when the soul sweats blood, when it sends up, through the midnight of its despair, its cry of agony; and when, that supplication unanswered, it rises and goes forth, still, uncomplaining, resolved, to its crucifixion.

Such moments were those that Edith spent in the twilight of that hushed and shadowy room, sitting beside the curtained bed whereon lay stretched her father, watching and waiting for him to awaken from the slumber into which he had sunk.

At length Mr. Arden's eyes unclosed. They rested on his daughter's face. He sighed, and turned them away.

Edith rose. Her very flesh shrank and quivered as she bent over him and said:

"Papa, only get well, and I will never oppose you any more."

CHAPTER XX.

ABBE HULOT AND HIS BOOK.

THE theatricals were over. The old grey house resumed its wonted quiet, and again Lady Tremyss sat in the low, dark drawing-room, bending over her embroidery frame; silent, inscrutable, self-controlled. Although Walter's presence at the Park was no longer necessitated by his office, the habit of going there still remained. Many motives conspired to draw him thither; chief among them, two widely dissimilar. Isabel was now to him, as we have said, the connecting link with Edith; she kept him informed of all that passed around her; she would talk to him of her by the hour together, she was never weary of praising Edith to Walter, and Walter was never weary of hearing Edith praised. It brought its own sharp pang with it, as when we listen to the eulogy of the dead who were dear to us, but yet the words were sweet, and he was content to accept the pain.

Another motive was his desire to watch Lady Tremyss. The mystery of the engravings was yet to be elucidated, her recognition of the ring, her disturbed slumber, and repetition of the name of the person who had last held the jewel; all these, with their sinister background of the uncertainty resting over the circumstances of Sir Ralph's death, combined to fasten Walter's watchful attention upon the mistress of Ilton Park.

Shortly after the theatricals he bethought himself of writing to Jack Taunton, an embryo lawyer and former college companion, asking him to hunt up Mrs. Williams.

By return of post he received a letter from that gentleman, accepting the office of amateur detective, and promising to keep him informed of his progress.

On the evening of the day on which he had received this letter young Arden rode over to the Park, taking with him a book of Mrs. Arden's for Isabel. He found Lady Tremyss alone. She was seated near the fire, its light struck upward on her face, imparting unnatural depth to her long black eyes, and bringing into strong relief the delicate outline of her features. It recalled to Walter the evening he had seen her stand warming her slender hands, and rejoicing, with that strange smile, in the bitter cold without. He stood with his back to the mantel-piece, and fixed his eyes upon her face. She sat apparently unconscious of his scrutiny; but as he looked, her face hardened into stone, her eyes glittered with the superficial lustre of black enamel, her very breath seemed petrified. Walter's glance turned upon her hands, loaded with jewels, one of them an antique intaglio of cornelian.

"Excuse me, but may I ask to see that curious ring?" he said.

She silently detached it from her finger and gave it to him. He examined it carefully, then returned it.

"It put me in mind of the Daubenay stone; did the likeness ever strike you?"

She looked up calmly.

"I do not know the stone. I never saw it."

Not a muscle of her countenance moved.

"You know the name, doubtless," he added carelessly.

"I never heard it before. They cannot live in this part of the country, I think."

Walter was staggered.

Lady Tremyss' face had resumed its ordinary expression as she spoke. The stony, repellant look had vanished. It was obviously not in that direction that she desired to evade enquiry. However, he would go on, perhaps he might get at something.

"No, the family seat is in Lancashire. It is a very fine place."

"Indeed: I have heard that shire is not remarkable for beautiful seats."

"Then you have not been in it?"

"Never."

Still the same unembarrassed calmness, the same unconscious look.

At this moment Isabel entered. Her mother looked up from her occupation of re-arranging her rings.

"Ah, Isabel, here is Mr. Arden." She smiled at the young man, as Isabel advanced and extended her hand to him.

"I have brought the book you asked for," said Walter to Isabel, turning from Lady Tremyss. He put into her hand a small volume.

"What is it?" asked Lady Tremyss.

Isabel gave her mother the book, and bending over her, read aloud,—

"Observations sur les differences produites par la civilisation chez les races indigènes des deux hemisphères."

"Oh, I shall like to read that, I am sure," she exclaimed.

"Do you know that nothing interests me so much as reading about savages. I have studied so much about them. I really think I know more of them than of my own people. Sometimes I feel almost as if I were a savage myself."

There was a peculiar narrowing of her eyes as she spoke, a furtive glance that Walter had never seen before. It affected him disagreeably.

"Don't look so, Isabel," he said hastily.

"How?" she asked.

"You looked as if you really felt what you said."

"I did," she answered, gravely, seating herself by her mother. Lady Tremyss had opened the book, and was turning over its pages.

"Please read me a little bit, Mamma, anywhere, just on this page. I want to see what the style is like—just a few words, you know."

"Pray, do so," urged Walter.

Lady Tremyss read the passage to which Isabel had pointed.

"It is a true pleasure to hear you read," he said. "Your accent is that of a native. May I inquire where you learned the language?"

"In a French convent," she replied, coldly; then rising, she went to her embroidery frame at the other side of the room, seated herself, and began to work.

"You must not ask her any such questions," said Isabel, in a low, anxious tone. "She doesn't like them." Then in a louder key she continued, "But who is the author of this book? I forgot to look."

"A very distinguished man, the Abbé Hulot. I saw him for a moment at Mr. Hungerford's."

"How does he look? I like to form an idea of the author whose works I am reading."

Walter turned over the first pages, and displayed to Isabel an engraving of the Abbé Hulot's head.

"What a strongly marked face; how very striking," remarked Isabel, examining it with curiosity. "Mamma, pray look here."

She laid the book on the tapestry frame before her mother.

"I see. Take it away," said Lady Tremyss.

The words came in a low, guttural tone. Walter, looking at her, saw a convulsive shiver run through her frame.

Isabel appeared to have noticed nothing, but replaced the book on the table with an absent air, as if her interest in it had given way before some pre-occupation.

"I have been thinking all day of a letter," she said, addressing Walter, as she resumed her seat, "a very drolly written letter that my maid received this morning from Edith's. It says that Edith is immensely admired at Albansea, and that she might have had un très bon parti, for

that a young milor Prideaux—I can't imagine who he can be—was *éperdument* in love with her; and that one day they were *brouillés* and milor went off the next morning. Edith never wrote me a word about it, but that of course she wouldn't do. I wonder who he is—Prideaux."

"Prideaux," repeated Walter, seeing that Isabel expected an answer. "Is not that meant for Prudhoe, Lord Prudhoe?"

"That's it," exclaimed Isabel, "of course it's Lord Prudhoe. How strange!"

"Why strange?"

"No it isn't, after all. It was only a coincidence—Lord Prudhoe inherited the Tremyss property, you know," she added in a lower voice. "But I must tell you the rest of the letter. The most interesting part is to come. She says that Mr. Averil is paying her a great deal of attention, and that Edith seems to like him better than any one there. I am so glad she is enjoying herself, but I am a little surprised that she should like Mr. Averil. You must feel astonished at my knowing all this," she continued with a smile; "but the letter was more than half French, and what English there was in it, was so strangely spelt that Melvil could not make it out, so I had to read it to her. But please tell me what sort of a person is Mr. Averil? I have only seen him, I never spoke to him."

"He is a man of fortune and position," replied Walter.

"That is not what I mean; you know him, don't you?"

"Slightly."

"Then tell me, do you think he is the right sort of man to make Edith happy?"

Lady Tremyss came to relieve Walter from the rack of Isabel's questioning.

"My dear, you are asking questions which it is quite impossible Mr. Arden can answer. Miss Arden herself is the only person capable of deciding."

"I don't like what I have heard of him," said Isabel, with a dubious air. "I cannot think she will marry him."

"Do not make up your mind hastily, my dear. The match would suit Mr. John Arden. He would never permit his daughter to marry any man who could not secure to her a brilliant position."

"Oh, Mamma, you don't think that Edith would marry for anything except love," exclaimed Isabel, earnestly.

"I think she will marry according to her father's wishes. Her's is a character in which filial devotion plays a large rôle, do you not think so, Mr. Arden?"

"I believe so,—yes,—certainly," stammered Walter, who, as Lady Tremyss spoke, had been rapidly retracing the various phases of his intercourse with Edith, and concluding that some discovery of her father's intentions had been the cause of her sudden coldness and reserve.

Lady Tremyss said: "Miss Arden will gain position and rank, and gratify her father's ambition; so console yourself, and begin to think what your wedding gift shall be," she added caressingly, and then led away the conversation from Edith, sustaining its chief weight until Walter took his leave.

When the doors had closed upon Isabel for the night, her mother rose and glided, catlike, towards the little book. She opened it, and gazed at the mild, venerable face. As she did so, her features assumed an expression of malignant hatred.

"The same," she muttered. "Thief, jailor—the same."

CHAPTER XXI.

DR. JACOBS NARRATIVE OF THE TRAGEDY AT ILTON PARK.

IN the first shock of the discovery of the probability of Edith's engagement to Ormanby Averil, all Walter's interest in other subjects sank out of sight. He had no time or thought for anything save his own vain and bitter regrets. The stings of jealousy added fresh poison to his grief. It was all that he could endure to know her lost to him; to think of her as another's was a torture greater than could be borne. He changed rapidly; he became silent, almost morose. A burning fever consumed him. Strange dreams haunted his slumbers, and made the night dreadful. He spent the day in long, solitary walks and rides, the evening in moody reverie, save when he went up to the Park, in the hungry hope of hearing something that might put an end to his intolerable suspense. He forgot to watch Lady Tremyss, he remembered no more the suspicions that had risen in his mind relative to her; he only felt that her voice was soft, her greeting gentle, and that before he had been half an hour in her company he was sure to hear something having reference to the one only subject that possessed any interest for him. It was from her that he had learned all the particulars of Mr. Arden's attack of illness, which she had gathered from Mrs. Lacy; and it was she who broke to him with gentle phrase and soothing tact the fact that Averil was the fellow-watcher with Edith in her father's sick-room.

"I fear there is now no doubt of its being a settled affair," she said in conclusion. "It is all that her father could wish, but Miss Arden's other friends may be excused for feeling some disappointment. Such a remarkably lovely girl."

Walter heard it without blanching, feeling that now the worst had come, and that he must rise and meet it like a man. The torture of uncertainty was over. Now, he knew what he had to bear. Now he could be himself again; and the next morning he chatted with his aunt during breakfast time; much to Mrs. Arden's relief. His affection for this one relative and friend flowed forth all the more strongly from his feeling a remorseful consciousness that he had somewhat neglected her of late, a consciousness the keener because unprovoked by any word or look from her. He drew the plan of a new open carriage for her, and in the afternoon read to her a recently published novel, until he found she had fallen asleep; then ordering his horse, he mounted and rode forth to seek the stern, but kindly bracing of the cold without.

It was a foggy afternoon, verging upon sunset. The wreaths of mist that rose from the neighboring river came creeping across the wintry fields, borne before the chill breath of a northern wind. The line of the horizon was lost in vaporous twilight, the leafless trees loomed darkly forth from the grayish half-tints hovering around. As Walter rode slowly along, a horseman overtook him, and young Renson's voice exclaimed:

"Ha, Arden, I am lucky to have met you—cursed disagreeable afternoon. I have felt bored to death ever since I left off going to the rehearsals, and all that. I wish some one else would get up a play."

"All theatricals are not as successful as these have been you must remember," replied Walter to Mr. Renson's unusually voluble address. "This was an exception. They are usually complete failures."

"Yes, but that is the fault of the actors, not of the theatricals," answered Mr. Renson. "Mrs. Lacy would wake up an audience of empty easy-chairs, and Miss Rosenfield is so pretty that she would have carried it off if she'd left out

every word of her part; but as to Miss Hartley, on my soul, she goes beyond anything I ever saw. When I was at Paris, I spent a good deal of my time at the theatres, and I didn't see any one to be compared to her. There was something in her voice that got into my throat, it did. I declare, in that last scene I—Good God! what's that?"

Renson fairly blanched, as a tall wreath of mist came gliding by them, its outlines imaging with singular accuracy of imitation those of a sheeted corpse.

"Why, Renson, you don't believe in ghosts!" said Arden, suppressing a smile.

"If I did, it would be no more than older and wiser men than I have done," returned Renson, somewhat sulkily.

"In olden times, yes; but not now-a-days," said Walter, who, as we have noted, had a singular intolerance for superstition in all shapes.

"Not so very long ago, either. Sir Ralph was no fool, and he believed in ghosts, and saw them too, for that matter."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. My man Storrord told me. He saw it."

"Saw the ghost?"

"No; but he saw Sir Ralph see it. It was when I sprained my ankle last year, leaping that confounded ditch. I didn't sleep a wink for three nights, and I made Storrord talk to me. He told me all about it."

"What did he tell?" inquired Walter, who began to feel convinced that the whole neighborhood was afflicted with an epidemic mania of belief in ghosts.

"He said that on the day Sir Ralph and Mrs. Hartley were married, they started for a country seat of Sir Ralph's in the north. It was late when they reached it, and it was a dreary, dismal-looking place when they got there. Storrord and the maid were in the rumble outside, and Lady

Tremyss and Sir Ralph, with Miss Hartley, inside. Lady Tremyss had refused to allow Miss Hartley to go in any other way. Sir Ralph was in one of his rages, Storrord said, and looked as black as a thunder-cloud; but Lady Tremyss did not seem to mind it. Sir Ralph went to his dressing-room to dress for dinner, and Lady Tremyss took Miss Hartley to the room that had been got ready for her. Storrord saw to his master as usual, and left the room. He had not got the length of the entry when Sir Ralph's bell rang furiously. Storrord hurried back and found Sir Ralph standing in the middle of the floor, his face a greyish white, his hair all matted on his forehead, and his eyes staring at something that he seemed to see standing between himself and the door of the next room. Storrord asked him what was the matter. Sir Ralph asked him in a sort of hoarse whisper if he saw it. Storrord said, 'Saw what?' Sir Ralph did not answer, but stood staring just as he had done before. Storrord got him some brandy out of the travelling-case that was in the room. After he had drunk it, he began to look more natural, but the next day all the rooms were changed, and Sir Ralph never crossed the threshold of that one again. Now, what do you think of that?"

"I think something was there; but I am not at all sure that it was a ghost," answered Walter, shortly.

"What else could it have been? Storrord couldn't see it. Sir Ralph did."

"Did Sir Ralph ever say what it was?"

"Never, at least not to Storrord."

"Whose ghost did Storrord think it was?"

"He didn't say."

"Did you ask him?"

"Yes; but he only answered that Sir Ralph wasn't a gentleman like other gentlemen."

And young Renson, who seemed rather to deprecate being out in the mist-haunted twilight, bade Walter good-night, and, setting spurs to his horse galloped away.

—What ghost—dread offspring of conscience and memory, was it that had come on that wedding evening with its invisible presence to chill the impetuous current leaping within Sir Ralph's stalwart frame? What vision was it that took its silent stand between him and the door, barring it with a viewless horror all too palpable to the bridegroom's terror-stricken sense? What apparition was it that had refused to quit its post, but remained firm rooted before the moving presence of the servant in the room, and had vindicated its right by enforcing Sir Ralph's retreat?—As Walter's thoughts, uninfluenced by those minor details so efficient in confusing our judgment, ran over the outlines of the story of Sir Ralph's marriage, and brought them beside the air-drawn phantom evoked by his brain, a suspicion, black and horrible, looked in on him from the darkness of the past. It refused to dissolve at his command; and now it had crept unsummoned towards him, and fastened itself upon him, and was whispering in his ear its monstrous story of perfidy, and treachery, and crime.

The first result of the new possibilities which had suggested themselves to young Arden's mind was to singularly complicate his feelings with regard to Lady Tremyss. She appeared to him no longer as an enigma to be solved, a mystery to be elucidated, but a woman who had sustained a wrong of unexampled magnitude, a victim happily unconscious of the worst feature of her fate, but still a victim to the most atrocious violation of laws, human and divine.

He found, on his return, Dr. Jacobs at the Hall, for Mrs. Arden, after suffering from rheumatism, and taking colchicum, according to her own judgment, for several days, had at length been compelled to send for him. He was about to take leave as Walter came in. An idea suggested itself to young Arden as he met him. He followed him down stairs and asked for a moment's conversation in the drawing-room.

Dr. Jacobs established himself comfortably in an easy-chair, pushed up his spectacles, and put the points of his fore-fingers together, as it was his practice to do when listening to anything of importance, for the gravity of young Arden's face told him that it was on a matter of moment that his opinion was desired.

"Well, my good young sir, and what is it?" he asked at length, as Walter seemed to hesitate at opening the conversation.

"I want to tell you something, and to hear how it strikes you."

And Walter detailed to Dr. Jacobs what young Renson had been saying.

The physician's face clouded as the young man went on. He pursed his lips together as he concluded.

"Now what conclusion do you draw from this?" inquired Walter.

"That there was foul play."

"And why was nothing said about it?" exclaimed Walter, indignantly.

"Softly, my dear sir. What use was there in saying anything about it? There were no witnesses to call, no testimony to be brought forward. The two men were alone together. Sir Ralph said that as Captain Hartley was examining the gun, it went off and shot him. A hundred such cases have occurred. There was not a single accusing circumstance to point to Sir Ralph."

"Then what led you to suspect him?"

"Things that won't bear discussion, trifles incapable of proof. The peculiar distension of the eye, the dry hoarseness of the voice, the clammy feel of the hand, the general aspect of the man. Where every one else read grief, I saw guilt; but I had no proof, save my own moral convictions; and if moral convictions were to hang men, they would turn out very immoral things."

"Then you saw Sir Ralph directly after."

"I was paying a night call in the village. The messenger saw my chaise, called me down, and I was at the Park in twenty minutes after it happened. Captain Hartley was lying dead in the dining-room where he fell. He looked as if he were asleep, all save that bloody hole over his heart. His wife was holding his head on her knee, bending so that I could not see her face, and Sir Ralph was leaning against the sideboard. The gun was lying on the floor. Death must have been instantaneous. The gun had obviously been discharged close to him. There was powder on the coat, and it was burnt."

"Did you examine the gun?"

"I could not then. Later I wished to do so; but it had been taken away by that black butler, I believe, and I could not get hold of it. I could prove nothing, so I held my tongue."

"You said nothing of your suspicions at the inquest?"

"I answered their questions; that was all I had to concern myself with."

There was a certain reticence in the physician's manner which impressed Walter with the feeling that he was keeping something back.

"Because you feared to compromise Sir Ralph?"

"Not only that—"

"But what?"

"But I did not feel sure about Mrs. Hartley."

"What!" exclaimed Walter, aghast.

"Don't jump at conclusions too hastily. There was nothing about her at that time to awaken suspicion; but, quiet as she looks, there is a capability of ferocity in that woman's face that leaves one all afloat as to what she may or may not have done."

"But even supposing her capable of it, which I can't admit—what motive could she have had for connivance?"

"The motive for many a crime. Captain Hartley had nothing but his pay; Sir Ralph was wealthy, could lavish luxuries upon her, gratify her every whim, give her position and influence. There was no lack of motive, supposing she were capable of aiding and abetting the crime."

"But it is too horrible, too unnatural. I can't believe it."

"I do not ask you to do so. I am only telling you why I kept my suspicions to myself. I did not know how large a circle they might make, did I divulge them."

"But there is something in the idea of undetected crime around us, too horrible to be borne."

"I believed that Sir Ralph killed Captain Hartley because he wanted to marry his wife, but I did not believe that he was any the more likely, because of that, to kill anybody else. As to Lady Tremyss, my suspicions have always been much more vague. In fact I cannot say that I suspect her, I can but assert that I think her capable of almost anything."

"But she is so fond of her daughter," objected young Arden, who could in no wise acquiesce in Dr. Jacob's sweeping denunciation.

"That has nothing to do with it. When I was starting in life I attended the young child of a gipsy woman under sentence of death for murder. The evidence was as plain as day, in fact, she confessed on the scaffold. The child was very young, she was allowed to have it with her in prison. I never saw any devotion equal to that which that woman exhibited. She tended it with all the care and softness that the most refined lady could have shown. She neither ate, drank, nor slept while it was in danger, and when I told her that it was safe, she burst into tears of joy."

"What became of the child?"

"I never knew. It was a beautiful little creature. But, as I say, Lady Tremyss is no fonder of her daughter than

that gipsy woman was of her child. As to that matter, the fiercest animals are the fondest of their young."

"I cannot see in Lady Tremyss' face what you do. I really think, doctor, that you are riding your theory of physiognomy too far," said Walter, firmly.

"Call it my hobby at once," replied Dr. Jacobs, smiling good-humoredly, as he rose from his chair. "Perhaps I am—perhaps I am; that's the more reason that I should keep silence on it. All this is in strictest confidence, you know."

He departed, leaving Walter strongly inclined to throw aside all his former undefined suspicions of Lady Tremyss; for like most persons of generous nature, the surest way to obscure his penetration and warp his judgment was to accuse a person, as he deemed, unjustly.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PRINCESS WARA'S PROPHECY.

THE next morning brought a letter from Edith to Mrs. Arden, which that lady read three times in the course of the morning, looking more and more anxious after each perusal. It was as follows:

"MY DEAR AUNT.—Much has happened since I last wrote to you, more than I should have thought could have been crowded into so short a time. I seem to be writing to you from out another world, so strange does all still appear to me.

"Last Tuesday, papa was taken very ill. He had appeared as well as usual until the time of the attack, which was sudden and very alarming. I do not think he had much physical pain; but he seemed much depressed when he re-

gained his senses. He did not talk, but he sighed and groaned at intervals so that it was very distressing to hear him. The physician did not seem to think him very ill the first day, but on the second he appeared much more anxious. What those days were to me I will not attempt to say. Now he is out of danger. Next week we return home.

"It is to you, my dear Aunt, that I send the first news of my engagement to Mr. Averil. Papa is much pleased. He was very ill at the time, but he rallied at once on being told of it. Mr. Averil is devoted in his attention to him, and aids me in every manner in his power to make the time pass pleasantly to Papa now that he is an invalid and confined to his room.

Every one here is as kind as possible. They seem to feel that they cannot do enough for us. Papa has quite a levée each day, now that the doctor allows him to talk. I tell him that he will be quite ruined for every day life, and that he is getting altogether spoiled. He is in good spirits most of the time, though I sometimes find him looking very dull when he has been a few minutes alone.

"I would write more, but Mr. Averil is waiting for me to go for a drive.

"Adieu, my own kind aunt. Do not forget me. Love me always. "EDITH."

Mrs. Arden would have been glad to discuss this letter with Walter; but Walter, after a hasty perusal, had given it back to her, saying that he hoped Edith would be happy, and then had gone out to superintend something on the estate, quite as if it were a matter of no interest at all. So Mrs. Arden was left to her own unaided reflections, and they were not pleasant reflections. The poor little woman felt perplexed, and puzzled, and worried. She was not at ease about the tone of Edith's letter. She had a strong conviction that Edith was not doing a wise thing in making this

match. Of course, Mr. Arden was pleased. He would have a son-in-law exactly to suit him, such a pushing man as he was. And perhaps it was as well, after all, that Edith should be married before she had time to fall in love with any body. But it was strange Walter cared so little for it. It didn't seem to interest him at all.

Walter did not come in to lunch; but Mrs. Arden was not left to solitude all the day. Early in the afternoon Mrs. Lacy made her appearance, all in a flutter of joy, and pink feathers, and *application* lace.

"My dear Mrs. Arden, I am so delighted, so perfectly enchanted, I could not rest until I had come over to see you. The loveliest young creature I ever saw. Ormanby is really captured at last. The very thing I have wanted. I was quite getting into despair about it. I thought he never would marry, but his time is come. Lady Melby writes that he is desperately in love, and that his fiancée shows wonderful tact in treating him just in the way to keep him so. I am glad she knows how to manage him. It wouldn't do to spoil him, he has had quite too much of that already."

Mrs. Arden enquired in what way Edith had merited Lady Melby's encomiums on her tact.

"Oh, she says that she is as cold as ice, and as gentle as an angel, and that Ormanby fairly shivers under her reserve. She couldn't do better if she had known him all her life. And from Ormanby's letter I see it is quite as Lady Melby says."

Mrs. Lacy might not unnaturally have committed the indiscretion of showing her brother's letter to Edith's aunt; but that she did not do, although she had it in her pocket at the moment. It ran thus:

"DEAR ELLEN,—Remembering a certain conversation at Houston Lacy not long since, I think myself justified in believing that you will not regret to learn my engagement to

Miss Arden. You have seen her, and can judge whether or not she is likely to fill properly her station in society as my wife.

"I have not yet arranged as to the time of our marriage; her father's health is in too unsettled a state to allow me to do so at present; but I intend the ceremony to take place at the end of a month, after which we shall make a tour in Spain. Don't write to tell me that there are no hotels, nor roads, nor cooks there. I know it already; but, likewise, there are no English there, and all deficiencies of accommodation can be supplied by a travelling fourgon. I will not ruralize in England, nor be stared at on the Rhine. I will have for a few months, my wife to myself.

"Adieu. You shall be informed of the date of the marriage, until then do not expect to hear from me."

"A cold, heartless, unfeeling wretch," Mrs. Lacy had impetuously exclaimed, throwing down the letter. "I pity that girl; I do from the bottom of my heart. Not a word of affection or of consideration for her in it. Poor child!"

Then Mrs. Lacy, who was an impulsive, good-hearted woman, though circumstances had educated her into being a mass of incongruities and faults, began to cry, from a mixture of emotions, dominant among which rose indignation against her brother, and compassion for her brother's prospective wife, curiously coupled with regrets that her own marriage had not been a love match.

Having thus relieved her feelings, she put on smiles, a black moiré dress and mantle, and a pink bonnet, and drove over to express the regulation delight to Mrs. Arden.

Had Ormanby Averil arranged every circumstance with an especial view to Edith's success, he could not have been better served by art than he had been by accident. The women—who make and unmake in the world—one and all united in lauding Edith's reputed beauty and grace. Had Averil chosen any one among their rank and file, they

would have unanimously decried the object of his preference, for each aspirant would have felt her own claims to admiration underrated; but he had chosen a girl who had never made her appearance, and who, consequently, could not be considered in the light of a rival, and each woman was glad to pique other women by magnifying the charms of Ormanby Averil's fiancée. The men were glad to see him so securely *rangé*, and felt that Ormanby Averil was a dangerous fellow, and that it was high time that he had a wife of his own to take care of.

So every day's post brought to him a packet of letters of congratulation on pink paper, and scented paper, and cream-laid paper, all expressive of admiration of the much-lauded, though as yet unseen charms of Miss Arden, and of the peculiar pleasure each separate writer took in Mr. Averil's good fortune in having secured such a prize.

Averil would run his eye over them and crush them up and throw them in the fire, and then return to the sick room where dwelt his lovely snow statue, and envy the father on whom she waited with such untiring care. For neither loving look, nor caress, nor smile could Averil win from Edith. She had distinctly told him she had engaged to marry him at her father's wish. She had not professed to love him; and the shudder which ran through her when he pressed the betrothal kiss upon her forehead, had warned him to abstain for the future from any such call upon her endurance. Yet he had nothing to complain of. Her manner never varied from its courtesy. Her ear was always ready when he claimed it, but Averil could not speak to her of his love. There was something in her manner that imposed silence on vows and protestations,—an invisible barrier of still reserve that he dared not attempt to break down. He took the part of devoting himself to Mr. Arden, and so won some rare smiles, some occasional words of gratitude from Edith.

Once, for one moment, did the idea of restoring her liberty to Edith cross his mind,—one struggle did his better nature make against the overwhelming force of his passion.

Mr. Arden had fallen asleep in his easy chair. Edith had left her place beside him and seated herself on the great old-fashioned window seat. The moonlight streaming into the chamber rested on her white draped figure, bringing it into startling relief against the surrounding shadows of the room. Averil placed himself as near as he dared to her. She did not turn her head. She was watching the moon, which was wading through clouds that seemed to retire at her approach, making a pathway for her to tread the sky. There was no sound save the beating of the waves without and the measured breathing of the sleeper within. Averil gazed on her in silence. There was something in the chill sanctity of the moonlight falling around her that cooled the rushing fever of his veins. Edith looked in those rays like some sculptured image of a saint, not like a mortal maiden bound by earthly ties. A feeling of reverential compassion rose softly within him, divine inspiration of his better self.

"Edith," he said, "speak frankly to me; do you wish this marriage?"

She turned her head with a quick, eager motion, the tremulous eagerness of a prisoned bird that sees the cage-door ajar. Her features quivered for an instant, then sank into their usual sad repose.

"It must be," she answered. "My father's life may depend on it."

The paper which Averil carried in his breast-pocket seemed to burn and scorch his flesh. Edith spoke again.

"I do not say that I love you, but I will always obey and honor you—that I can safely promise. I will try to love you;—perhaps some day I shall."

Innocent, unconscious words, that fell like drops of per-

fumed oil upon the smouldering furnace of Ormanby Averil's heart, sending up a cloud of sheeted flame to devour utterly his nascent good intention, his scarce-born better thought.

He had no idea of becoming a common malefactor. He felt assured that he risked nothing in returning to the banker the despatch that he had rescued from the flames. Edith's father would take good care that no disclosure should be made that might induce her to falter in her present convictions. Accordingly he took the opportunity afforded him the next morning by Edith's absence to put the yellowed and discolored sheet into Mr Arden's hands.

"Where did this come from?" exclaimed the banker hastily. "I thought I had burnt it."

"It was on the hearth beside you. I put it away to give it back later."

"Does any one know of it?"

"No one."

"Not even Edith?"

"I have been silent even to her."

"You did right, quite right. I must beg you on no account to mention the circumstance, especially not to her."

Mr. John Arden dropped the paper into the fire, and looking up, caught a cold, derisive flicker in Ormanby Averil's eye.

"I am not called on to be more scrupulous than her father," he thought to himself. "What a confounded blunder I was on the point of making last night."

His self-accusing reflections were interrupted by Wilson's entrance with newspapers and letters. For these the banker had shown peculiar eagerness ever since he had been able to pay any attention to their contents; but he would never allow any one to open them for him, although Edith usually read aloud to him their contents. He shuffled them hastily, selected one, opened it with trembling hands, threw a glance over the contents, and turned purple. Averil started forward.

"No, no; it's nothing," he said, half inarticulate. "All's right."

He shook from head to foot.

"My God!" he muttered, after an interval, passing his hand through his hair, and looking round like a man relieved from a hideous dream.

Averil knew that the banker had dreaded ruin, and that the danger was past.

"Don't say anything to Edith of my having been a little moved," said Mr. Arden, after a new pause. "It might make her uneasy, you know."

"I have not spoken of Edith's dowry," said Mr. Arden the next day to his intended son-in-law, "and I most highly appreciate the delicacy which has kept you silent on the subject."

Averil bowed in acknowledgment. In fact, his reserve had cost him nothing. He did not care for the girl's money, he only coveted herself.

"It may surprise you to hear that I intend shortly to retire from active business. Such attacks as this of mine should be taken as warnings."

"Not to tempt fortune any longer," mentally commented Averil.

"But such is the position of my affairs that I do not fear to affirm that my daughter will be one of the richest heiresses in Great Britain at my decease."

Averil bowed again, but without any expression of surprise or of pleasure.

"The only thing that remains to be done is to come to an understanding about the settlements. I shall give her four hundred thousand pounds on her wedding-day."

"Excuse me," interposed Averil firmly, "I intend that you shall give her nothing."

"But, my dear Sir—"

"Permit me," proceeded Averil, without allowing him-

self to be interrupted; "I shall settle upon your daughter ten thousand a year as soon as I come to the earldom, and shall execute a will endowing her with all my present fortune in case of my demise before that time; but I must positively protest against receiving any dowry with her. There must be no further question of it."

Averil, drawing himself to the full height of his slender but stately figure, walked out of the room, leaving Mr. Arden in a state of stupefaction of astonishment. He had seen a man in his sober senses refuse four hundred thousand pounds!

To this resolution Averil was moved by two strong motives. In the first place, he hoped that such a proof of disinterestedness might influence Edith in his favor; and in the second place, that he had refused four hundred thousand pounds with her, would give her redoubled *éclat* in society. To what the world would say, Averil, who led and pretended to despise it, was as sensitive as the merest *débutante*. Had anything been capable of dissuading him from this marriage, it would have been the fear that he might be thought to have been influenced to it by Edith's wealth. Every letter exchanged for the next fortnight among the members of his clique bore on the extraordinary intelligence recently promulgated, that Ormanby Averil, who, although not in the least eccentric, yet never did anything exactly like any one else, had denied Mr. John Arden the right of giving any wedding portion whatever to his daughter, to the great disappointment of the banker, who wished to give her four hundred thousand pounds.

At the same time a sister rumor was circulated, coming from a widely different but equally reliable source, to the effect that Mr. John Arden had recently doubled his already enormous fortune by some transactions with Greece which, it was whispered among the monied magnates, had looked very insecure a little while before, in consequence of unex-

pected complications with the fiscal affairs of the Sublime Porte, but whose final success had vindicated Mr. Arden's reputation as the longest-headed man of business in England. No rumor of this sort reached Edith's well-guarded ear.

The general success of his renunciatory stroke of policy fully equalled Averil's expectations. There was one person who did not seem at all affected by it, and that person was one whose good opinion he was peculiarly anxious to secure. Princess Wara smiled when she heard it—smiled an acute, cautious smile.

"Does that surprise you?" she said to Lady Melby. "It does not surprise me at all."

That evening she accosted Averil, rather an unusual occurrence, for since Edith's arrival she had spoken but little to him, though she had watched him much.

"You have gained your parti," she said. "I have not congratulated you on your success, but I may do so on your play. It has been admirable, worthy of a Russian."

Her eyes looked him through as she spoke.—How much did she know?—Averil felt rather uncomfortable.

"I see that you have profited by the answer I made to your question that first day."

"It would have been a very poor compliment to your penetration had I not done so," replied Averil, coldly and courteously.

"Yet, had I known the use to which you would put it, I would not have told it you."

"Are you still resolved to be my enemy?" he asked, with a disturbed expression.

"It is not as an enemy, it is as a friend," she answered. "I see how it will be."

"What is it that you see? will you not explain yourself?"

She looked fixedly at him.

"This marriage will bring misfortune upon you."

"What do you mean to say?" asked Averil, half-whispering, as if some invisible being were present.

"I do not know; I cannot tell you what I mean. Only one thing can I tell. We of northern blood can presage and divine, we do not know how; and I tell you again this marriage you so much covet will bring misfortune upon you. I bid you beware."

Rising, she moved to where the Prince was sitting alone at some distance, placed herself beside him, and taking his hand, raised it caressingly to her cheek.

"Qu'as tu, donc, mon enfant?" asked the old man, in a tone of quavering sweetness.

She leaned towards him and whispered something in his ear. He smiled incredulously.

"It is strange, mon amie, that you should be so clear-sighted for others, and have been so blind for yourself."

"Silence, Waldemar," she exclaimed hastily, "my best friend, my father."

"Yes, petite, your father," he repeated.

"I have been happy with you. Do not say such things—they pain me."

She kissed his withered hand.

"Every position has its advantages," he replied half-jestingly. "If I were but thirty years old, for instance, you would not kiss my hand before the world."

"Tu es méchant," said his wife, pinching his finger "no one can see us save ce beau monsieur là, and he is not thinking of us at all."

It was true. Ormanby Averil had other subjects to occupy his thoughts just then.

Vague memories of supernatural denunciations—against those who deceive and fraudulently conspire against the innocent and harm the sinless rose ominously within his mind with a strange and sinister murmur. A dread—new, inex-

plicable—closed in around him. The belief in God arose from beneath the heaped-up ruins of his early faith—stern, reproachful, condemning.

For a moment he shrank before it; then, with a sudden and abrupt revulsion, his second self returned, mocking, hard, and triumphant upon him.

—He had lived without God comfortably enough—was he to allow any old womanish scruples to come now to unman him? Had he been so weak as to be moved by the Russian's maundering? What was it that had shuffled away his habitual self, and sent such a senseless, idiotic lunatic in its stead? He would never speak to Madame Wosocki again. He would go upstairs and look at Edith. He was glad they were going the next day.—He believed the devil was in that woman.—

Averil stalked out of the room, and going upstairs, extracted from Mr. Arden, whom he found alone, a promise that he would obtain Edith's consent to be married in three weeks from that day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WALTER ARDEN'S PAINFUL APPREHENSIONS.

THE next week brought no letter from Edith to her aunt; but in its place came an epistle from Mr. John Arden, a wordy and inflated production, which acquainted Mrs. Arden that his daughter's marriage was fixed for the twenty-second, and concluded with an invitation to the wedding for herself and Walter.

Great was Mrs. Arden's dismay when her nephew stated that he regretted not being able to accept the invitation; but that he had an engagement with Jack Taunton to go

somewhere to hunt, which would render it impossible for him to be present at the ceremony. She remonstrated in vain, and was at length reluctantly compelled to give up further discussion of the point, and to unwillingly acquiesce in his decision.

Lady Tremyss, when informed of Walter's intention, had consoled her to the best of her power, by saying that young men never liked weddings, and that it was quite natural that hunting should have the preference in Walter's mind. She had proposed that they should go up together, which invitation Mrs. Arden had gladly accepted; and had taken her leave, saying that Isabel was coming over the next day to show her wedding present for Edith.

Accordingly Walter, on returning from his customary ride late the next afternoon, saw a groom in the Tremyss livery leading about two horses with side-saddles, and in the drawing-room he found Lady Tremyss and Isabel.

Mrs. Arden's liking for Isabel had ripened into affection since Edith's departure. She now sat comfortably leaning back in her easy chair, her hand resting on Isabel's waving brown hair, from time to time gently caressing it, whilst she conversed with Lady Tremyss on the pitiable helplessness and general incompetency of a certain Mrs. Todd, a pensioner, whom all Mrs. Arden's benefactions could not keep tidy or contented.

Isabel sat meantime straining her ear to catch the sound of Walter's return. She looked hastily down as he entered.

Graver, older than his former self, young Arden seemed now. There was that indescribable air of authority about him, given only by the habit of holding pain in subjection; but nothing hard or stern mingled with it.

Isabel's lashes drooped anew after her glance upward as he spoke to her. She rarely looked him in the face now, she whose eye used to be so frank and fearless. Her words

were low and brief when she answered him; they had lost the gay, petulant vivacity of other days. Her attitude was that of timid reserve—she, the spoilt beauty, felt herself so humble before the man she loved.

Was Isabel mistaken, or had in fact Walter's tone become of late more friendly than she had ever known it before? Did he now meet Lady Tremyss with greater warmth? What might these signs betoken?—Unconscious of the searing words which had so lately fallen on young Arden's ear, rousing all that was chivalrous within him in unscrutinizing and blind revolt against their imputations, and driving him into an uncompromising partisanship as the only means of expressing his dissent, Isabel turned away and began to chat with Mrs. Arden with some of her old gaiety.

"Then you really think Edith will like it? I am so glad."

"I am sure she must; of course she must, my dear. Let me show it to Walter."

Mrs. Arden opened a case of crimson velvet, which displayed a bracelet of large stars of pearl set on a broad band of delicate blue enamel.

"Oh no, don't interrupt him now, please; you can show it by-and-by," objected Isabel, who dreaded to have Walter's attention turned towards her.

"I have been sitting here half-an-hour," she continued, anxious to distract Mrs. Arden from her intention, "and you have not yet admired my new collar. Isn't it pretty? I've just had a set from London, all like this."

"I don't know much about such things, you know I never do, my dear; but I did notice that you looked very nice to-day, very nice, indeed; perhaps it was the collar."

"Certainly it was, and I want to get employment for the person who made it—such a hard case, poor woman. Edith wrote to me about her. She is very poor, and has been ill

and wants work. Won't you order something from her? there's a dear; I know you will."

"Give me the address, and I'll order two; but then, mind, I won't promise to wear them. I'm too old to be putting pretty things on my head," replied Mrs. Arden.

"Madame Guillaume, sixteen, Great Windham Street," said Isabel. "Mrs. Williams, that is. If it were Mrs. Williams it would be quite an English name, you see."

Walter's ear was caught by the last words of the sentence.

"Excuse me," he said, bending eagerly forward, "did you say Mrs. Williams?"

"Yes, or rather no. I was translating a French name so that Mrs. Arden might remember it. Perhaps you will write it down for her, that will be the safest way."

Walter drew out his note book, and took down the direction from Isabel's dictation.

"Why do you want to know about any Mrs. Williams?" asked Mrs. Arden, as he put up the memorandum.

"It is not for myself—it is for another person."

"Tell us the story, will you not?" said Lady Tremyss. "It has quite a piquant opening."

"It is a strange enough story. A valuable jewel has been lost by the Daubenays, or perhaps stolen from them. The ring was a peculiar one, an orange colored diamond supported by two eagles' heads." The long, black eyes gave forth a sudden gleam. "It was the original of the sketch you saw. It has been traced to the hands of a Mrs. Williams—"

Walter paused.

"And that Mrs. Williams is not to be found, I gather from your question to Isabel," said Lady Tremyss, turning carelessly away. "Pity that the name is so common. You will find it but a hopeless task, I fear."

"I beg your pardon," answered Walter, unguardedly.

"We have traced her to number thirty-five, Chadlink Street."

He had no sooner spoke the words than a sense of their imprudence rushed over him. He would have given a thousand pounds to recall them.

"Ah then, the persistent advertisement in the 'Times' has reference to the same person."

"It has."

"I wish you all success," she said, with an inscrutable smile, as she rose. "Come, Isabel, it is time we were turning homeward."

"My dear, don't forget your bracelet," said Mrs. Arden, holding it out as Isabel was bidding her good-bye.

"No, that would be very inconvenient, as it must go back to London for some alterations," said Lady Tremyss.

"Why, Mamma, you did not tell me so," exclaimed Isabel. "I thought it was all right."

"Not exactly. I think I may be obliged to take it up myself. Look, Mr. Arden, would not a diamond in the centre of each star make it much handsomer?"

Lady Tremyss stood discussing the effect of the alteration upon the beauty of the bracelet, as if Mrs. Williams and the Daubenay jewel and all circumstances connected with them had utterly glided from her mind; then, with Isabel, she took her leave.

Walter plunged his hands in his pockets when he returned from putting the visitors on their horses, unconscious himself how icily cold his farewell had been; and going into the library, walked perturbedly up and down. He had had the opportunity he had wished for, and what had come of it? Literally nothing. Lady Tremyss had glanced stealthily at him, and her eyes had flashed at mention of the ring. Her look had revealed a deep and dangerous nature, had confirmed all those suspicions which he had of late cast aside, but that was all. It told him nothing save that she

had some previous knowledge of the ring, and that he knew before. Perhaps it was a secret that Sir Ralph had entrusted to her; for although young Arden's former distrust had again assumed ascendancy, it in no wise tended towards belief in the accuracy of Dr. Jacob's estimation of her character—but he did not want conjectures, he wanted certainties, and where and how was he to find them?—

He meditated long. The result of those meditations appeared in the shape of a confidential letter to Taunton, to be despatched by the next morning's mail.

A singular and inexplicable persuasion had recently begun to arise in young Arden's mind, an impression so vague that he could not reason on it, and yet so positive as to obstinately hold its place,—a belief that Lady Tremyss in some way was his enemy. He could not call up any one instance in which she had shown herself hostile to him; her tone was peculiarly gentle, her smile more than usually courteous, when addressed to him; but nevertheless he felt as if some harmful influence breathed from out her, of power to blight and sear.

With that intuition which comes to us all at times, contradicting reason and defying explanation, the conviction now rushed upon him that in the final shattering of his hopes Lady Tremyss had had some share.—And Edith; had she wrecked Edith's happiness also? Edith, who used to love him.—Notwithstanding her tacit rejection, Walter had not swerved from the final persuasion which had dictated his unanswered letter, and Edith had loved him once.—What was it that Lady Tremyss had sought to compass? She could not have been actuated by dislike of Edith, had she not saved her life at the danger of her own? She professed herself peculiarly his friend. What aim, what motive could she have had?—And again her caressing words, her gentle looks, her persuasive accents, came back, and with them the image of Isabel, gentle, downcast-eyed, and silent.

"Can it be?"

He sprang from his chair, and paced the room in perturbation.

"It is impossible. It cannot have been that."

Even as he denied it, the apprehension of the truth crept over him. A thousand signs, unheeded at the time, returned upon his reluctant memory. He threw himself down on a chair by the table, rested his forehead on his hands and groaned aloud.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GROOM SEEKS REVENGE ON LADY TREMYSS.

As Walter came in to lunch from a morning walk on the second day after his despatch to Taunton, the footman in the hall—a new servant—accosted him.

"A person has been here for you, sir. He said that he would come back in an hour. What sort of a person, sir? He was a steady, good-looking man, but pale. I think, sir, he has had something to do with horses. He looks like it, sir. He said he'd come a long way to see you, sir."

—George—could it be George? What on earth had brought him all the way back from Canada?

In about an hour Walter heard heavy steps sounding along the hall; the door opened, and George stood upon the threshold.

His former air of listlessness and dejection was gone. A dogged determination was stamped upon his face, drawing deep lines around his mouth, and lowering his eyebrows over his eyes.

He bowed silently, and putting a sealed letter into young Arden's hand, stood with his eyes fixed upon the opposite

wall while Walter read it. It contained a few lines from Daubenay, expressive of his regret at George's return.

George appeared to feel no interest in the contents of the letter. As Walter laid it down he turned his eyes upon him, and spoke:

"I've come to see you, Sir, minding the words you said when you sent me to Daubenay about when I needed a helping hand. I've come all the way from Canada, Sir; and now I will tell you what I am going to do."

"Sit down, George," said young Arden, glancing at the man's pale, fixed face. "Sit down and let us talk together quietly."

George sat down on a chair beside the door, and put his hat on the floor beside him.

"You remember, Sir, when I had that fever at Mrs. Dingall's, you remember I said I had taken port wine, and that it was the same thing Mr. Goliath had given me?"

"Yes; but you know the apothecary's assistant owned that he had sent port wine."

"He lied, sir;" a momentary gleam of fierceness shot from the man's eyes. "It was not port wine, it was something that had laudanum in it. I have had the fever again, and the doctor ordered me laudanum, and I took it; and it was what Mr. Goliath gave me, and what Mrs. Dingall gave me. It made me feel the same, all heavy and stupid, and light-headed at once; and I saw those same faces that I had seen before, Sir, those same faces came back to me, Sir;—and now I know what I know."

"What do you mean to say?"

"I mean to say, sir, that Mr. Goliath gave me that to drink knowingly, and I mean to say, Sir, that my lady knew about it."

George folded his arms on his chest, and looked full into Walter's face.

"Are you thinking of all the weight of what you assert? Have you considered all that it implies?"

"I have not thought of anything else, Sir, for five weeks. I believe I should have died in that fever, Sir, if it had not been for the hope of coming home and having the truth out. She knew it, Sir; as true as there's a bottomless pit, Lady Tremyss knew what was done that night."

Still the same impassive voice, still the same look of dogged determination.

"What ground have you for thinking so? Be careful, weigh every word before you say it."

"I shall not say a word that I can't prove; and though I can't say that I heard my lady tell Mr. Goliath to give me that drug, yet I can say what I did see and hear."

Walter took out pen and paper.

"Yes, Sir. If she does away with me, as it's very like she'll try to, it will be there in black and white. Would it hold good in a court of law, Sir?"

"Not unless you swear to it before a magistrate; but we can think of that afterwards. Now go on."

"It was the day Sir Ralph was drowned, Sir. We were all at dinner in the servants' hall, and talking together, and one of the maids said it was queer my lady had not learned to manage Sir Ralph any better, and the upper housemaid, who had lived at the Park a long time, told her my lady could wind Sir Ralph round her little finger. The younger maid, who was a saucy girl, said she supposed that meant my lady wanted Sir Ralph to ride Kathleen, for that she had heard her that morning telling him there was no use in keeping such a horse in the stables, for no one dared to ride her, she was so ill-tempered, and Sir Ralph said there was never a horse foaled that he was afraid of, and my lady said that any one ought to be afraid of such a creature as that, and a great deal more to the same purpose, and the upshot of it was Sir Ralph swore that he would ride Kathleen that very day. The upper housemaid seemed puzzled, and said she couldn't in no wise understand it, for my lady knew, as well

as ever anybody could know anything, that the surest way to get Sir Ralph to do a thing was to dare him to do it. And we all agreed that if Kathleen did upset Sir Ralph, my lady would have herself to thank for it. That was the last meal I ate at Ilton Park. It wasn't three hours after when Mr. Goliath gave me the laudanum, and that night Sir Ralph was drowned, and, what with the shock and the confusion, all that I've been telling you, Sir, went clean out of my head, until it all came back to me in the fever in Canada. I've never seen Ilton Park since; but I'll see it again, Sir. I haven't been beggared and starved, and had my good name lied away for nothing. I'll have my revenge, if I have to follow them underground for it."

George set his teeth and looked again fixedly at the wall before him.

"But before you can get anyone to listen to you, you must first show some reason why Lady Tremyss should have been induced to plot against her husband's life."

"I don't know what motive she had; but there's one person I'd like to question about it."

"Who is that?"

"It's Sir Ralph's gentleman as was, Sir, Mr. Storrord. He's got the longest head and the stillest tongue that any one ever had yet. He isn't hard-hearted, neither, as gentlemen's gentlemen are apt to be. He met me just after while I was hanging about, hiding myself, and trying to get a look at some one as I thought cared for me. He said one or two words to me; there was nothing to take hold of in them, but I saw he didn't think harm of me for all their lies. He knew something. I know he did. He meant something when he said it was hard on me. He's with young Squire Renson now. I am going to ask him what he meant."

Young Arden shaded his face with his hand, and sat silent for a few moments, then he looked up at the man.

"George, I want you to promise me one thing,—I want you to leave this matter in my hands."

The dogged look, which had never left the groom's face during the interview, deepened into sullen distrust.

"You have been very good to me, sir. It is not because I forget how much I am obligated to you, but I cannot do that. I am the one as has been wronged next to Sir Ralph. He's dead, and there's no righting him; but I'm alive, and I mean to be righted."

"I mean you shall be righted. Leave this to me, and I promise you solemnly I will seek redress for you with all my might. I will not rest until this matter is searched out."

The man moved uneasily on his chair. His breath came short.

"I do believe you, Sir; but you don't know how hard it is to give it up out of my hands. I don't seem like myself, Sir. I've got to love my revenge. I feel as if I should be all empty and weak if it was taken away from me, Sir. It's all that holds me up."

Walter scanned the groom's face. If he was to influence him, it would not be done by opposition.

"What do you propose to do?"

"To let every one know what they've done, sir, no matter what comes of it; and the worse, the better. That's what I mean to do."

"Are you aware that if you bring such an accusation against them without more proof than you have adduced, you lay yourself open to an action for slander, with heavy damages, which, in your case, would mean imprisonment."

George lowered his eyes a moment, as if taking counsel with himself; then he rose, approached the table behind which Walter was sitting, leaned his hands on it, and gazed steadfastly at him.

"Do *you* believe that Lady Tremyss had to do with what was done that night?"

There was silence in the room while one might have counted twenty, then Walter answered,

"I do."

"Will you see justice done?"

"I will, so far as in me lies."

"I am going, Sir. When you have need of me I shall be at hand."

"You had better go to London for the present. Send your address here. If you need money I will supply you. Be careful; it mustn't be known where you are."

George gave the desired assurance, and left the room.

An hour had passed, and still Walter sat in the library meditating on the strange and sinister story that George had told, that story which recalled so singularly all his own former passing misgivings, but clothing them with such dark and monstrous forms as he had never for an instant contemplated. George's recital had compelled young Arden's belief, almost in spite of his reason, for he saw plainly that as yet the accusation rested on insufficient grounds. He had promised to use his best endeavors to see justice done. In order to do so he must have the whole case distinctly before him, all the circumstances connected with Sir Ralph's demise must be classed one by one. The first thing to consider was the relation of the parties to each other. There was good ground for supposing that Sir Ralph had been accessory to the death of Lady Tremyss' first husband. Goliath had but a few weeks before his master's death received an injury from his hand. Could Goliath have been cognizant of the circumstances attending Captain Hartley's death? Walter suddenly remembered Doctor Jacobs had stated that when he wished to examine the gun, Goliath had taken it away and he could not get hold of it again. If there had been any proof of guilt to be drawn from the state of the weapon, Goliath would have been aware of it. It might not improbably be assumed that he was aware of

his master's guilt. The fidelity of his race would lead him to keep this concealed, unless some stronger motive were brought to bear to induce him to reveal it. The injury he had received might be considered sufficient to have provided that motive. He would scarcely have chosen to denounce his master to the authorities, as by so doing he would implicate himself as a party to the crime after its commission. He would seek some other means, and what would have been so obvious as to betray his master's secret to his master's wife? And she, so cold, so secret, so resolute, so daring, would it not be in accordance with her character to choose a silent and sure revenge, rather than trust for vengeance to the unsafe chances of a criminal prosecution, which,—end as it might,—would inevitably entail social ruin upon herself and her daughter? She would have every external inducement to preserve Sir Ralph's secret. Her revenge must be close hid. George's testimony as to the art with which she had induced Sir Ralph to mount his most unmanageable horse, the opiate which the butler had administered to him before his setting forth in company with his master, offered strong presumptive evidence of some conspiracy between herself and Goliath. The witness borne by the little boy to the fact of Sir Ralph's having crossed the bridge before being drowned in the river, although at variance with the common belief, was yet in no wise a refutation of the main fact. There was no reason that Kathleen should not plunge into the river from one bank as well as from another. And yet—as he had thought before,—would any horse be likely, when close to its stables, to turn and rush off in an opposite direction? But Goliath was there; if he had given the opiate to the groom to ensure his master's solitary return, he was not watching there with any view to Sir Ralph's safety. Was it not his hand that had turned the furious animal's course towards the river, perhaps that had hurled his master in? But how to

prove it?—there was the question. George had said that Storrord might know something. The next thing was to see Storrord. But first he would call Letty in, she had been in service at the Park, perhaps something might come out if she were questioned. Accordingly he rang the bell and ordered Letty to be summoned.

Letty entered her young master's presence with cheeks as red as her arms. What could he possibly want with her? An undefined hope that she was going to hear something about George, made her heart beat quickly as she stood beside the door and dropped her curtsy.

"Letty, I have been thinking over that affair of George's," said Walter, "and I am very desirous of seeing it cleared up."

Then the young master hadn't heard about him. Poor Letty's heart sank.

"I want to know if you remember whether he had had any ache or pain for which he had taken any medicine on that day when Sir Ralph was drowned?"

"I should have known if he'd had anything the matter with him, Sir, for he'd have told me, sure; but he wouldn't have gone to the 'pothecaries, Sir."

"Why not?"

"Because, Sir, Mrs. Pralyn, the housekeeper, had a medicine chest, and whenever anything was the matter the servants used to go to her, and if what she wanted wasn't in the chest, it was sure to be in Sir Ralph's dressing-room. He kept a closet full of doctor's stuff, Sir."

"How do you know that?"

"I've dusted the bottles many and many a time, Sir."

Walter pondered awhile. He did not want to awaken the girl's suspicions, and yet it was not easy to go on with his enquiries without doing so. However, he must risk it; fortunately she was not peculiarly sharp-witted.

"Do you know whether Mrs. Pralyn kept any laudanum in her medicine chest?"

"No, Sir, she didn't," Letty replied promptly.

"You speak as if you were sure of it," said Walter, fixing his eyes upon her.

"Yes, Sir; there was something made me remember it particular, if you please, Sir," said Letty, looking as if she feared Walter might take offence at her presuming to be very sure of anything.

"Really,—well, tell me what it was."

"It was only that the morning after Sir Ralph was drowned, and they were all laying it on George because he wasn't there, and I was in great trouble, Sir, and the cook called me to help cut bread for the servants' table, and I was crying so I couldn't see, Sir, and I cut a great gash on my hand, and it ached very bad, Sir, and the cook sent me to Mrs. Pralyn, and she said it must be bound up with laudanum, but that she hadn't got any, and she told me to go to Sir Ralph's dressing-room and get some out of the closet, Sir."

"Well, did it do your hand any good?"

"No, Sir; it wasn't there."

"I thought you said it was there."

"It was always, Sir. It was in the front row, and it had 'Poison' on it in big letters, that's how I remember it, Sir."

"And now you say it wasn't there?"

"It had been taken away, Sir. I don't know who had taken it, Sir; but it was Mr. Goliath as had got it."

"How do you know?" Walter bent forward.

"Why, Sir, I couldn't eat anything that day, and when the rest were at dinner I went and sat on the servants' staircase, to be by myself. And I heard steps coming along the passage, and I didn't want to be seen, and so I slipped into a closet on the stairs where the brooms and dust-pans were kept, and I saw Mr. Goliath go by, going up-stairs, Sir, with the bottle in his hand. By-and-bye my hand ached worse than ever, and I thought I'd go and get some

laudanum for it, now that it was there, and there it was, Sir."

"Had anything been taken out of it?" Walter asked, after a pause of thought.

"Yes, Sir; it wasn't full then, and it was full only a day or two before."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Because it was so full that it was wet round the cork, Sir, and the last time I had dusted that closet, and it was only a day or two before, Sir, I had taken the cork out to clean the top of the bottle, and it was full, Sir; and I remember it, for Mr. Storrord came in while I was cleaning it, and told me to have a care, for that it was dangerous stuff to meddle with; and I told him I hadn't meddled with it, Sir, and that he could see it was as full as full could be, Sir."

"Very well, Letty," said Walter, after a while, during which Letty had been vainly struggling to make out the scope of his inquiries, "that will do. Don't speak of this to any one. It seems you are quite sure George had not been ill?" he added, to divert her suspicions from the right channel, in case, which was most improbable, that she had discovered it.

"No, Sir; he never was ill in those days, Sir," replied Letty, with something like a sob.

"Now you may go."

"Thank you, sir," said Letty, dropping a curtsey, and she turned slowly away. Walter read the disappointment on her face.

"Stop a moment," he said. "You need not say anything about it; but I am in hopes, before long, to have good news to tell you about George. Now go."

And Letty, suddenly radiant, returned to the laundry, her wonderings as to what the young master wanted to know so particular about the bottle for, chased for the time

by the glad possibilities that clustered about his last assurance.

"There was something gained," thought Walter; "not much in itself, but sufficiently important, taken in connection with other things. Now for Storrord." And he ordered his horse, refused the attendance of the groom, and leaving word that he should not be back to dinner, rode away to Renson Place. According to his expectation, young Renson was out. He requested to see Storrord, and at the end of some two or three minutes the valet made his appearance at the door of the drawing-room. Walter cast a rapid glance over the man's features. They were clear cut, expressive at once of resolution and of habitual reticence. The pale cheek, the steady eye, the somewhat compressed nostril and the thin lip, all betokened a man whose confidence was not to be surprised. "Close, wary, politic," was the result of Walter's investigation. Storrord perceived that he was being studied. He looked down.

"Come further into the room. I wish to speak with you, and I do not wish to be overheard," said Walter.

Storrord advanced to the other side of the hearth-rug.

"I want certain information; it is my object to avoid any unnecessary publicity in obtaining it, and so I come to you to supply it privately."

"I am not aware that I possess any information that could be of any interest to any gentleman," replied Storrord, quietly.

"Perhaps you think so at this moment; but you will be better able to judge when I refer to Sir Ralph."

"Sir Ralph was a very good master, Sir; I have nothing to say against him," answered Storrord, impassively.

"And Lady Tremyss?"

"My lady was always as other ladies are. I have nothing to say about Lady Tremyss, Sir."

Walter looked steadily at him. There was a convulsive

twitch of the muscle of the eyebrow as he ended. Though of an intrepid nature, Storrord was a nervous man. That twitch betrayed consciousness. Walter resolved to come at once to the point.

"I will speak openly to you. I have reason for believing that Sir Ralph was instrumental in the death of Captain Hartley."

Had he heard his former master accused of having been instrumental in the death of a woodcock, Storrord could not have looked more unmoved.

"I can't say anything, one way or another, sir. I was not on the spot, and I only came in with the rest of the servants."

"Did you see the gun?"

"No, Sir; it was not there."

"What had become of it?"

"I do not know, Sir."

"Did you ever ask?"

"No, Sir."

Storrord's face was like a sealed book. Walter must try to reach his convictions in some other way.

"What was it that appeared to Sir Ralph on the evening of his wedding day?"

Storrord changed his weight to the other foot.

"I do not know, Sir."

"You saw him while the vision was before him?"

"Yes, Sir."

"What did you then suppose it was?"

"I never said I supposed it was any thing, Sir."

"Do you think he fancied it was Captain Hartley?"

"Sir Ralph never said, Sir."

"Then what Sir Ralph saw was the result of his imagination."

"I suppose it was, Sir."

"Do not forget that I could summon you before a magistrate and demand your deposition."

"But I know nothing, Sir."

"The law has ways of sharpening men's memories."

"I trust the English law is not such, Sir, as to punish a man for not saying what he does not know."

He was obviously impervious to fear. Walter must make it for the man's interest to reveal what he knew. He had kept Sir Ralph's secret because it was his interest so to do; his interest must now be enlisted to divulge it.

"I should on many accounts be sorry to be driven to any such expedient. I wish to gain the information I seek in as quiet a manner as possible. I do not hesitate to say that it would be worth fifty pounds to me."

Storrord's eye dilated an instant. He paused.

"Fifty pounds is a large sum, Sir," he said, slowly, at length. "I am sorry I cannot earn it."

There was an almost imperceptible change in his tone.

"Supposing that you knew, should you still refuse to give the information?"

"Supposing that I knew anything, Sir—"

"Yes."

"I should say one hundred pounds, Sir," replied Storrord, steadily.

Walter took a cheque from his pocket-book, asked for pen and ink, filled it up, and laid it upon a stand near him.

"And for this sum you engage to tell me all you know about Sir Ralph and Lady Tremyss."

Storrord looked away from the check.

"Not of my lady, Sir. If I knew anything I could not say it."

"And why not?"

"I could not, Sir."

"What reason have you for refusing?"

Storrord glanced around the room, drew a step nearer, and said in a low voice: "I should not think my life worth an hour's purchase, sir, if Lady Tremyss were my enemy."

Walter could not shake Storrd's settled resolve. He was forced at length to relinquish his fruitless efforts, and content himself with learning what he was willing to say with regard to Sir Ralph.

"I will tell you all I know, Sir; but it is not much."

"Very well."

"I had been with Sir Ralph a little over eight months when Captain and Mrs. Hartley came on a visit to the Park. I had got well acquainted with Sir Ralph's usual ways in that time; but from the day he received Captain Hartley's letter, he became different from what he had been. He did not rest a minute. After they arrived, he grew stranger than ever. He was always a dark-complexioned man; but he got a red, swarthy look that did not belong to him; and he would sit up till three and four in the morning, long after every one else had gone to bed, which was not his habit before. The house was all in a whirl with company the whole time, and Sir Ralph seemed to think that nothing was good enough for them. One day Mrs. Hartley said that she would like to see a certain play, and he had play-actors down from London, and a stage fitted up, and the ball-room turned into a theatre. She took every thing very quietly.

"On the morning of the day Captain Hartley died, when I came into the dressing-room I began to arrange the dressing things ready for Sir Ralph to come in, and as I was doing so I saw some shining grains on the carpet. I supposed the housemaid had let some coal dust fall. I took the hearth brush and swept the grains into the fire. They went off. It was gunpowder. Something put it into my head to go down into the dining-room and look round at the guns and fowling-pieces. They were all in their places. The housemaid was dusting the room, so I could not examine them then. As I finished dressing Sir Ralph, he was taken with a shivering fit, as if he had the ague, but otherwise he

seemed no wise different from the days before. I did not exactly suspect any thing, but I felt uneasy. I watched all the day for an opportunity to get alone into the dining-room. At length, late in the afternoon, I got there. I took down nearly every gun before I came to anything. At last I took down one that had been newly cleaned. I had just got it into my hand, when Mr. Goliath came in. I could not tell whether he had seen me or not, but he looked at me all the time I was in the room. I felt as if something were going to happen. The air seemed heavy.

"When Sir Ralph came up to dress I knew by his breath that he had been drinking wine. He talked by fits and starts; but what he said did not seem to belong together. He was in a hurry to get through dressing, but when he was dressed he did not appear inclined to go down. At length, seeing it was getting late, I told him that Captain and Mrs. Hartley must be in the drawing-room. He swore an awful oath at me, and went down stairs.

"That night there was no company, and Sir Ralph and Captain Hartley sat in the dining-room together. Mr. Goliath was not to be seen all that evening. I asked where he was. The footman said he must have gone out, for that he had not seen him since the dessert was put on the table. I took occasion to pass by the place where his hat usually hung. It was there. I went upstairs and sat down and waited, I did not know for what. The time went on; I began to think that nothing would happen, when I heard the report of a gun. It seemed outside of the window. At first I could not move; then I ran down stairs. All the servants, men and women, were crowded together in the hall, whispering and exclaiming below their breath; the dining-room door was open. I pushed through them and went in. Captain Hartley lay on the floor; Mrs. Hartley was holding his head on her knee; Sir Ralph stood leaning against the sideboard; there was a great pool of blood at his

feet. I did not notice Mr. Goliath. I looked at the place where I had seen the gun which had been cleaned. It was gone. I looked for it on the floor. It was not there. I heard afterwards that Mr. Goliath had carried it away. That is all I know, Sir."

"Do you think Sir Ralph ever fancied you had suspected him?"

"No, Sir."

"And Goliath?"

"It was hard to tell, Sir. Sometimes I thought he did and sometimes I thought he did not."

"You think Goliath was aware of the truth?"

"Yes, Sir."

"What gave you that impression?"

"A number of things, Sir. He was in the room the first one after Mrs. Hartley, so he must have been near. None of the servants knew where he was, so he could not have been in their part of the house, nor in the hall, and he could not have been out. There was a door which opened from the library into the passage near the butler's pantry. He could easily have got in and out of the library without any one's seeing him."

"You think he was watching there?"

"Yes, Sir."

"What do you think had aroused his suspicions?"

"He may have seen me put back the gun, Sir, and examined it himself afterwards; he may have had nothing but Sir Ralph's ways to set him thinking. He had known Sir Ralph since he was a boy, Sir."

"Do you think Mrs. Hartley had any idea of the circumstances?"

"No, Sir;—if she had had ——"

Storrord paused.

"Go on."

"I had rather not, Sir."

"Have you told me all you are inclined to communicate?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Very well, there is the cheque. Say nothing of this."

"You may be very sure, Sir."

And Walter departed.

Storrord took up the cheque, and placed it carefully in his pocket-book.

"He is a fine young gentleman, is Mr. Arden," he mentally soliloquized, "but if he is going to cross my lady's path, I'd rather be in my place than in his. If he knew what I do——"

Storrord shook his head, while young Arden rode away quite unconscious that in his zeal for mercy and justice he had placed himself in what might prove an awkward position were the case ever to be brought into court.

Walter had intended to dine with Doctor Jacobs, and to talk over the affair in the evening, but on reaching his house he found that the doctor was out, and would not be back till the evening, so he returned to the hall.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE WINE CELLAR.

ISABEL was in the drawing-room at the Hall when Walter returned from Renson Place. She was sitting in the window seat, her hands folded on her lap. Through the window behind her fell the last rays of the setting sun, slanting from between heavy, dark grey clouds; a few blood-red bars streaked the horizon, and deepened by their contrast the sombre and stern coloring of the lowering masses above. The light rested upon her, shedding around the outline of

her head a faint glory, beneath which her eyes looked out from the shadow of her face with a melancholy gaze.

Walter came forward and took her hand. It rested an instant, unresponsive yet trembling in his; then she withdrew it, left the window seat, and placed herself by Mrs. Arden's side.

"It was all I could do to keep her when she heard you had come back, it really was," said Mrs. Arden.

"She should have known how glad I always am to see my friends, especially those who are yours also," he replied.

"Mrs. Arden sent over and invited me to cheer her up in her loneliness, as she called it," said Isabel, "and how can I do that when she is not alone?"

"You must remember that you have been tempting my aunt to wish me away again," said Walter. "Lady Tremyss has gone up to London, it seems."

"Yes; Mamma went early the morning after we were here, and took up the bracelet. She writes that it will be much handsomer than before. It was so kind in her, I was quite satisfied with it, as it was."

"I wonder she should have taken the trouble, so pretty at it was," remarked Mrs. Arden.

"Yes. Every one says Mamma spoils me. I suppose it is true."

Isabel sighed.

"How lonely you must be, my dear, now that she is away," said Mrs. Arden compassionately.

"I do not think I am exactly afraid; but there are such strange noises in my room at night, and I cannot find out where they come from."

"I do not think that at all astonishing; it would be strange if there were not noises in such an old house, and I have heard Lady Tremyss say that it is full of rats and mice," rejoined young Arden, while his aunt's eyes vibrated rapidly.

"Yes, but,—you will think it absurd, I know,—the sounds I hear at night beat time, time in cadence, and it is the cadence of tune."

"Did you ever hear the tune?" asked Walter.

"Yes, but I am sure again you won't believe me; it is a tune Mamma used to play years ago, an old minuet, the only thing I ever heard her play; she caught it by ear."

"And you hear it only at night?"

"Yes, almost every night."

"How long does it last?"

"Sometimes as long as I am awake, sometimes not so long."

"Can you hear the sounds in the day time?" inquired Walter.

"No, only at night."

"How does it beat time?"

"With a hammering sound."

"It is not probable that you think any one is really there hammering," said Walter.

"Oh no, of course not; besides the cellars are not under that part of the house."

"Then there is no excavation there whatever?"

"I think not."

By one of those inexplicable coincidences which occur at times, and not unfrequently, to all of us; Mrs. Arden's next question was precisely that which Walter most wished to hear answered though he would not ask it.

"By-the-bye, my dear, whereabouts is Sir Ralph's famous wine vault?"

"You will think it odd, but I really cannot tell you. It is a secret. I suppose Sir Ralph was afraid of his wine being stolen, for he never let any one know except Goliath. He had the rooms behind the dining-room locked up while the carpenter was at work."

"But the stone-masons and laborers, who dug it out,—they must have known of course," said Mrs. Arden.

"Melvil told me that they worked a long way in from the cellars, and that when the vault was finished they filled up the opening and built up the wall just as it was before."

The daylight had faded since Walter's entrance. The firelight seemed to grow brighter as the shadows fell without. It illumined Isabel's face as she sat, her cheek resting on her hand, her eyes fixed upon the flickering flame, rising, falling, fading, then leaping up anew again to fall, again to fade, and at last to die into coldness and darkness, only bitter ashes remaining to tell of what once had been. That requiem of hope, so dreary to all, so unutterably dreary to the young, was intoning its dirge to Isabel's ear as she sat there.

She had grown to feel that she was as nothing to Walter. The hopes which his constant visits to the Park had sustained in their struggle against the discouragement as constantly resulting from the equal calmness of his manner, had gone out one by one. The last had been blighted by that recent chilling parting. She no longer feared, she knew that Walter did not care for her. She was left, passive, unresisting, stranded at the outset of her voyage.

Young Arden could but too easily read her mood. The spectacle of her submissive endurance well-nigh unmanned him. As he looked on her, the heroic traits within him began to turn traitor. Since his own hopes of happiness were irretrievably gone, why should he not, at least do his best to make another happy? What was there to hinder him from marrying Isabel?

For a moment the temptation was strong; but the young man's mind was of too firm a temper to be thus worked upon for more than a moment. His love of truth, his allegiance to duty arose in their might. Neither for himself nor for another would he swerve from what he had always held to be right. He did not love Isabel. It would be wrong to marry her, not loving her, loving another. She

would not wish him to marry her, such being the case. And even did he love her, could he marry Lady Tremyss' daughter?

The summons to dinner came to break the silence of the drawing-room. The change of place seemed, however, to exert but little influence upon the respective moods of Walter and Isabel. The dinner passed but heavily. Isabel was unnaturally quiet, Walter conversed with effort, Mrs. Arden was the only member of the party who was inclined to talk. Fortunately she had exhausted all the *péripéties* of Edith's engagement before Walter had come in; her attention was now chiefly occupied with subjects of local interest; but even these, in the course of time, came to an end, and the conversation languished anew. At length a sudden remembrance struck her.

"What was it, my dear, that you said you would tell me when Walter came in? It was when we were talking about Edith, don't you remember?"

"Yes, I wanted the pleasure of telling him myself," Isabel answered. "What do you think," she continued, turning to Walter, "Edith is coming to stay at Houston Lacy. Mrs. Lacy has gone up to London and is going to bring Edith back with her for a visit. Is not that good news?"

Walter flushed violently with the various and contradictory emotions her words called up. Isabel looked at him, and turned pale. He was too absorbed in his own sensations to notice her sudden change of color, and Mrs. Arden's perceptions were not sufficiently quick to enable her either to observe Isabel's pallor, or, if observed, to trace it to its cause. Walter had not yet mastered the agitation of his thoughts when Mrs. Arden rose from the table, and with her, Isabel.

When he followed them into the drawing-room, he found Isabel stooping over some transparent embroidery stretched upon a small frame, while Mrs. Arden was plying her never-resting knitting needles. Isabel's attention was to all ap-

pearance, totally absorbed by her occupation. Walter tried to draw her into conversation; but meeting with faint success, he gave up the endeavor, and taking up a book, approached the lamp by which she was working, and began to read. He had held the same page open for about a quarter of an hour, when he heard Mrs. Arden say,

"What is it, my dear. Does anything trouble you?"

"I can't make the pattern come as it should do at this corner."

Mrs. Arden came and leaned over the frame.

"It looks right to me, quite right."

"Don't you see that there is no place for the rose bud? The shamrock and the thistle are too near together."

A pause of examination followed, then Mrs. Arden summoned Walter.

"No trouble at all," he answered to Isabel's deprecatory remonstrance. "Let me see it."

He took from her hand the frame.

On the transparent material stretched across it, Isabel was drawing a wreath of rose buds, shamrocks, and thistles.

"What a tasteful design. Is it your own?"

"No, I copied and enlarged it."

"They're all British emblems, you see, and yet it's just as pretty as if it were French, isn't it?" said Mrs. Arden, contemplating it admiringly.

"It was done by a Frenchwoman, the same I recommended to you, Madame Guillaume."

"It doesn't look like a French design, that is all that I can say, it really doesn't," replied Mrs. Arden, returning to her chair and knitting.

"It is a little singular that it should strike you so," said Isabel, "for the woman's handwriting is very English. I saw it on the bill for the things she sent. It isn't at all a French hand."

"Perhaps she is an Englishwoman who married a Frenchman," said Walter.

"That may be, or perhaps she has taken a French name; a great many of these people do. Madame Julie, who makes all mamma's nicest dresses, is not French at all, she is an Englishwoman."

"I think it time things should be changed, if they have got to such a pass that Englishwomen cannot make a livelihood in their own country without giving themselves out as French, I really do," said Mrs. Arden indignantly.

Mrs. Arden was interrupted by the opening of the door, and the announcement, "Lady Tremyss."

Walter had not seen her since he had acquired the moral certitude of the hideous tragedy of which she was the moving spring. He gazed at her as she advanced, the beautiful, graceful woman, hedged in by all the dignity and state which wait on wealth and high position; he listened to the suave tones of her voice as she addressed his aunt, he saw her smile upon her daughter, and a sickening sense of disgust and loathing came over him. He seemed to behold a grinning skeleton through that fair, shapely form; those blue veins distilled slow dropping poison; those softly uttered words hissed upon his ear. It was with difficulty that he could force the customary words of courtesy to his lips. He withdrew to a little distance, seated himself with his back to the light, and watched her.

Mrs. Arden was saying something about her sudden departure.

"Yes, I had the bracelet to give new orders about, and those hundred-and-one things, which we are always putting off, had been accumulating for a long time. I was very busy all the while. You will be glad to hear, Isabel, that I have bought a pair of chestnut horses. It is your favorite color, I know."

"I think horses of that color are apt to be vicious, don't

you?" remarked Mrs. Arden. "The only time I was ever thrown was by a chestnut horse."

"But these are not for riding, you know," replied Isabel, "and no matter what they are, mamma would soon break them in."

"I shall not need to take that trouble," said Lady Tremyss, "they are very well trained already. But you do not ask me about Miss Arden. I have seen her."

"How was she looking?"

"Much the same as usual, quite unmoved by all the excitement she has just been through."

There was nothing in Lady Tremyss' look or manner which betrayed whether success or failure had attended her expedition, or whether or not her suspicions had been roused. Her unrevealing features kept their counsel well; and when at the end of a half-hour, she departed with Isabel, Walter's scrutiny, close as it had been, had discovered nothing. He might as well have questioned one of the sphinxes at her gate as her face.

As they entered the carriage, Isabel sank back in the corner. She did not speak until they had turned into the high road, then she said,

"Is it to-morrow that Edith is coming, Mamma?"

"To-morrow. Are you glad?"

"Yes, of course, I am glad,—but, Mamma, I cannot talk,—I am so tired."

Isabel shrank further into her corner, and mother and daughter drove on in silence until they reached the Park.

From her earliest childhood, Isabel had kept her deepest pleasures and all her pains to herself. Perhaps it may have been the reserve of the mother's character, which was thus reflected in the child; perhaps it had a deeper root, and came into being with Isabel's first breath of life;—however that may have been, the latent secretiveness which was so strangely at variance with her otherwise frank and joyous

character, never belied itself in any emergency of pain; and now her only desire was to shrink from her mother, from everyone, to go and hide herself away where she could be alone with her grief.

Lady Tremyss cast a glance after her daughter as Isabel bade her good-night in the hall, then she went into the drawing-room, locked the door, and resting her forehead on her hands, sat down to ponder and to resolve.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MEETING OF EDITH AND WALTER AT ILTON PARK.

"DEAR me, Walter, I've had such a dreadful night!" said Mrs. Arden, as her nephew, looking unnaturally stern and grave, took his place at the breakfast table on the next morning. "I don't think I've shut my eyes once, I really don't," she sighed, plaintively.

"What was the trouble?" inquired Walter, absently.

"The sounds—they never stopped till three o'clock, and by that time I was in such a flurry that I couldn't sleep a wink even when the house was still. I heard somebody walking—now don't say it was fancy, I positively did,—and I heard a chair move every once in a while, and then the steps would begin again. I assure you I got into such a state, you can't imagine!"

"I am very sorry," returned Walter, "but I had no idea that you would be disturbed by my sitting up."

"Then it was you, after all," said Mrs. Arden, with an expression of mingled relief and disappointment. "Dear me, now that I look at you, how pale you are. I'm afraid you are ill, and it was that kept you up last night, I know it was."

"No, I was not ill—I was thinking," he answered, gravely, and taking up his letters, began to turn them over. Among them was one from Taunton. He opened it hastily.

"DEAR ARDEN:—I said I would write when I had anything to tell.

"I went this morning to the house in Chadlink Street. I saw the maid—I did not care to see the mistress. She declared, as I expected, that she knew nothing whatever about Mrs. Williams. However, I got from her a piece of information that will doubtless surprise you, and that is that a second person is engaged in the same inquiry. It seems that yesterday a lady called, and asked after this same Mrs. Williams. She said she had heard of her as being ill and in distress; that she had called to see if she could be of any service. This roused my curiosity, of course. I cross-questioned the girl, and she said that she had very minutely inquired about Mrs. Williams, and as to her possible whereabouts. I can make nothing of this, but send it, thinking that you may find it useful. The lady was very handsome, and wore her veil down all the time, the girl says.

"Next I obtained a detailed description of Mrs. W.'s appearance, and what was of still more consequence, I learnt that the girl had looked after her and seen her go into the baker's shop in the same street.

"To the baker's shop I went. The woman there said that she remembered perfectly Mrs. W. I asked her if she recollected her coming to her shop the day she left. She said she did, that Mrs. W. had a small bundle with her; she bought a roll, paid a little account she had there, and went away. I inquired if she had any idea where she had gone, and she replied that Mrs. W. had asked a direction, but all she could remember about it was that it was to a street that began with "Great." After trying a while to recall

the name, she said she thought it was either Great Needham or Great Windham Street. The indication was not very precise, still it was something, so off I started for Great Needham Street. I found nothing there. Then I went to Great Windham Street. I had not much choice of lodging-houses here; there were but two, one for single gentlemen only, the other was a French lodging-house; there was no Mrs. Williams at either. Then I tried all the private houses. I found one Mrs. Williams, but she was a cook, and did not answer at all to the description. So here I am this evening not a whit advanced.

"To-morrow I shall begin a campaign, taking in all the shops that employ sewing-women. The girl says she sews for the shops.

"You told me that Mr. Daubenay set the detectives at work some three weeks ago, as the advertisement did not bring her out, so of course I shall not apply to them. If they had discovered anything, you would know it through him.

"I am very much interested in this matter: it is better than fox-hunting, and capital practice, as I told you before.

"Let me hear if you have any suggestions to make, and believe me ever,

Truly yours,

"JOHN TAUNTON."

—Great Needham, Great Windham Street;—certainly he had recently heard that address. What was it? He had it written down somewhere.

He turned over the leaves of his memorandum-book.

Yes, he was right. Madame Guillaume, thirty-three Great Windham Street. It was only Isabel's sewing-woman. But what was it that Isabel had been saying about the English handwriting, and the frequency with which work-women assumed French names? Guillaume—Williams; it was certainly a coincidence. And then that

wreath of British emblems. Was it possible that he had come at length on the scent? that he had been carrying about with him that very direction for days? It would not do to be too sure. He would write to Taunton to ask some lady friend to drive there and see her, and give the order, and her description of the person would decide the question.

Walter despatched his new instructions to Taunton by that day's mail.

The discovery of the chain of circumstances that had placed the Daubenay ring in Lady Tremyss' hands, had sunk into very secondary importance in Walter's mind, compared with another discovery, linked with which was the question of who and what Lady Tremyss was. In the utter uncertainty that shrouded her origin, he felt as if she might vanish as unaccountably and mysteriously as she had appeared. The only possibility that had yet offered itself of attaining any knowledge of her antecedents seemed to be in the identification of Mrs. Williams, and to the accomplishment of this object young Arden charged his friend to strain every effort, offering him *carte blanche* as to expense.

The letter despatched, he ordered his horse, and rode over to confer with Dr. Jacobs. He had passed the preceding night in anxious thought, reviewing all the circumstances, comparing and weighing all the testimony connected with Sir Ralph's disappearance; and he had slowly arrived at a horrible but firm conviction,—the conviction that Sir Ralph had not been drowned, as had hitherto been believed, but that he still dragged on his life, a prisoner in the hands of Lady Tremyss and Goliath. Isabel's remarks on the beating in cadence at night had set his suspicions on the right track at length, and had enabled him to identify the very place of Sir Ralph's imprisonment. He was, without a doubt, immured in the wine vault. It was time to ask the counsel of a man older and more experienced than himself; and a number of reasons, chief among which was the belief

that he should find him fully disposed to co-operate in any plan that might shield Isabel, combined to fix his choice upon the old physician.

He returned at two o'clock, asked for a cup of coffee, refused all other nourishment, mounted again, and rode away in the direction of the Park.

That morning it had been decided that delay might be dangerous, that he should not wait to hear further from Taunton, but that he should at once seek an interview with Lady Tremyss, acquaint her with the charges against her, and offer her the choice of leaving England at once, or of remaining to await the result of a legal investigation. In the counsel he had held with Dr. Jacobs, the desire, as far as possible, to save Isabel had triumphed over every other consideration. Lady Tremyss' marriage settlement would be sufficient to support her abroad in luxury. Her acquiescence in the plan could scarcely be considered doubtful. The whole matter might be arranged secretly, so that nothing should transpire until she had left England, and was with Isabel in safety.

"As to Sir Ralph and his wife," Dr. Jacobs had said, "they seem well pitted against each other—devil against devil. The one thing to consider is how to save that poor girl."

Walter had nerved himself to the immediate performance of his task, and it was with no feeling of relief that he learned at the lodge that both Lady Tremyss and Miss Hartley were absent. He rode on to the house. He would write and leave a note asking for an interview the next day.

He entered the long, low, crimson and black drawing-room. As he glanced around, it seemed curtained and draped with crime. The faces on the wall had a fixed and unnatural stare, the bronze busts were animated with an unreal and sinister life, the flowers on the table breathed forth heavy and sickening odors, the very sunlight that

streamed within had in it something oppressive and suffocating. He walked to one of the windows and threw it open. As he looked without, the pines stood waving their dark branches slowly backward and forward with a beckoning motion, as if calling upon something invisible to come and listen to their inaudible revealings. He turned away from the window, sat down at Lady Tremyss' writing-table at the end of the room, and commenced his note to her. As he was writing the last line, he heard the approaching roll of carriage wheels. That must be she! He rose from his seat and stood expectant. The door opened. From the twilight of the hall appeared a slender form, a gentle face—the face and form of Edith!

She did not notice him at first, apparently she did not know of his presence. She came forward, turning her eyes slowly around, as one who is recognizing familiar objects, one by one. As her glance fell upon him, she stopped, and stood visibly trembling. Walter did not move. Indignation rose uppermost in the whirl of his sensations. He had never thought that he could feel anger against Edith; but as he beheld her, pale, shrinking, quivering before him, a cold sternness mastered his every other feeling. She had rejected him whom she loved, sold herself for wealth and rank; no wonder she feared to meet him. He bowed silently, and moved towards the door. His touch was already on the handle, when a faint word sounded on his ear,

“Walter—”

He turned. Edith's eyes were fastened imploringly upon him. He hesitated a moment, then strode towards her, took her hands in his, and gazed into her face. As he looked the paleness of her cheek changed to pink, then to crimson. She withdrew her hands forcibly from his grasp, and covered her face with them. He led her to a sofa and seated her upon it, for she was still trembling. He leaned over her in silence.

“Oh, Edith, why —?” broke at length from him.

She turned her head away without speaking. He rose from his stooping posture, retired a few steps, and drew himself to his full height. She glanced hurriedly up.

“Walter, do not go till I have told you that I hope you will be happy.”

“Happy—Edith, how dare you wish me happy!”

“What is it, Walter? What is it that you mean?” she stammered.

“How dare you wish me happy, when—”

He paused. His look seemed to scathe her.

“And Isabel,” she added, with effort.

“Isabel—what of Isabel? Why do you speak of her? Do you think my affection so slight a thing that what you reject you may pass on to another?”

“But since it is so,” she answered timidly.

“Since what is so? Since I have nothing left to hope for, you wish me to hope? Since my every wish is destroyed, you wish me to turn my desires elsewhere? Edith, is this really you?”

Edith turned a bewildered gaze upon him.

“But Lady Tremyss—the letter—the poem,” she said faintly, at length, as he waited for her to speak.

“What letter? what poem?” asked Walter hoarsely, shuddering with anticipation of some coming disclosure of Lady Tremyss' machinations.

“The serenade to—”

Edith's voice stopped at the name.

A spasm writhed young Arden's lips for an instant, then he slowly answered,

“Edith, have you believed?—” He paused, then continued vehemently, “It was a translation wiled from me by that fiend.”

It was some moments before either spoke again. Walter was the first to break the silence.

"And my letter?"

She cast upon him a quick, startled glance.

"I've had no letter."

"The letter I sent you when I found you had left the Hall; did you receive that letter?"—Her father saw all the letters. Could he have kept that back?—

Edith's lips turned pale. They scarcely moved to frame the answering word,

"Never."

Walter left her and walked about the room. He returned and stood before her as she sat there so white, so wan, with such a world of anguish in her eyes.

"Edith, in that letter I told you that you were dearer to me than any words could say. I asked you to be my wife."

He paused for a moment, then continued with the same enforced composure of manner.

"And now I ask you to refuse to marry this man, whom you do not love, and to give yourself to me."

Edith's eyelids closed heavily; she did not answer; she seemed gathering up her strength.

He bent over her.

"We love each other, Edith. Is there anything that should part us?"

Edith's lips moved ineffectually once or twice before any sound came forth; at last, with an effort, she commanded her voice.

"Yes, Walter, there is one thing. It was my refusal of Mr. Averil that brought on my father's illness at Albansea. The physician said that any mental disturbance might bring on another, and that a second attack might prove fatal. My father's life may depend upon it. I must."

Her voice had grown stronger as she proceeded. It fell clear and distinct on Walter's ear, telling her unchangeable resolution. What was to be urged against such a plea?

"We will not think of what might have been," she continued. "Our duties lie apart. We can pray for each other, Walter. There can be no wrong in that. And when you pray, ask God to give me strength."

A great silence seemed to fall around her as she ceased. She saw, as in a dream, Walter stoop and raise her hand, she felt his lips pressed to it, she beheld him leave the room. She tried to move, but could not. She sat stunned, stupefied for a while, then a keener consciousness returned, and with it her power of movement. She rose and left the room. She bade the servant tell Miss Hartley that she had waited for her as long as she could; then she quitted Ilton Park and drove back to Houston Lacy.

Mr. Averil came out to meet her. He had arrived unexpectedly that afternoon. As she entered the drawing-room Mrs. Lacy accosted her.

"Oh, my dear, it is such a pity;—you had not been gone half an hour when Lady Tremyss and Miss Hartley drove up. They had but just gone. I think you must have met them. Did you return by the upper or the lower road?"

"I do not remember," Edith replied.

"Not remember, my dear," said her father, "why they are very different. One crosses the hill, and the other goes by the river."

Edith made no reply, but turned her head away. The change of position brought her face more directly under Averil's observation. He came towards her.

"You are not well," he said.

While Averil placed Edith on the sofa in the boudoir, and arranged the pillows beneath her head, his sister drew closer the rose-colored curtains, and placed eau de Cologne and lavender water on a little stand beside her.

"There, now you shall rest. You will be better in a little while. I shall see that no one comes in to disturb you. Poor child, how white she looks!"

And Mrs. Lacy retired, softly closing the door.

Lady Tremyss had spoken falsely when she had said that Miss Arden, when she saw her, seemed much the same as usual. From the time of her return to Arden Court, Edith's health had rapidly failed. See uttered no complaints, when questioned, said nothing was the matter with her; but she changed day by day.

Sir Joseph, at Averil's request, readily prescribed change of scene to Mr. Arden, and Edith passively acquiesced in its necessity. She had shown herself reluctant to go to Houston Lacy, but had at length yielded to her father's and her lover's urgent representations. Averil was to have followed them two days later. The business which detained him in London was pressing; but no sooner had Edith left Arden Court than he became uneasy, restless, impatient. He could not bear to have her separated from him by such a distance. He dreaded he knew not what. How deathlike she looked when he bade her good-bye. If anything were to happen before their marriage,—and Averil muttered a curse on the chance that might at the last moment interfere to frustrate his desires. Business might take care of itself. He would not stay in London. Leaving a short and sufficiently abrupt note for his lawyers, he had followed Edith by the night train that went down to Houston Lacy. When he arrived he had found that she was gone over to see Miss Hartley.

As Lady Tremyss, followed by her daughter, came gliding up the length of the great saloon, Mrs. Lacy drew in her breath; and Averil, though not easily moved to admiration, rose involuntarily to his feet. Like those snakes whose colors show only when they are excited by the approach of danger, or by rage, so Lady Tremyss' usually calm and colorless features had this day taken a new and peculiar brilliancy. Her long, dark eyes gleamed from beneath their lashes with an intermittent light that seemed

to flash and play over her face, shedding on it a swift and shifting glow. She glittered from beneath her black velvet draperies like an opal as she greeted Mrs. Lacy, then turning to Mr. Averil held out to him her slender hand with softly-uttered hopes that in right of her affection for Miss Arden she might claim him also as a friend.

Isabel stood the while pale and silent. She seemed a white shadow by her mother's side; while Lady Tremyss, laying aside her habitual reserve out of compliment to her hearers, as it seemed, conversed with an easy, sparkling grace, new to Mrs. Lacy, often as they had met, and quite unexpected to her brother, who had been heard to say that Lady Tremyss' only fault was her being too statue-like. Little by little she directed her conversation more exclusively to Averil, flattering his pride by her prophecies of the brilliant success that awaited his young fiancée; soothing his vanity by her wily comments on the indescribable charm of that reserve which habitually induced her to veil her every deepest feeling under the semblance of indifference, one might almost say of coldness; and rousing his self-complacency by her remarks on the rare sweetness of Miss Arden's voice and smile whenever any subject was introduced of interest sufficient to induce her to lay aside for the moment her usual somewhat haughty reticence.

"It is not long since I saw that smile," Lady Tremyss added, turning an expressive glance upon Averil.

Averil's eyes glowed.—Was it possible that Edith's coldness was but maiden pride and shyness?—Isabel's color rose slowly.—Did Edith really love Mr. Averil instead of Walter?—

Lady Tremyss, passing on to the subject of Edith's delicacy of health, regretted that singular timidity which disinclined her for those exercises which would have otherwise proved so beneficial to her, and Isabel reminded her mother of Edith's partiality to Moira, and proposed sending her

over for Edith's riding; which Averil, with characteristic jealousy of every past association of Edith's life, refused, saying that he intended purchasing a pair of gentle ponies to drive her about with, as the stables at Houston Lacy contained nothing but thorough-breds.

"I have a great mind to try again to get away my little French pony from Mrs. Arden," said Mrs. Lacy meditatively. "She bought it for her to ride last summer, when she was staying at Arden Hall. I was sorry after I had sold it, and tried a few weeks ago to buy it back; but young Arden would not let me have it, though I offered more than they gave for it."

"If you really want two very gentle little animals, such as no one could possibly be afraid to drive with, I think I can tell you of a pair," said Lady Tremyss. "I will send a groom when I return, to find whether their owner is still inclined to part with them. If so, I will drive my new chestnut pair over here to-morrow morning, and take you to look at them. Will that suit you?"

The unwonted fascination of her manner had begun to exert its compelling influence over Averil's displeasure; and as she raised her long, black eyes to his questioningly, yet with a tinge of timidity as if she feared a refusal, it vanished entirely. He accepted the invitation.

Lady Tremyss and her daughter took their leave and were escorted by Averil to their carriage, an honor he had never before paid to any of his sister's guests.

Averil's coldness and sternness had disappeared now that he saw Edith lying back on the cushions of the boudoir, the rose-colored light scarcely tinging the whiteness of her cheek.

Edith lay the while with closed lids, striving to reduce to order the rush and tumult of her thoughts. She dared not think of Walter, such thought was forbidden to her now. At last her mind, wearied with pain, sought refuge in other

reflections. With the sensitiveness of an over-conscientious nature, ever prone unduly to blame itself, she began to accuse herself of ingratitude towards her betrothed, of want of proper recognition of his unceasing care and anxious affection. She opened her eyes and turned them upon him. How sad, how troubled he looked. She extended her hand and smiled on him an instant, then her lids closed again, and the momentary expression vanished. She did not see the flush which mounted to his forehead, the gaze he fastened upon her pallid face.

—The time had come. She had begun to love him.—

Tempering his exultation, a new sensation stole through him, and sent the tears to Averil's eyes. They rose like a soft dew, purifying the grosser strain of his nature. The sentiment with which he had beheld Edith on that first night at Albansea came back upon him, soothing, calming, elevating. Peace and gladness sang together their sweet choral in Averil's arid heart. As the sun went down, he rose from his seat beside her, and drawing aside the curtains, watched the red orb sink beneath the horizon, and saw the first stars shine out; and in his heart, for the first time since his childhood, Averil thanked God.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MRS. WILLIAMS' NARRATIVE.

THAT night saw Walter on his way to London. A telegraphic message had met him on his return to the Hall.

"Come up. J. T." were the only words it contained.

He could hurry up to London by that night's express train, find out the cause of the summons, and return in time for his appointed interview with Lady Tremyss on the next evening.

The road passed near Houston Lacy. He turned his head from the lights that gleamed through its windows,—Edith was there.

The hours passed slowly to young Arden; each seemed longer than the last. He tried in vain to sleep. The many exciting emotions of the preceding day chased all possibility of repose. At length he saw the dawn break over a dense, dark cloud of smoke. A few moments more, and he was at the terminus.

As he stepped out upon the platform, a tall, broad-shouldered figure rushed up to him, and caught him by the hand.

"Arden, my dear fellow, she's found!"

"It all went on wheels from the time I got your letter," Taunton resumed, as he stowed himself away in the cab which he had in waiting. "I drove at once to a lady I know, a friend of my sister's. The upshot of it is that she saw her. She says she is not French but English, and describes her exactly as the maid-servant did. It seems your idea was correct as to the change of name. Now we'll have some supper, and you shall go to bed for three or four hours, and then you can be off."

The next morning saw Walter at Great Windham Street. She had gone out. The servant asked would he wait for her.

Taking his assent for granted, she retreated into the entry, and threw open the door of a small back parlor. Walter followed her.

Half-an-hour had not elapsed when Walter heard the street door thrown open at the same moment that the bell rang. The parlor door opened, and a gentlewoman appeared on the threshold.

Walter rose and bowed. She saluted him with the air of a person accustomed to good society, and stood waiting for him to speak.

"Madame Guillaume, I believe."

"The same, Sir."

What was he to say to her? Strange that he had not thought of that before. He must order something;—awkward,—she looked so like a lady.

"Excuse me, Madame, I come to ask if you are able to provide for me some embroideries?"

"That is my occupation, Sir."

"I should like some—some—" what did people wear?—"an embroidered dressing-gown."

"For yourself, Sir?"

A tendency to a smile appeared for an instant amid the grave lines of Mrs. Williams' mouth.

"No; for my aunt, I mean. Can you let me have any such thing?"

"I have none ready-made, Sir. I could embroider one; but it would take a long time, and the expense would be great."

"That is of no consequence."

"Shall I show you my patterns, Sir? Perhaps you may have a choice as to the design."

"Yes; I should like to see them."

And Mrs. Williams retired.

"No; that woman was all right,—lady-like, dignified, conscientious. It required no effort of discrimination to read her character,—face, expression, demeanor, all were consistent. This Mrs. Williams was trustworthy. How had she ever become involved with such a being as Lady Tremys."

Walter's meditations were interrupted by the return of Mrs. Williams, with a portfolio in her hand. She opened it, and spread the drawings it contained upon the table.

They were delicately and gracefully composed, evidently the work of a practised pencil. As he turned them over, young Arden caught sight of a small pattern for a collar, the same wreath of rosebuds, shamrocks, and thistles, which he

had seen Isabel copying. An idea struck him,—he must venture something,—this offered an opportunity for doing so without rousing her suspicions.

"I think I have seen this before," he said, drawing the sheet from under that which Mrs. Williams had just placed upon it.

"It is possible, Sir. I have worked a number of that pattern."

"May I ask for whom you worked it?"

"Certainly, Sir. I sent half-a-dozen of that design, and half-a-dozen of this—" she held up another pattern, "to Lady Tremyss, in Warwickshire, a short time since. I worked a set for Miss Horsford, of Watertree Lodge, just before."

"Then I was right. I saw Miss Hartley with this pattern."

"Not Miss Hartley, Sir. Miss Horsford, I said."

"Perhaps so; but I refer to Miss Hartley, Lady Tremyss' daughter by her first husband, Captain Hartley."

"Captain Hartley, did you say, Sir? Captain Hartley—"

She looked at him eagerly an instant, then its expression of habitual depression returned to her face.

"Excuse me, Sir; I used to know a Mrs. Hartley, the wife of a Captain Hartley; but, of course, it cannot be the same."

"It would be very easy to ascertain. Will you describe the Mrs. Hartley you used to know?"

"She was the most beautiful woman I ever saw, Sir. She was dark:—I can't well describe her. There was something strange about her. She scarcely ever smiled. I never saw her laugh. I never saw any one at all like her."

"A very singular person she must have been?" remarked young Arden, tacitly allowing Mrs. Williams to conclude that Lady Tremyss and Mrs. Hartley were two different

characters. "Who was she before she married, did you say?"

"I can't tell, Sir. All I know is that for some years she was in a French convent."

"Indeed.—In France, I presume. This also is very tasteful. I shall want some pocket handkerchiefs like these." He examined a pattern.

Mrs. Williams' faded eye brightened a little at the prospect of well paid work opening before her.—What a pleasant young gentleman this was.—She forgot about the convent.

"You were saying the convent was in France, I believe."

"No, Sir. In Montreal."

"Ah, really. And I suppose her parents took her out."

"No, Sir; she ran away."

"This is quite an interesting story," and Walter smiled. "Wouldn't you indulge me by going on with it while I look over these patterns? I haven't quite made up my mind as to which of these three I like the best."

Walter placed the three designs in a row before him, and seemed intent on their different outlines. "Ran away! how did she get out?"

"There is not so much to tell as perhaps you fancy, Sir; but I will tell all I know."

Walter's courteous manner, his kindly smile, were pleasant interruptions of the monotonous routine of Mrs. Williams' daily life. She felt disposed to humor the handsome young gentleman's appetite for romance, boyish though it seemed.

"My husband was chaplain of the regiment to which Captain Hartley belonged, Sir; that is the way in which we came to be called upon by Captain Hartley to help him."

Walter shifted the drawings.

"Late one night Captain Hartley came and called down

my husband. He came back and told me to get up quickly and dress myself, and come down stairs. I did so, and there I found Captain Hartley and a nun. My husband married them. He translated the service into French as he went along, for it appeared that the nun could speak no English. She did not look timid or frightened,—she looked fierce;—but such a beautiful creature I never expect to see again.

"I was so surprised, and I will say frightened, for the danger of such a thing was great, that I did not know what to say. I felt very much inclined to tell Captain Hartley to take her away when he asked me to keep her with me. But it was difficult to refuse Captain Hartley anything, and at last I consented. How he got her out we never knew. He was bound to secrecy, he said. I have often wondered what became of her and of him."

Mrs. Williams paused and seemed absorbed in recollection for a while.

"Then he left the regiment in which your husband was chaplain?" said Walter, desirous of recalling her to her story.

"No, Sir. My husband became a Baptist and left the service. And so I have quite lost sight of them."

"Then you know nothing more of Captain and Mrs. Hartley?"

"This was afterwards, Sir, some two or three years afterwards. As I was saying, we kept her. Nothing was ever said about her escape in Montreal that I heard of, though I have no doubt they searched for her everywhere."

"Her parents must have been greatly distressed."

"She was an orphan, Sir."

"What was her name?"

"Ignatia."

"I mean her family name."

"That was one of the odd things about her, Sir; she would never answer any question about herself, not even tell

what her name was. If we made any reference to her past, she would turn one of her sidelong looks upon us and remain silent."

"Captain Hartley must have known."

"Perhaps so. I cannot tell, Sir. If he did know he never told us, and I think he would have done so, for we were long together in India afterwards."

"Ah."

"Yes, Sir; and I was very glad when we left Canada, for during the three or four months I had her in the house, I had not any peace of mind."

"And you went to India?"

"The regiment was ordered off that summer, Sir. Captain Hartley begged me to take charge of her on the way. She always remained the same. After we got to India, she insisted upon following her husband in all the marches and fighting; and the officers and men both said that she seemed like an evil spirit when there was any bloodshed going on."

"Did she ever have any children? That might have softened her, one would think."

"Yes, Sir; she had a little girl a year after she was married, but she seemed to care but little for it until it began to grow like its father. Then she took to it, and would hold it and look at it for hours together when he was away; when he was by she never minded it. It was a pretty child. I had the principal care of it, for we shared the same bungalow."

"Were you long together?"

"Two years in India, Sir. Then my husband's health broke down, and he exchanged into another regiment. Shortly after, Captain Hartley's regiment was ordered to Gibraltar. Before long my husband left the service, as I have said, and since then I have known nothing of them."

Walter rose. It would not do to show too great curiosity, he had risked much as it was.

"Thank you. It is really quite a peculiar story, quite interesting. I think I should prefer the dressing-gown to be embroidered with this Greek pattern, only I think the wreaths around it should be a little broader."

"Of course, Sir; for so large an article the whole design must be enlarged. I think it would be better to make it a finger broad, Sir, instead of half a finger, as it is here."

"I will leave it entirely to you." He took up his hat. "But certainly there is something I wanted to say. Ah, yes. It was about the story. Did this Mrs. Hartley possess no family relics, no ornaments, or something of that sort that could have thrown any light on who she was?"

"I never saw but one ornament in her possession, Sir; and that was a ring which she could not have valued much, for she gave it to me when we left the regiment."

"That would scarcely have thrown any light on the subject; rings are very much alike for the most part."

"But this was not like most rings. It was set with a curious orange-colored stone."

"That is odd."

"Yes, Sir; it was very curious, and it was held by two eagles' heads."

"That is a singular coincidence. It answers to the description of the Daubenay stone."

"I never heard of that stone, Sir."

"Perhaps you would be so kind as to let me look at it?"

A slight flush rose on Mrs. William's cheek.

"I am sorry, Sir; but the ring is no longer in my possession."

"I am sorry too. I should have liked to have seen it. Good-morning."

Walter was about leaving the room.

"Excuse me, Sir; but I believe you have forgotten the address to which I am to send the dressing-gown and handkerchiefs?"

Walter tore a leaf from his memorandum book, wrote the address, got into the brougham, and drove to the railway station.

"Just in time, Sir," said the guard. "Here, Sir,— quick, Sir. No baggage, Sir? All right."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FORESHADOWINGS.

AVERIL awoke that morning ill at ease. The glad expectations, the alluring hopes which had heralded in his slumber on the preceding night had given place to a vague disquietude. As he completed his toilet, he dismissed his valet, drew aside the curtains, and threw open the window. The fresh air might dissipate that unwonted sensation. He looked abroad, over sweeping lawn and sheltering woodland, to the hills beyond. Every object appeared clothed with strange and startling vividness. Every sound came, scarcely veiled by distance, clearly and sharply upon his ear. He heard the far-off song of the laborer as though it had been on the terraced walk beneath him. As the wind came sweeping across the lawn it pressed a distinct and palpable touch upon his forehead. Never had his perceptions been so powerful, never had he felt so keenly the life in his veins; yet this increased vitality had nothing pleasurable in it. It seemed grasping eagerly at all within its reach; grasping hungrily, not lovingly. He turned away from the landscape, closed the window, and sat down before the fire. Strange faces looked out at him from the red embers below; the leaping flame above seemed waving backward and forward like a fiery sword. He rose with an abrupt movement. As he did so he caught sight of his face in the glass over

the mantel-piece. There was an unaccustomed expression upon it. It looked to him like a stranger's face. The eyes were deeper, more dilated than usual, the cheek paler, the forehead more gloomy.

He muttered a curse upon the blue devils, and leaving the room, descended to the breakfast-room. Edith had not yet come down. She had slept badly. She would take her breakfast in her own room.

The intelligence did not tend to enliven Averil's mood. He breakfasted in silence, then took his hat and walked out into the shrubbery. After a while he returned and sought his sister in her sitting-room.

"Ellen, what was that thing you were playing last night; that little song?"

She opened the piano-forte and took her seat at it. With trembling touch she played a simple, plaintive little air.

"Now sing it," he said, as she finished.

She stole a half-frightened glance at his face and obeyed.

I saw a maiden sitting by the sea;
Dark clouds of grey curtained the pallid sky,
And as she sang, the moaning wind sobbed by:
"Wilt come to me?"

"Here come and dwell beside this moving sea,
And list the sea gull's melancholy cry,
And watch the white waves toss their foam on high.
Wilt come to me?"

"There is no better home where thou mayst be;
Thou canst not choose a mansion broad and high,
Here must thou dwell with me, and ceaseless sigh,
'I've come to thee.'"

As she ended, Averil turned and walked out of the room.

"Poor Clara,—poor, poor Clara," Mrs. Lacy murmured to herself as she sat before the piano. "How can he bear to hear it, when she used—"

She paused and sat awhile in thought, then closed the piano and went back into her sitting-room. Averil was not there. She did not see him again till Lady Tremyss drove up to the door with her two prancing chestnut horses. Then from the window of her boudoir Mrs. Lacy saw her brother come down the steps, enter the light open carriage, take the reins from Lady Tremyss' hands, and drive down the sweep of the avenue.

"What a pity that Edith didn't come down before he went out. However, he will be at home before long. What a lovely day for a drive."

Mrs. Lacy smiled at the sunshine, smiled at the circling pigeons, smiled at the little dog which came jumping up at her hand, and turned back to her interrupted note, as Averil and his companion issued from the avenue and came out upon the road.

Lady Tremyss watched his face from under the covert of her black plumed hat and lace veil. The heavy cloud which hung brooding over it offered no indication of a nature to encourage conversation. They drove on in almost unbroken silence over the gently swelling ridges of the corn lands, past the sphinxes and dark pine avenue of the Park, up the steep hill beyond, and across the broad stretch of level land which lay still further on, until they drew up at Marsh Manor.

"Good-morning, good-morning," said Mr. Marsh, coming forward from where he was sunning himself and smoking his cigar on the southern side of the Manor House. "You have come over to see the ponies, I suppose? I hear you sent about them yesterday. That's a fine pair you're driving."

He advanced and laid his hand on the neck of the one nearest to him. The horse backed, reared, shied, and was not reduced to quiet without some exertion on Averil's part.

"A young horse, a young horse," said Mr. Marsh, look-

ing distrustfully at the animal's wild eye and open nostril. "You wouldn't get Lady Emily to stir a step with that horse in the traces. I have bought three pair of carriage horses since last September, in hopes to get something quiet enough to suit her, and last of all I bought these ponies, and now she won't use them. She says she never feels safe in a pony-carriage since Mrs. Dartmouth's ponies ran away with her. But I'll have them brought round; they are pretty little things."

The appearance of the ponies fully justified Mr. Marsh's encomium, and they gave satisfactory evidence of their tameness by thrusting their noses into his hands in quest of sugar, with an ample stock of which delicacy Mr. Marsh's pockets were always lined.

The ponies were purchased, and Averil and Lady Tremyss, with polite messages and excuses for Lady Emily Marsh, turned on their homeward way.

The interview with Mr. Marsh, perhaps the sight of his round, good-humored face and the sound of his cheery voice, joined to his satisfaction in his new purchase, had changed Averil's mood. He seemed to wish to atone by extra courtesy for his taciturnity during the first part of the drive. Little by little Lady Tremyss turned the conversation upon the families in the neighborhood. The name of the owner of Arden Hall was mentioned. She assumed an air of slight reserve, and appeared disposed to change the subject. Averil alluded distantly to the report of his engagement to Miss Hartley.

"Oh, no. I assure you there is nothing of the sort. Certainly you must know—"

She checked herself.

Averil's attention was awakened, less by her words than by her manner.

"Know what?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing at all."

He looked inquiringly at her.

"I assure you there is nothing."

But Lady Tremyss' somewhat hurried protestations had not the effect of convincing Averil. — She was keeping something back. —

"I must beg you will be so kind as to tell me to what you alluded just now when you spoke of the absence of any truth in those reports," he said, somewhat peremptorily.

"Oh, it was the merest thing in the world, the most natural. Indeed it would have been very strange had it not been so."

"Been how?"

Averil's voice was taking a tinge of impatience.

"Miss Arden is such a very lovely girl, you know."

"I do not perceive the connection," he replied, with some hauteur.

"But surely you must be the last person to blame him," she responded, smilingly.

"To blame whom?"

"Mr. Walter Arden, of course."

"And for what is it that I am not to blame him?"

"For his sentiments towards Miss Arden, certainly."

"Ah."

"Seeing so much of her as he did, I really can't see how he could help himself."

Averil compressed his lips.

"Highly natural, as you say. Not at all to be wondered at."

"Yes; especially as of course her manner was more open and frank to him as a relation than it is in general."

"Of course; and her manner deceived him."

"I did not mean exactly that. I meant—I—Indeed, I know nothing about it."

Lady Tremyss' own manner was decidedly embarrassed.

"But it would have been only reasonable that she should

have been somewhat pleased by the attentions of Mr. Arden."

"Yes, precisely—pleased with his attentions."

Lady Tremyss seemed relieved.

"Possibly a little touched by them."

"He is really so handsome and intelligent, you know."

She spoke apologetically.

"Quite sufficiently so as to attract a very young girl."

"Yes, I think that was it. I think she was attracted by him—a little." Her tone was guarded.

"Very probably interested in him more than she was aware of."

"A *tendre*, you know," she answered, soothingly; "a young girl's sentiment, such as soon dies out of itself when its object is removed." The dread of giving pain was plainly observable in her manner.

A spasm of jealous rage wrung Averil's inmost core. So, this girl he had thought so cold, had not been cold to another. How many knew it? Had it been the common chit-chat of the place? No, his sister would have told him. Her constant letters kept him informed of every item of intelligence in the neighborhood. Lady Tremyss and her daughter had seen Edith more intimately than anyone else had done; they would perceive what others might fail to discover.

"Nothing more natural, of course. But the people around seem to have been blind to it. It is not every one that has Lady Tremyss' penetration."

She smiled gently.

"Young Arden would scarcely thank me for the result of my discovery. I fear he would never speak to me again did he know."

"Is it possible that you interfered to cross his hopes?"

"In the most unconscious manner in the world. I happened to be writing to Mr. Arden at the time, to thank him

for a *cadeau* he had sent me, and, very naturally, I spoke of the admiration Miss Arden excited in every one, and by chance mentioned her cousin. The next day he came down and took her away. I do not think there was any serious harm done on either side; and certainly, as events have turned out, it was a most fortunate slip of the pen on my part."

She smiled again through the black frost-work of her veil.

—No serious harm done. He could have shot Arden on the spot if he had met him. It was he then who had gathered those sweet first-fruits of Edith's affection. It was he who had awakened her coy tenderness. This young Arden had gained what had been so coldly refused to him—her promised husband. A dark red flush mounted to Averil's forehead. Lady Tremyss watched him askance. For a while they drove on in silence, then she resumed the conversation.

"I take the deepest interest in Miss Arden," she began, pensively, and with a tinge of reluctance in her manner. "So, very lovely and unsuspecting a girl. The worst of it is that the very innocence of such a nature sometimes intervenes perplexingly."

Averil shot a piercing glance at his companion.

"You talk like a sphinx," he replied.

"Perhaps I had better not have touched on the subject at all," she responded, averting her eyes. "If I have been very indiscreet, you must excuse me, I am really so fond of her."

"May I ask to what subject you refer? I am quite ignorant of your possible meaning."

The flush was fading. Averil had begun to grow pale.

"But of course she mentioned it to you—I refer to yesterday afternoon."

"She mentioned nothing."

Lady Tremyss looked much disturbed.

"I am afraid I have done wrong—I thought, of course—But doubtless she had some good reason."

"Reason for what?"

"For not speaking of it. I think it was a mistake on her part—entire openness on such matters is so much better. But then if there were any remains of sentiment—"

She paused. Averil turned his face full upon her.

"Lady Tremyss, I request you to state what circumstance has occurred."

His eye was bloodshot and haggard, his cheek of a yellow hue; the contraction of unendurable pain was on his forehead. She had tortured him to the requisite point. The train had been well laid; one sentence more, and it would explode, and Walter and Edith be separated for ever. The long, dark eyes veiled themselves with feigned compassion under their lashes; Lady Tremyss' voice sank to a plaintive minor, as she replied:

"Pray do not be disturbed; it was possibly accidental. I hope you will not attach undue weight to it; but—I am sure it was very painful to her, poor girl, she looked quite overwhelmed, they say, after it—while I was absent at Houston Lacy, yesterday afternoon, Miss Arden and her cousin met and spent a long time together at the Park."

A maddened oath escaped Averil's lips. He struck fiercely at the horses in a sort of blind fury. The spirited animals reared upright, sprang forward, gained the ridge of the hill they were ascending, and rushed unmanageably down the abrupt descent on the other side. A cloud of dust enveloped the horses, the carriage, and those within, and rolled rapidly on with them, hiding the whole from sight.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DEATH OF LADY TREMYSS.

WHEN the railway train stopped at Wodeton, Walter saw, by the light of the station, on the edge of the platform, one of the grooms from the Hall. As he descended, the man came up and touched his hat.

"I beg pardon, sir, but Missis has sent the horses down for you. There's been an accident, sir."

"Well," said young Arden, hoarsely, as the man paused, as people always do at such moments.

"Yes, sir; an awful accident, sir. Lady Tremyss and Mr. Averil have been run away with by the new horses; and they were thrown out, and Mr. Averil was killed on the spot, and Lady Tremyss is dying, sir."

The man stopped, as if in expectation of some remark from his master. Young Arden said nothing. The sound of his heavy breathing alone filled the pause.

"Missis has sent the horses, sir. She begs you will go directly to Farmer Robeson's. My lady is there."

As the man finished his sentence, Walter sprang into the saddle and galloped towards the farm. In the dim twilight, as he passed the long stone wall at the foot of the hill, he saw the wreck of the carriage crushed up on the edge of the road. Dr. Jacobs' four-wheeled chaise was in the farm-yard. Farmer Robeson was standing at the gate. He took off his hat as the young Squire dismounted, but that was all. Mrs. Robeson came to the house door. The candle, flickering on the table in the passage-way, showed her rosy face paled with dread. She spoke below her breath.

"She's there, sir." She pointed to the door of the best room, but without approaching it. "Doctor Jacobs is with her, sir. Will you go in?"

While she spoke, the door of the room she had indicated softly unclosed, and Dr. Jacobs came out. Mrs. Robeson stepped backward into the kitchen, and shut herself in with Melvil and some of the other servants, all of whom Doctor Jacobs had forbidden the room where their lady lay.

The old physician wrung Walter's hand in silence.

"God has taken it into his own hands," he said.

"Is she dying?"

"Yes. Come in."

The young man drew back.

"But Isabel?"

"She is not here."

"Not here!"

"I sent her away; she is with Mrs. Arden. I made a pretext of the danger of its agitating her mother should she see her when she recovered her senses. I don't dare to have anyone in the room. God knows what that woman may have to say, should she speak."

He preceded Walter into the room.

On a mattress stretched on the floor lay Lady Tremyss, her face of a chalky white, her eyelids closed. A bandage was around her head, her long black hair, unfastened, rested on the ground. A faint motion of her chest alone disturbed the lifelessness of her posture, alone told that she was not already dead.

"She is not conscious?"

"No."

"Will she regain her senses before she dies?"

"I cannot tell."

They stood and watched her in silence by the light of the solitary lamp on the chest of drawers at her head. As they stood, they perceived a slight shiver run along her frame. Her eyelids heavily lifted, closed, then lifted again. Dr. Jacobs bent over her. She feebly raised her hand and motioned him away without looking at him. He drew back

to where Walter was standing, out of the range of her sight. She looked intently forward, as though the wall before her were transparent, and she saw beyond.

"I am coming," she whispered. "Listen, Edward, my brave. I am coming. It is not finished, but I must come."

She paused, her breath fluttered, then grew steadier again. She whispered anew.

"I see you smile. You have drunk the tears of your enemy, you have laughed to hear his groans. You have looked down from the eternal fields, and your soul has rejoiced to see him where he lies in cold and darkness, alone."

Her eyes closed, her breast labored.

"Wait," she gasped more faintly.

There was an interval. Dr. Jacobs bent noiselessly over her, then rose to his feet.

"She is almost gone," he whispered, in reply to Walter's look.

"I follow," she faintly murmured once more. Then all was still. The physician laid his hand upon her heart. It had stopped.

She was dead. That woman of mystery and crime lay dead before them, looking with stony gaze out from the curtain of that silence which now was never to be broken. Who was she? Whence did she come? What early links had bound her life to the life of others? Where was her home, and what her parentage?

They stood and gazed upon her as she lay in her strange beauty, dead. She had not repented, she had not sorrowed, she had not confessed. She had died exulting in her guilt.

With hushed steps and silent lips they retired from the chamber where lay the corpse of Lady Tremyss.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WINE CELLAR.

THE morning dawned redly on the broad front of Houston Lacy, where Edith sat, still in the dress she had worn on the preceding day, her hands crossed before her, her eyes fixed upon the brightening sky, on whose expanse all night long they had watched the darkness, and by the far illumination of the stars, had contemplated the mystery of death.

Those first rays rested on the mellow walls of Arden Hall, and stole cautiously between the curtains of the room where Isabel lay sleeping the heavy slumber of exhaustion, worn out with passionate grief.

Rising higher, they poured down upon the long, grey pile of Ilton Park, darting athwart the dark tops of the surrounding pines, avoiding one closed, dim chamber, where sat the watchers by the dead; but piercing the small panes of the ancient windows below, as if hastening to bring their aid to those who, with anxious faces and restless steps, were still seeking, seeking as they had sought all night, save when they had paused to listen to the muffled sound of hammering below, with intermittent stroke imaging forth, as if in mockery, the shadowy semblance of the antique dance.

Entrance to that subterranean dungeon there was none. Goliath had not been seen since the preceding evening, and with him all knowledge of the wine-vault was lost. The position of its entrance was unknown to all the household; nor did young Arden and Doctor Jacobs choose to make any inquiries to arouse suspicion in the minds of the servants. They had called no aid. They had sought all night alone, sounding the walls, testing the floors, the wainscoting, searching for secret springs and hidden hinges—baffled at

every step. They had descended to the cellars, and paced their length, then returning, had measured off the distance of the story above. The cellars extended no further than the library. Sir Ralph's prison-house must lie beyond. They had forced the door of the dancing-room, at the commencement of their search, but their closest scrutiny had failed to discover any irregularity in the long line of panelled mirrors, the unbroken uniformity of the embrasures of the windows, the straight-lined regularity of the oaken floor. They listened anew at the wall.

The sounds, a while intermitted, began again.

The two men gazed on one another.

"What can it mean?" said Walter, fixing his eyes on the old physician's face, which, seen in the dim light, had taken an expression of sinister apprehension.

"*He is mad,*" replied Dr. Jacobs, and, taking up the candle, he pursued anew the search.

They quitted the dancing-room, with its faint, fearful echoes; they sought in the labyrinth of vacant rooms beyond.

Again they went over the ground they had examined, and again they paused in discouragement.

"There would be no use in asking any questions of the servants," said young Arden. "Isabel said a few days ago that no one, not even herself, knew. It is daylight now. I will saddle a horse and ride over to Renson's. It is possible that Storror may know; at any rate, he can tell who was the carpenter who did the woodwork."

"Stay," said Dr. Jacobs, as Walter turned away, "you must have a reason to give. Say that Miss Hartley is not well, and that I want a bottle of Sir Ralph's old cordial from Sicily for her; that will answer."

Walter took his way to the stables, saddled a horse, and rode away at speed through the early sunlight towards Renson Place.

A messenger had been despatched the night before to Sir Ralph's nearest of kin, a third cousin. He would probably reach the Park that afternoon but he could not be waited for,—Sir Ralph might be without food meantime.

The night-capped porter at the lodge at Renson Place stared at Walter as he passed; the gardener stopped on his way to the forcing-house and looked after him.

In a few moments Storrord stood before the young gentleman, his composed demeanor betraying no trace of the rapidity with which he had made his toilet.

Walter led the way into the breakfast room, and signed to Storrord to shut the doors.

"You know what has happened?"

"Yes, sir."

"Goliath has disappeared."

Storrord looked in no wise surprised.

"Dr. Jacobs wants a bottle of Sir Ralph's old cordial from Sicily for Miss Hartley, who is not well; but the key of the wine-vault is not to be found."

"Mr. Goliath probably has it, sir."

"I presume so; but, meantime, we want to go down into the wine-cellar."

"You will find it difficult, sir. Its opening is a secret."

"I thought, perhaps, you might know?"

"No, sir; I do not know. Sir Ralph had all the western end of the house shut up while it was being made; the dining-room was the last left open."

"Was the butler's pantry closed?"

"Yes, sir; but I think that was for a blind. There was no work done there, I am certain."

"Had you no idea where Goliath came from when he brought up the wine?"

"He always brought it up at night, sir. It was one of Sir Ralph's whims. The servants used to believe that Sir Ralph had treasure hidden there; but I think it was only that he chose to have it so."

"Then you are ignorant of any way of getting down there?"

"Entirely, Sir."

"Do you know who the carpenter was who put up the door?"

"It was old Rickland, Sir."

"Where does he live?"

"He lives with his daughter at Stonefield."

"What is his daughter's name?"

"Thurston, sir; Mrs. Thurston. She lives in a little house on the edge of the common. It is about five miles from here. Any one in the village can tell you, Sir."

Walter mounted again, and took the road to Stonefield.

"So Mr. Goliath is gone. It is a wonder he stayed so long," said Storrord to himself. He reflected a moment. "Singular that Dr. Jacobs should be so set on that particular cordial—very singular. There's something to be found out there," he added, slowly rubbing his chin. "If I were there, as I used to be, I would soon have it."

Despite the urgent haste of the moment, despite the horror which lay before young Arden's mind, Edith was free. He sought to shut his ear to the words, to turn away his mind from following out their meaning. Surely this was no moment for rejoicing. Stronger than compassion, and anxiety, and truth, returned the voice, with its exultant burden—Edith is free.

"What news?" asked Dr. Jacobs, as an hour and a half after his departure, Walter dismounted at the Park.

"Unsatisfactory; yet I have learned something. Storrord knew nothing. The old carpenter has almost lost his mind, and refused to tell; but from what he muttered to himself afterwards I think the door must be in the dancing-room, under one of the mirrors. The gilding may be a little different at the place."

Dr. Jacobs pursed up his lips; the information was more vague than suited him. Time was wearing on.

"I have found out that Goliath took the express down train from Rustiton, yesterday."

"Where can he have gone?"

"Probably to Liverpool. If so, he is off by this time. Vessels are leaving by every tide."

They took their way to the dancing-room, opened the closed shutters, and renewed their search. The sounds drew them again to the southern wall. They examined carefully the gilded frames of the mirrors placed there, but their scrutiny remained fruitless. The length of time that had elapsed, since the alteration, had effaced any difference that might once have existed.

"We can sound the frame work," said Walter. "Our ears may serve us better than our eyes."

They tapped cautiously in turn around each gilded frame. As they tested the third from the library, instead of the dull, muffled sound of plaster, it gave forth the clear resonance of wood. Possibly a spring might be hidden beneath. True they had looked there before, but still it might have escaped them. Walter passed his hand along, one of the iron clamps supporting the mirror moved slightly beneath his touch. He pressed forcibly upon it. It yielded, the mirror swung slowly forward and showed a narrow door, fast locked.

They looked at one another in perplexity. It was impossible to wait. The door must be opened without delay. They must assume the pretext of opening some other lock, some cupboard in the library, and send for a locksmith directly.

A groom was dismissed to Wodeton in haste, and Walter and Dr. Jacobs sat down to the breakfast that had been prepared for them. The meal was but a pretence.

Walter's attention had wandered to the figure of a poorly-dressed youth who was coming up a side path which led across the lawn to the house. He carried a small brown pa-

per parcel in his hand. Walter opened the glass door and went to meet him.

"I comes from Rustiton, Sir," he said, "and I brings this for the young lady at Ilton Park."

"Who sent it?"

"A great black man, Sir. He gave me half a crown to bring it here at nine o'clock to-day. It's just that now, Sir."

Walter took the parcel eagerly.

"I will see that it is rightly delivered," he said, and dismissed the lad.

It was the key. Within the outer covering was a slip of paper with a few words to Isabel:—

"The third mirror on the left from the library in the dancing-room—press on the middle clamp beneath."

"Black devil as he is, it seems he didn't want him to starve," said Dr. Jacobs, as throwing down the paper, and starting to his feet.

They locked all the doors of communication with the rest of the house, and adjusted the key to its place. The door opened. A damp chill crept outward, and waved the flame of the candle in Walter's hand. They descended the steep and narrow stairs. There were many of them. At their foot was a second door. They pushed it, it opened, and they entered a small, round vault. The candle burned dimly, and illumined but faintly the arched recesses around, showing imperfectly the rows of bottles ranged in order on every side. Nothing else was visible at first. They made the tour of the vault, throwing the faint light of the candle into each recess in turn. All at once they paused abruptly. The rays were reflected from two eyes gleaming up out of the darkness at the extremity of one of the recesses. An exclamation broke from Walter's lips. He was springing forward when Dr. Jacob's caught him forcibly by the arm.

"Take care—he may be dangerous. Let me go first."

They approached cautiously.

On the ground before them, chained to the wall, crouched the figure of what was apparently a very old man. His long and matted hair and beard were of a yellowish white, his skin had the greyish hue of a corpse. He was clothed in what seemed the rags of a gentleman's dinner dress. He did not look at them as they advanced towards them. His whole attention seemed to be absorbed by the light in Walter's hand. Young Arden placed it on the ground, and with the physician knelt beside him. They spoke to him. He did not answer. He looked only at the light. They touched him. He paid no heed, but slowly and with a vacillating motion reached out his hand towards the faint and sickly ray. They sought in vain to obtain some recognition of their presence from him. He heeded nothing but the light.

"It is as I thought, or worse than I thought," said Dr. Jacobs, with a groan, at length abandoning his fruitless efforts.

"He is an idiot?" said Walter, in a low voice.

"Yes. And now for God's sake let us get him up."

The chain was fastened to a strong staple in the wall by a heavy padlock.

"The housekeeper will have keys," said Walter; and he sprang up the dark stone stairs.

In a few minutes he returned with several bunches of keys. One was found to fit the rusty lock. The chain fell clattering. Sir Ralph was free;—but still he sat passive, gazing at the light. They raised him to his feet. His joints refused to support him. He sank upon his knees.

Exerting all his strength, Walter, aided by Dr. Jacobs, bore him up from his prison. As he emerged into the light of day he writhed and closed his eyes muttering unintelligibly.

They carried him into the library, laid him on the sofa, and drew the window curtains so as to make twilight in the room.

They had but just accomplished this, when the sound of carriage wheels was heard from the avenue. Walter went out. Early as it was Isabel had come to sit beside her mother. Walter drew back Mrs. Arden, in a few whispered words informed her of the discovery, and impressed upon her mind the necessity of its being kept secret from Isabel for the present. Mrs. Arden, bewildered by horror as she was, promised, and faithfully kept her word.

The news of the accident of the day before spread fast. Before mid-day the Park was besieged with visitors: every house in the neighborhood had heard the astounding story that Sir Ralph Tremyss had been found immured in his own wine vault, where he had been kept imprisoned by Goliath ever since his supposed death three years before. Old friends and acquaintance came pouring in to express their horror and grief. Only one or two were admitted by Dr. Jacobs into the room where Sir Ralph lay. These stood beside him with awe-struck faces, and gazed upon that grey and shrunken visage and skeleton form, and sought in vain to awaken some responsive sign of intelligence; then retired with careful tread and hushed voices to confer in the adjoining rooms on this frightful disclosure, and on the atrocious guilt of Goliath towards Sir Ralph and Lady Tremyss.

No voice came to proclaim *her* guilt. Safe in her shroud she lay, while those among whom she had lived so long, spoke her panegyric, and mourned her wrongs.

Towards evening Mrs. Arden summoned Walter. He found her waiting for him in the gallery outside the door of the chamber where Lady Tremyss lay. She looked harassed and wearied.

"Walter," she said, "I wish you would come in and

“speak to Isabel. I don’t know what to make of her, I really don’t; she is quite different from what she was last night,—so still that she frightens one. I can’t get her away from her mother. She is sitting on the floor beside the bed, and won’t get up nor answer when I speak to her. Do come in.”

She opened the door. Walter stood on the threshold, and gazed within. The shutters were partially closed; the dim light fell from the upper part of the windows only, resting with a lifeless quiet upon the purple draperies and furniture of the room. On a canopied bed, beneath shrouding folds of finest linen, lay a stirless form. Beside it, on the floor, sat Isabel, her arms clasped around her knees, her eyes gazing steadily before her, motionless, as if carved in monumental stone. Mrs. Arden advanced and spoke to her. Isabel made no reply. Mrs. Arden beckoned to Walter with an imploring air. He came nearer, and stood looking on the girl, locked up from all human sympathy as she seemed, in her dumb sorrow. She did not look up,—she did not appear to notice his presence. He bent over her.

“Isabel—”

She stirred slightly, but did not raise her head.

“Isabel, it grieves me to see you.” The tenderness of an infinite pity was in the young man’s voice. “Won’t you go back with my aunt to the Hall?”

Isabel was silent.

“Won’t you come?”

He laid his hand upon her’s.

“I cannot leave her,” Isabel replied slowly.

“But if I promise you that I will not leave the house as long as she is here. Will that content you?”

Isabel rose to her feet. “Go,” she said.

Mrs. Arden looked hesitatingly at Walter. He silently led the way from the room. They stood without. For a while they heard nothing, then came a low wailing sound

so plaintive that it forced the tears to Walter’s eyes, and Mrs. Arden dried a trickling moisture on her cheeks. The wail died away, and again there was silence. Then Isabel opened the door, came out, and passing by them, without turning her head, descended the staircase, and left the house.

“She looks like her mother,” whispered Mrs. Arden, as she followed with Walter.

“God forbid,” he replied.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LORD PRUDHOE’S MAGNANIMITY.

THE next morning Lord Prudhoe, the heir-at-law, arrived. On the preceding day a keeper, a quiet-looking man, with broad shoulders and watchful eyes, had been summoned from Harrowby Lunatic Retreat to assume the temporary charge of Sir Ralph until ulterior measures could be taken as to his disposition. When Lord Prudhoe was introduced into the room in which his kinsman was, he found Sir Ralph shaved and dressed. To the eyes of those who had seen him on the preceding day, the removal of the matted locks and beard which had then partially concealed his features, served but to make his emaciation still more apparent. He was sitting in an easy chair, his eyes fixed with a dull, meaningless stare upon the ray of sunlight which made its way through the closed curtains. The attendant had placed him where that ray fell near him. At intervals he would feebly extend his hand, as if to grasp it; but soon let his arm fall again, as if wearied by the effort.

Lord Prudhoe stood a while gazing at the miserable, mournful sight; then drew back with Dr. Jacobs to the other side of the room.

"Is there no hope of his recovery?"

The physician shook his head.

"But surely, with care and attention, something might be done. Persons as reduced as that have got well before now."

"I don't say the physical debility couldn't be combated if there were sufficient vitality in the brain; but as it is, there is nothing to take hold of. The nervous system is destroyed."

With a sorrowful gesture of assent, Lord Prudhoe followed the physician from the room.

Lady Tremyss had left no will. Her dower, which had remained untouched to accumulate since her marriage, would make a comfortable provision for Isabel; though she would be, nevertheless, reduced from wealth to a modest competency, Sir Ralph's entire property, at his demise, falling, of course, to the heir-at-law.

Lord Prudhoe listened to these details with all the attention the case demanded, and remained plunged in thought when Mr. Marsh had concluded his statement.

"A very fortunate thing for her, poor girl, that she has that to depend upon."

"Very," replied Lord Prudhoe, absently.

"She might have been left without a penny; such a pretty creature as she is, too;—poor child, poor child." I hope I shan't have to tell her of the change in her prospects," he added, as if struck by a sudden perception of something very disagreeable which lay in store for him.

"I don't think any one will be called on to say anything of the sort to her," Lord Prudhoe returned, quietly.

"Not at present, of course; but then before long she must learn it, you know. It can't be deferred for ever."

Mr. Marsh shifted his position uneasily.

"Precisely—I intend it shall be deferred for ever," said Lord Prudhoe, deliberately.

Mr. Marsh pushed up his spectacles and stared at him. Lord Prudhoe continued with the air of a man who has made up his mind what he is going to do, and wishes no comments made upon it.

"I have no intention of taking possession of the unentailed property at Sir Ralph's death, which I fear is to be expected before long. I shall at once execute a deed, making over to Miss Hartley my right of succession."

Mr. Marsh continued to stare without reply at the young man, for a moment; then he reached forward, and energetically shook his hand.

"One thing I most particularly request," said Lord Prudhoe, his color rising a little, "I am especially anxious that this arrangement should not be communicated to Miss Hartley. Young ladies usually know little about law matters, and I don't think she will ask any questions that cannot be easily eluded."

"What! You don't want her to know!" ejaculated Mr. Marsh. "Give away an estate like that, and not be thanked for it!"

"On no account," returned Lord Prudhoe, with a tinge of hauteur. "I must beg, as I say, that the most entire secrecy be preserved."

The requisite deed was made out, witnessed, signed, sealed, and finally deposited in the hands of Isabel's lawyer.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FLIGHT OF GOLIATH.

A COLD, sullen sky, a sobbing wind at intervals rising into a sough, then sweeping wildly away over the misty fields to the half-veiled hills beyond; a slowly dropping

rain accompanied the funeral train that bore that which had been Lady Tremyss to the little church.

The cold rain through which Lady Tremyss' funeral procession had passed, had not ceased to fall, when a carriage drew up late in the day before the gate of Ilton Park.

There was some little delay, then, over that threshold which Sir Ralph, in all the vigor of his manhood, had last crossed at midnight, three years before he was borne a helpless, decrepit burden, unconscious of all around. A few gentlemen followed him from the house. They stood in silence while he was lifted into the carriage, nor did they turn until it had disappeared beneath the dripping pines of the dark avenue, on its way to the Retreat, Sir Ralph's last resting-place before the grave.

The account of Sir Ralph's sequestration, coupled with the information that a reward of £1000 was offered for the arrest of the butler, had reached every corner of Great Britain. Public excitement rose to its highest pitch. The enormity of the crime, its long impunity, the frightful circumstance that the affectionate and devoted wife of the victim (for so Lady Tremyss was styled by universal consent) had actually lived in the same house in which her husband was enduring his long agony, without a suspicion of his existence; the very trust she reposed in the old servant of the family made the means of the accomplishment of such an appalling vengeance for a comparatively trifling injury; all these, added to the general sense of insecurity produced by the disclosure, kept the public mind in a ferment for days. The whole police force of Liverpool and the adjacent towns was on the alert. Goliath had been traced thither, but for some time it was uncertain what had become of him. Every vessel which left the docks was searched, but in vain; the entire town was explored without effect. Two days passed. The reward was increased to £2000, but still no

result followed. The criminal remained hidden, and no clue was discovered which could afford even a supposition as to his retreat. The accident had taken place at about noon. It had been immediately known at the Park. Goliath had saddled the fleetest horse in the stables, and had galloped off, saying that he was going for a physician. He had made his way to Rustiton, the nearest station where the express train stopped. The press had been so great at the moment of the departure of the train, that the man at the ticket office could not remember for what place the fugitive had taken his ticket; but it was made certain by other testimony that he had gone on to Liverpool, which he had reached after nightfall. The notice his color, uncommon stature, and disfigurement would have inevitably attracted by daylight, had been prevented by the darkness. Three or four persons only came forward, deposing to having seen him, between eleven and twelve o'clock that night, skulking along the streets. Further than this nothing was elicited, and it became nearly certain that he had fled the country before the police had been set on his track. At length, after several weeks, public attention was reawakened by the intelligence that the black butler of Ilton Park, whose crimes were still fresh in the memory of all, had succeeded in making his way to Cape Town on board an Australasian steamer which had sailed early on the morning of the discovery. He had not remained in the settlement, but had been last heard of journeying towards the north of Africa. Among the Boers who came down about that time from the out-lying stations, there were one or two who, when questioned, spoke of having seen a black answering the description of Goliath. He had asked for food, and having received it, had gone on his way, always toward the north. After this, having probably reached a region where his forefathers had ruled as barbaric chiefs, Goliath disappeared, finally and for ever.

One of Walter Arden's first cares, after the discovery of Sir Ralph, had been to write to George to engage his secrecy as to his suspicions of Lady Tremyss' complicity in the crime. He depicted the injury to Miss Hartley should any hint of the real circumstances get abroad, and appealed to all George's better feelings to allow the secret of Lady Tremyss' guilt to rest with her in her tomb. Walter concluded by offering him the place left vacant by the retreat of his groom, and by promising to bring about his marriage with Letty as speedily as possible.

George's answer arrived the next day.

"SIR:—I don't try to thank you; there isn't any words that can thank a gentleman fitly for what you have done, and more than that, what you say you will do for me. I didn't think anything could have made me give up my revenge. It was like an only child to me. I carried it about with me all the day, and slept with it close to me at night. But since I read the letter you sent me it seems to have gone, and I give you my bounden word never to speak of what I think and what I know to any one on earth.

"I take the place you offer me; and if ever a gentleman is served to the utmost of a man's ability, it is as you will be served by

"Yours humbly to command,

"GEORGE HILL."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHAT STORRORD SAW AND HEARD.

A FEW days after the funeral, Storrord made his appearance at the Hall, and desired to speak to Mr. Arden.

"You behaved very handsomely to me the other day, Sir," he said, speaking with that brevity which characterised his style of conversation. "What has since occurred has removed the reason I had for not saying any more than I then did; and now I am ready to answer any questions which you may wish to put."

He stood in the attitude of a witness at the bar who possesses the comfortable assurance that, no matter how much what he is about to say may damage other people, it will have no effect of an injurious nature upon his own interests.

"Then I suppose that your former refusal to reply arose solely from the fear that Lady Tremyss and Goliath might find it out?"

"Not Mr. Goliath, Sir. I never was afraid of a man in my life," and Storrord raised his eyes and looked steadily at the young gentleman. "It was my lady."

"Had you any especial reason to fear Lady Tremyss?"

"One cannot live in the same house with persons without finding out something about them, Sir; and usually I do not find them difficult to understand, but I never could make out my lady. Sometimes I used to think she was of different flesh and blood from other people. I have seen her, when there were thunderstorms, with her eyes shining and her nostrils spread, and a fierce look all over her. She seemed to love them, and the worse the storm was the fiercer and gladder she seemed. And then she hadn't a human heart of pity in her. She was kind enough to animals; that little black horse of her's would follow her like a dog, and all the creatures on the place knew her; but she hated the sight of poor and sick people. She gave money, I know; but for all that she would not have cared if all the world had died of the plague, except Miss Hartley. She was fond enough of her. But I came to answer your questions, Sir," said Storrord, checking himself in his unaccustomed fluency of speech.

"I would rather that you should tell me in your own way what led you to suspect Lady Tremyss."

"It shall be as you choose, Sir. I said that I never understood my lady; more than that, I always mistrusted her. There was something in her eye and about her that looked to me more as if she belonged behind the bars of a cage than in a drawing-room. The very way she had of gliding about so that you did not know any thing till she was close upon you looking sideways at you, had something to scare one in it; and although my lady was always gentle spoken, and went to church regular, and no one ever had any cause to complain of her, I always felt as if some day something might come out. The time came, sir; and if I've never spoken about it before, it is because I did not dare to. If my lady had known that I heard what I heard, and saw what I saw that night, I should have been a dead man before morning.

He paused a moment as if, even now that he was safe from her revenge, he still felt a reluctance to divulge the secret he had kept so long. Walter silently waited for him to go on.

"It was the day that Sir Ralph threw the decanter at Mr. Goliath and laid open his face, Sir. There was to be a great gentleman's dinner party that evening, and it was because of the key of the wine cellars being lost that it occurred. Sir Ralph had it in his pocket all the time. I was in the housekeeper's room when Mr. Goliath came in and asked her to bind up his wound. There was a look about him that made me think it was not going to end there. From being black he had turned of a greenish color, what of his face was not covered with blood; and when he told the housekeeper, who was exclaiming at Sir Ralph, that his master had a good heart, and would feel sorry some day, I felt sure that he meant more than he said. Suspecting, as I always did, that Mr. Goliath had a clear guess as to how Captain Hartley got

shot, and seeing how he looked, I fully expected that he would have something to say to my lady, and I kept one or the other of them well in view. It was my lady's practice every night to go, while Sir Ralph was over his wine, and sit an hour with Miss Hartley, while the servants were at their dinner, and I thought it most likely he would choose that time. Miss Hartley's room was next to the picture gallery; but inside is a smaller room that she used to study in, that had no door on the gallery. It opened into Miss Hartley's room on one side, and into the picture gallery on the other; but the door into the picture gallery was always kept locked. Mr. Goliath did not stir out of his room that day. I was in mine, which was near his, watching, a good part of the time. I did not go down to dinner, for I thought that would be the opportunity he would most likely choose. When all the house was still, and the gentlemen were over their wine, and my lady had come up to sit with Miss Hartley, Mr. Goliath came out of his room. I waited a while, and then followed him. He went downstairs and along the gallery until he came to Miss Hartley's door. He knocked. After a moment I ventured to look down the gallery. No one was there. I knew he had gone in. I went another way through the old part of the house, round to the picture gallery, opened the door so as to make no noise and went up the room. It was a moonlight night, as bright as day. I went very softly to the door that led into Miss Hartley's study and listened. I heard Mr. Goliath. I heard him tell my lady that Sir Ralph had killed Captain Hartley. She did not answer a word, but I could hear her pant. I looked through a crack in one of the old panels, and I saw my lady's face. She was standing full in the moonlight; she was so horrible to look on that I drew away my head after one glance, and stole away as fast as I could. I did not feel safe till I was locked into my own room, and after I did fall asleep that night I kept starting awake with my lady's face

before me. If I had dared, I would have left the house the next day, but I was afraid to do any thing different from usual for fear she would suspect me. I have blamed myself many a time afterward that I had not warned Sir Ralph; but I couldn't, Sir. If I had said anything about Captain Hartley, he might have turned on me, and he never would have believed a word against my lady."

"How was it that you remained at the Park after what you knew of Sir Ralph?" asked young Arden, putting a question that had several times occurred to him since his previous interview with Storrord.

"There were several reasons, Sir. If I were to say that it was an uncommonly good place, and that Sir Ralph was always a good master to me, whatever he may have been to others, I should be only saying the truth; but there was something more than that." Storrord stopped for a moment. "You will find it strange, Sir, but I had a certain feeling for Sir Ralph. I pitied him. I knew what a miserable man he was. The thought of what he had done never left him. He did not dare, after that, to be alone in the dark. He never looked my lady in the face. He never laughed again as he had laughed before. If ever a man did penance for a sin, Sir Ralph did penance for his. And I believe, Sir, that if he could have brought Captain Hartley back to life by giving up his own, he'd have been glad to do it. That is why I stayed, Sir."

"Did Miss Hartley never mention her mother's having seen Goliath on that occasion?"

"No danger of that, Sir. The door was shut. All she knew was that they were talking together, and Miss Hartley was never so happy as when she had a secret to keep, or when she could hide herself away where nobody knew what had become of her. She was the pleasantest young lady and the kindest-hearted in all the world, but she had something in her like my lady for all that. Not that I mean any harm; I only mean that she was secret by nature."

"Then when the event occurred, the whole household, yourself included, was entirely unprepared?"

"Entirely; and as to proofs that Sir Ralph had had foul play, there never were any, except that about the groom; and that couldn't be called a proof, rightly speaking."

"Did you ever hear anything said about the supposed cry of Sir Ralph's ghost?"

"Yes, Sir, I supposed it was one of the dogs. I never suspected that it was my master's voice. I never shall forget them as I saw them that night, Sir. There was a look in my lady's eyes that made one turn cold when I came down with the rest, and heard her give her directions about dragging the river; and Mr. Goliath stood there dripping with water, and his nostrils moving up and down, and his face with a strange swollen look, and his eyes all bloodshot. There was no doubt in my mind then, Sir, that Mr. Goliath drowned Sir Ralph in the river, and my lady was consenting to it. I never dreamed how much worse things really were."

"If you will allow me to say it, Sir," added Storrord, as he was about to withdraw, "I was not sorry to hear of my lady's accident—the world seemed an unsafe place as long as she was in it."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BURIAL OF SIR RALPH.

LORD PRUDHOE's previsions as to the depth of Isabel's ignorance with regard to legal matters were fully justified by the event. When Mr. Marsh and Mr. Lacy, whom she had chosen for her guardians, informed her that she would eventually come into possession of Ilton Park and the rest

of Sir Ralph's unentailed property, she received the information without any inquiry, manifesting neither surprise nor relief. In fact, she had not once thought of money matters; she had thought of nothing but the loss of her mother.

Invitations came in upon Isabel from every side, for she was a general favorite, and the sympathy of the world around her was painfully interested in her behalf.

Mrs. Lacy and Lady Emily Marsh stood foremost among the claimants. Indeed, those two ladies had come to an amicable understanding, in virtue of which they were to share Isabel between them; but these arrangements were brought to an abrupt close by Isabel requesting her guardian's permission to accept Edith's invitation to reside with her at Arden Court; and it was arranged that she should accompany Edith on her return, directly after the funeral.

The examination of Lady Tremyss' papers, undertaken by Walter and Dr. Jacobs, to whom Mr. Marsh and Mr. Lacy were glad to depute the task, brought to light no document or paper bearing any reference to her early life. Either such had been carefully destroyed, or had never existed. Doubt and uncertainty seemed but to settle the more closely over them as they pursued their investigation, and when they ceased from it, the shadow that lay over Lady Tremyss' past was as impervious as before.

Convinced, at length, that no further disclosure was to be hoped for, Walter wrote to Mr. Daubenay informing him of the discovery of Mrs. Williams, and detailing her account of the manner in which the jewel came into her possession. He did not think it expedient to enlighten Mr. Daubenay as to the after history of Lady Tremyss, nor to describe the concealed anxiety with which she had recognized his sketch of the ring. He dreaded to let in any light, however feeble, upon the dark mystery of her life, lest it should result in an

exposure which might entail incalculable evils upon her unconscious child.

A month had scarcely passed when the bell of the little church tolled out its warning heavily again. Again his friends and acquaintances gathered together to hear the solemn words, no ghastly mockery now, with which the body of Sir Ralph Tremyss was committed to the tomb.

At the close of the ceremony, the mourners drew near while the coffin was being lowered into the vault, to be laid beside that of Lady Tremyss. Just as it reached its destined place, the cords swayed, and the coffin, escaping from the grasp of those who stood ready to receive it, slipped towards the other side of the vault. The men were about readjusting the cords to remove it from where it had rested, when they heard a voice from the opening above. It was young Arden's.

"Leave it there."

They left it.

"I suppose the vault may as well be sealed up, Sir," said the sexton to the clergyman, as the mourners dispersed. "Sir Ralph was the last of the family; it won't never be used again.—It was queer, Sir, wasn't it?" he added, lowering his voice. "It seemed as though he didn't want to lie near my lady."

CHAPTER XXXV.

MR. ARDEN'S CONNECTION WITH THE GREEK LOAN.

ALTHOUGH no sudden seizure had followed the shock Mr. Arden had received from the death of Mr. Averil; his health had, nevertheless, failed from that period. A long and wasting

illness had assailed him on his return to Arden Court, and Edith's time and care had been fully occupied by her unwearying attendance upon him. Whatever indignation she might have felt at the discovery of his detention of Walter's letter, had yielded to filial solicitude. The deed was forgotten in her anxiety whilst his illness lasted; forgiven, in her joy at his convalescence; tardy and protracted though that convalescence was. All her former affection had revived in full force.

What moments she could spare from her father's sick room she gave to Isabel, but they were few and far between. Perhaps it was better for Isabel that it was so. Left much to herself as she necessarily was, among scenes void of all sorrowful and weakening associations, the instinct which impelled her to seek solitude in her grief allowed full scope,—her health of mind, her native buoyancy began by degrees to return. Her affection for Walter had been rather an impulse of the imagination than an emotion of the heart.

When the first period of mourning was over, Isabel, though subdued and quieted, had attained to a more natural and peaceful frame of mind than had been hers for some months before. Her affection for Walter had calmed itself into friendship; her anguish at the death of her mother had tempered itself into regret; and when the summer time began to approach, it brought with it to her that sensation of hope and vague expectancy which makes so delicious that opening season to the young.

It was a morning in early May. The sunshine rested on all around.

Isabel sat on the top of the broad stone balustrade which bounded the southern side of the Italian garden, tranquilly enjoying the sunlight, the air, the odors of the flowers. The last few months had changed her much, not in form or in feature, but in that which underlies form and feature.

The first unquiet effervescence of the change from childhood to womanhood had passed, and had left Isabel with only so much of peculiarity remaining as gave piquancy to her converse and zest to her companionship.

As she still sat, Edith came down the walk. The little terrier which trotted by her side, and whose life was harassed and made miserable by the perpetually conflicting claims of his equal attachment for his two mistresses sprang towards Isabel with a joyful bark, made an ambitious spring, intended to deposit him beside her on the top of the balustrade, and in his sudden excitement overleaped the mark and rolled over and over down the grassy slope beyond. Isabel laughed aloud. The sound rang mirthfully, and called a responsive smile to Edith's lips. She had not heard Isabel laugh that way for so long, so very long a time. She must be happy, else she would not have laughed so gaily.

"I am glad you have come," said Isabel. "It is so pleasant here."

"You looked so contented that I was almost unwilling to come lest I should disturb you," said Edith.

"No; you did not disturb me. Do you know, it's very strange, but I don't love to be alone as I used to do. I like better to have some one near me to feel as I do how beautiful it is. It seems to make it still more beautiful."

"Then you don't want to climb trees and watch for deer any more?"

"I don't quite know that," replied Isabel, thoughtfully. "That is very pleasant too; but I am afraid I am too old. I should be ashamed if any one caught me."

"I don't think you will find any deer to tempt you where we are going this afternoon," said Edith. "Papa has taken a fancy to drive as far as Wardistoun."

"Aren't you afraid it will tire him?"

"Sir Joseph thinks not. He wants to encourage him to make a little more exertion now that he is better."

The exertion seemed to do Mr. Arden good. He looked refreshed and reinvigorated, and chatted pleasantly as they drove along. At length Wardistoun, the point of their drive, was reached, and Mr. Arden unwillingly gave the order "Home."

The carriage was passing the gates when another equipage, escorted by a young man on horseback, rolled out of the avenue. Edith's head was turned away. She was pointing out something on the other side of the road to her father.

"I wonder who that lady was," said Isabel, as they drove on. "The one on this side. She had the strangest face, but something nice in it. I think she must have known you, for she spoke eagerly to the gentleman on horseback as she passed, and they both looked back at the carriage."

"I know so few people. I don't think she could have been looking at me," replied Edith.

"What sort of young man was it?" inquired Mr. Arden.

"He was rather pale, with sandy hair, and a very intelligent face. His horse was a beauty."

But the description was too vague to found any conjecture upon, until that evening brought Madame Wosocki and her husband to Arden Court.

"I am not long at Wardistoun before I come to see you," said the Russian, kissing Edith on either cheek in foreign fashion. "The Prince will tell you how impatient I have been."

"This is the pleasure my wife has most anticipated on her way to London," asseverated the old gentleman, "and in it I much sympathize."

And he gallantly raised Edith's hand to his lips. Mr. Arden next received his share of amiable words, and then Edith presented her friend.

"You need not say the name; I know it already. It is Miss Hartley I have the pleasure to meet," said Madame

Wosocki, as she turned her light bluish grey eyes on Isabel. "You did not see us driving to-day, but we saw you."

"It was the Princess that we passed," said Isabel, as Edith looked perplexed.

"Nor did you see the young man who had just joined us."

"No."

"And yet it was a very good friend of yours," remarked Madame Wosocki, with a half smile. "It was Lord Prudhoe."

"I am glad to hear of him," said Edith earnestly. "Pray tell me something about him."

"That which I remember best at this moment is that he much desires to present himself at Arden Court, and I promised to obtain your permission that he should come."

"I shall always be glad to see him," answered Edith in her truthful voice. "I count him among my friends."

"You do well," said Princess Wara, with emphasis. "I do not know of a nobler character."

She paused and turned her eyes around the room. They rested first upon Isabel, who had retired to a little distance, then upon Mr. Arden as he sat conversing with the Prince.

"You find papa much changed, I fear," said Edith.

"Yes; he is not looking well, but I think I see that he is growing better and not worse. His eye is clear, though not so bright; and the tone of his color is healthy, though much paler than before."

"I feared so much that the event of which you have heard would bring on another attack like that at Albansea," said Edith. "I feel that I can't be grateful enough that his illness took a different form."

"You thought then his attack at Albansea came from some sudden grief."

"Yes."

"Did you ever know what it was?" asked the Princess, fixing her eyes on her companion's face.

"I fear I do," she answered, reluctantly.

"You surprise me. Do young English ladies discover secrets of state?" said Madame Wosocki, meaningly.

Edith looked up inquiringly.

"I think you are mistaken. It was no secret of state."

The Russian sank her voice.

"You know that we are aware of many things that we do not tell. I can assure you that the Greek loan was in danger at that time. I have a friend in a position to know."

"Are you sure? If I could only think it was that!"

She spoke hurriedly. Her eyes filled with tears. It was the one great trouble of her life, the fear that she had been the involuntary cause of her father's illness.

"I can assure you that the Russian embassy in London received despatches announcing the probable success of the measures taken to make fail the Greek loan, on the very day that your father was taken ill at Albansea. He was the chief negotiator, you know. Its failure would have ruined him."

"But I wrote to the head clerk, and he said all was safe."

"Bankers do not tell their secrets to their clerks any more than ambassadors do to their secretaries, *ma mignonne*. You may depend upon what I tell you, and disquiet yourself no more."

She took Edith's hand in her's, and patted it caressingly.

"You do not know how glad I am to hear this," said Edith, after a pause of mingled emotions.

"Yes; I know. It is for that I tell you," replied Madame Wosocki. "It is for that I have worked so hard to find this out," she might have said, but did not.

Then, as if to change the subject, "How very striking a face has your friend. Lord Prudhoe was greatly impressed. It seems he had never seen her before."

"No; they have never met, yet they are connections."

"I did not know that. He did not say so."

"He was the nearest relative of her stepfather, Sir Ralph Tremyss."

"Yes; I know," replied Madame Wosocki, who obviously did not intend to make any allusion to recent events. Her imagination had been strongly impressed by the coincidence of Averil's death following so closely upon her prophecy. She did not like to speak of him.

"Now I must bid you adieu. The Prince brought me here on the promise that I would stay but half an hour."

"But not adieu for a long time," replied Edith. "I shall come to see you."

Madame Wosocki smiled sadly.

"It would be too long a journey, *ma mignonne*. We return to Russia. Our two years' congé has expired. We leave to-morrow. I must say farewell. Adieu! be happy. You will be. I see it written in your eyes. Misfortune is never more for you."

Princess Wara pressed Edith in her arms, took courteous leave of Mr. Arden and Isabel, and vanished from the room, to reappear no more.

The next day Lord Prudhoe arrived. Enlightened as he had been by Madame Wosocki as to the causes which had induced Edith's acceptance of Mr. Averil, she had risen higher than ever in his esteem; for, like many men of elevated nature, he over-valued self-sacrifice, and was inclined to set an exorbitant value upon all voluntarily inflicted renunciations, trials, and privations. Accordingly he met Edith more with the air of a devotee revering a saint than that of a gentleman finding himself again in the presence of the woman he had asked to marry, but a few weeks before.

Isabel was in the room when he was announced. She

had as yet maintained the strictest seclusion, and seen no morning visitors; but so closely did he follow on the servant's steps that she had no time to make good her escape. She sat with heightened color and eyes cast down on her work, unconscious of the glances of interest Lord Prudhoe directed towards her in the intervals of his conversation with Edith. It appeared quite unlikely that she would look up or speak to him at all, when a summons came for Edith from Mr. Arden's room. There was no help for it—if Edith went, and Lord Prudhoe wouldn't go, she must do her best to entertain him.—

As she raised her eyes to him, she met an expression so gentle, so solicitous, so respectful, as to strike and rouse her attention at once. He was a young but not a handsome man, that was certain; but what a pleasant face he had. Isabel felt quite at ease with him at once.

When Edith returned, she found, to her great satisfaction, Lord Prudhoe established near Isabel's work-table, deep in what appeared a very interesting conversation.

"That's a nice man," said Isabel when he was gone. "I like him."

Lord Prudhoe's succeeding visits in no wise appeared to diminish the favorable impression left by the first. Edith could not wonder that Isabel found him delightful. In fact, Lord Prudhoe had never appeared to so much advantage before. The gratification of feeling that he had conferred so great and unknown a benefit upon the unconscious girl, the compassion he felt for her orphaned state, added to the admiration inspired by her beauty and the sympathy he soon felt for her fresh and original nature, all made it very pleasant to be near her; and that pleasure tempered his voice, softened his irregular features, and communicated a glow and warmth to every sentiment that he expressed. Moreover, he was the only gentleman whom Isabel consented to see, and so he had the field all to himself.

Edith watched with daily increasing interest the unfolding of this new attachment. She had never discovered the existence of Isabel's short-lived affection for Walter. Her own nature was cast in such a mould of steadfastness that she would have thought it simply impossible for a second attachment to rise so quickly from the ashes of a first. Moreover, it is extremely improbable that she would have approved of the possibility, could it have been proved to her to exist. She beheld with unmingled satisfaction the rise and progress of the mutual liking between Isabel and Lord Prudhoe, undisturbed as it was by any of those petty gossipings and small troubles which are so apt to ruffle the content of those whose affections flow through less secluded channels.

On one occasion only did Isabel fancy that she had occasion to find fault with Lord Prudhoe, and Lord Prudhoe feel inclined to remonstrate with Isabel.

It was a pleasant morning, fresh, sunny, and clear. Isabel sat in the window reading a new novel, "Edgar Morton's Inheritance." She had got as far as the middle of the first volume, and was much interested in the story. Lord Prudhoe came in. She laid the book down and had soon forgotten it.

"You have been reading, I see," said Lord Prudhoe after a while, and he carelessly took up the volume. As his eye rested on the title he changed countenance.

"I hope you are not reading this book," he said, bending an earnest look upon her.

"Yes, I am. The opening is very interesting."

"It is a book that I should be very sorry to have you read," he answered gravely.

Isabel flushed.

"Mrs. Marston told me to read it. She said she liked it. I should think she might know."

Mrs. Marston was one of the most Puritanic of women. To ascribe any undue laxity of principle to her was an obvi-

ous absurdity. Lord Prudhoe flushed in his turn as he answered,

"Certainly—nevertheless I hope you will not read the book."

He spoke in a tone so serious that it bordered on severity, at least so Isabel thought. She felt not unreasonable displeasure at what seemed an unaccountable and unjustifiable interference. As she looked at him she met an imploring look that tempered her vexation.

"Will you tell me why?"

"I cannot," he replied firmly, looking away.

Isabel drew back into her chair and compressed her lips. What was the matter with the man? What did he mean?—

As she sat silent and vexed, a sudden revulsion took place in her mind. Her faith in her companion all at once re-asserted itself.—What a baby she was. What did she care about the book.—So, without saying a word Isabel jumped up and put the volume into the fire.

"Thank you," said Lord Prudhoe as she returned to her place; and he looked so grateful that she felt quite ashamed of having been so unwilling to grant his request.

The incident, happily as it had passed, seemed nevertheless to interfere with Lord Prudhoe's usual fluency. He conversed with a certain constraint, and soon took his leave.

He had not been gone long when Edith came in, looking much discomposed. She had been finishing the second volume of "Edgar Morton's Inheritance."

"Oh, Isabel, please don't read that book," and she gazed anxiously around for it.

"That's strange," said Isabel, "Lord Prudhoe has just been saying the same thing."

"He's quite right," said Edith. "I hope you're not going to finish it."

"I couldn't if I wished," said Isabel. "There it is," pointing to the blackened mass in the fire.

Edith, who had been made acquainted by Walter with Lord Prudhoe's deed of gift, retired with a look of satisfaction. There was a great deal of information concerning the laws which regulated the descent of property, to be derived from "Edgar Morton's Inheritance."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

EDITH SPEAKS PLAINLY TO HER FATHER.

THE chill blasts and infrequent sunshine, the capricious showers and tardy frosts of early spring were passed. The rejoicing hum of insect life, the breath of wild flowers, the perfume of leafy trees, were all abroad. The summer time had come, redolent of beauty, bounteous of life.

Mr. Arden sat with Edith, and gazed forth over the garden. The sun had set; the sky was of that soft, opaline purple beside which the deepest blue looks cold; on the edge, where the golden glory of the sunset faded into the deeper hue above, hung trembling one solitary star. The evening breeze waved the tops of the encircling elms, and wafted towards the house the heavy fragrance of the flowers from the garden. The song of the field cricket alone broke the stillness, with its shrill, familiar sound.

Edith leaned her head upon her father's chair, and looked upward. They sat sometime without speaking. In his days of youth and vigor, Mr. Arden had cared little for such scenes. He was beginning to love them now.

"Where is Isabel?" he asked, at length. His voice had lost its former roundness; it was feebler than of yore.

"In the drawing-room, Papa with Lord Prudhoe."

"He is often here."

"Yes, he comes often."

"I used to think, when we were at Albansea, that he had a liking for you."

Edith was silent.

"How long ago it seems," continued Mr. Arden. "How much has happened since then. It is hard to believe that it is but a few months."

He paused for a while, and watched the deepening landscape and the brightening star. Again he spoke.

"And Lord Prudhoe, what brings him here so much?"

"I think to see Isabel. He was very much struck by her when he met her a few weeks ago; he has been here constantly ever since."

"Does she like him?"

"She is always very reserved about what she feels, but I think she will like him in time. No one can see much of him without admiring and respecting him; and certainly that is the best foundation for love."

"Yes, and he has other things too. He would be a good match for any girl." Mr. Arden gave a half sigh. Presently he returned to the subject.

"You say every one must respect and admire him, and that is the best beginning for love. Why did you not think so before?"

"I have always thought so, Papa."

"Then why, when he was so attentive at Albansea, did nothing come of it?"

Edith was silent for a moment. Her father was approaching the subject which she had lately been resolving to open to him.

"Papa, do you want me to talk freely to you, as I should to Mamma were she here?"

There was an earnestness, a pathos in Edith's voice that moved her father—that touched what was softest within him. He laid his hand upon hers.

"Yes, my dear; speak." Yet, as Mr. Arden said the words, he felt an undefined consciousness that perhaps Edith might be going to say things he did not wish to hear.

"I have been long wanting to talk to you, but I have feared that you would be grieved and perhaps displeased at what I have to say; and you have not been strong since we returned from Houston Lacy, and I did not wish to vex you; but now I must speak to you and show you my whole heart."

She paused. Her father made no reply.

"I want you to look back, Papa, and remember when you were young, when you first knew Mamma. Did you love her?"

"I loved her as much as a woman could be loved," Mr. Arden answered slowly. "Why do you ask me that?"

"Would it have made you unhappy to have given her up, and married some one else?"

"No power on earth could have forced me to do so. But, Edith, you are talking strangely this evening."

"Listen a little while, Papa, and please answer me. Did mamma make you happy?"

"I was perfectly happy with her. No one could—" Mr. Arden's voice failed; he paused.

The love which his wife had inspired had been the deepest sentiment he had ever known, the leaven of that otherwise worldly heart.

"Now, Papa, looking back, you are glad you married her?"

"Glad,—I am thankful. She was my blessing."

"Then, Papa, if you had a son you would think he did wisely to marry the woman he loved if she were like mamma?"

"Most certainly."

"But mamma was not of high rank, and she had no money."

Mr. Arden did not answer. Edith's voice grew deeper, more pleading.

"And, Papa, if I were to say to you, when I marry I want to marry some one whom I can love as you loved mamma, what should you answer me?"

There came no reply.

"Papa, when I engaged myself to Mr. Averil did you know why I did it?"

"Because you thought it best, my dear, I suppose," said Mr. Arden uneasily.

"I did it for your sake, Papa. I feared it was my refusal that had made you ill. I was willing to sacrifice my whole life to buy the chance of safety for you, Papa. I did it, though I knew I should be miserable as long as I lived."

"You were a good girl, Edith, a good girl."

"I told Mr. Averil that I did not love him; but that I would try to do so. I told him the truth so far, but I did not tell him the whole truth."

"Why, my dear, I think that was enough. What was it that you did not tell him?"

"I did not tell him that I loved some one else."

Something very like compunction stirred within Mr. Arden. Edith's constant and tender care of him during these last months of illness had rendered her very dear to him.

"But did you not tell me that you had no wish to marry any one else?" he asked.

"Yes, Papa; but I thought he did not care for me."

"Who is it that you are speaking of, Edith? Tell me his name."

Edith laid her cheek against her father's.

"Papa, remember all you have been saying, remember how you loved mamma, and think that perhaps she is standing here by us, listening to all we say. Think it is she who

is speaking to you, that it is she who tells you it is Walter that I love and that loves me. We love each other as well as you and mamma loved so long ago."

Again there was silence. The moon had risen over the tree-tops, and poured her full-orbed radiance across the lawn and flower-garden into the dark and shadowy room. All was silvery light without, all was dim within, save where the white rays rested on Mr. Arden's changed and pallid face, and on the slight figure nestling by his side. There was something in the moonlight which re-echoed the sense of Edith's words. On such a summer night as this, years ago, before his life had become the barren and worldly thing to which it had changed, he had wooed his wife. Thick coming memories rose thronging around him, a sweet and placid smile beamed as from the grave upon him, a gentle voice sounded again within his heart; and as Edith nestled imploringly towards him, he drew her to him and wept.

Edith wrote to Walter that night,—

"DEAR WALTER,—It was only yesterday that I wrote, asking you to have patience a little while longer, and to-night I write to say that you may come. Papa has given his consent.

"I scarcely know how it was brought about. I have been dreading it so much, fearing that touching on the subject might agitate him, and make him ill again; but he led the way to it himself, and then when I told him all, he took me in his arms without a word and held me there a long time, and when he let me go he bade God bless me. I whispered, 'And Walter? Papa,' and he said, 'And Walter.'

"I could hardly have hoped for it once; but among the many changes that have taken place, Papa has very much altered. I feel that his affection for me is different from

what it used to be, and that he will be contented in seeing me happy.

"You will think it childish, but I cannot believe in my happiness until I see you. I have so lost the habit of being happy, that I cannot convince myself that all my pain is over, and that we are never to be separated any more.

"EDITH."

The reverie into which Edith had sunk after completing her letter, was broken by a light tap at the door of communication between her room and Isabel's. It opened at her response, and Isabel, in her white peignoir, came in.

"I saw the light under your door, and as Félicie's chatter stopped an hour ago, I knew you were thinking instead of going to bed. May I come and think with you?"

She sat down on a low chair close to Edith, clasped her hands around her knees, and remained silent.

They were used to sit thus together, and at first Edith paid no heed to her companion beyond the welcoming smile and gesture that had greeted her entrance, but as after a while her eye rested on Isabel's face, something in its expression arrested her attention.

"Tell me, Isabel, what is it you are thinking of?" she said softly.

Isabel turned her eyes slowly upon Edith.

"I am thinking how strange life is." She paused a moment, then went on. "How strange it is that what we have longed and prayed for we may come to think nothing of, and what we have thought nothing of may grow to seem more than all the world to us."

This had not been Edith's experience, and her answer tarried a moment on the way.

"Isn't that resignation? the accepting God's will for us?"

Isabel shook her head.

"No:—I think perhaps it is God's changing us so as to enable us to be happy in a way we never dreamed of."

A troubled gladness spread over Isabel's face as she spoke. She looked appealingly an instant at Edith, then hastily left her place, and knelt beside her, hiding her face on Edith's shoulder. Edith cast her arm around her, and waited for her to speak. At length the words came.

"Oh, I am so happy."

Edith pressed an earnest kiss on Isabel's forehead, and waited for her to go on.

"It's only that he's too good for me."

"I'm sure he doesn't think so," Edith answered.

"No. I wish he did. It's dreadful to have him think me so perfect—but then—" she paused and resumed in a lower voice; "I don't think that, if I were what he thinks me, I could—" she stopped.

"Care for him any more?" Edith suggested.

"Yes."

"I fancy that is the chief thing to his mind just now. So he has spoken?"

"Yes—to-night."

"And you told him?"

"I told him that Mr. Marsh and Mr. Lacy would answer."

"No,—Isabel—you didn't say that," said Edith, laughing.

"Yes, I did, why shouldn't I? It's true. I can't say anything that they don't. Mr. Arden told me so,—and I knew it before."

"But you know that they will say yes."

"Oh, yes, of course;—but then, I was very glad to say it so as not to have to say anything else just then. I felt so frightened."

"Yes, I understand," said Edith.

"I think Mamma would have been pleased, don't you?" said Isabel, after another pause.

"Yes," answered Edith. She did not care to dilate upon this theme.

"He never saw Mamma; I am so sorry."

"Haven't you any portrait of her that you can show him?" asked Edith, with an effort.

"No, Mamma would never be painted. Once Sir Ralph had a great painter down from London to take her portrait. She didn't say anything, but she locked herself up in her room, and wouldn't come out till he had gone away."

Edith made no reply. She was not sorry to learn that there existed no likeness of Lady Tremyss.

"I suppose he will be here to-morrow," she said, preferring to turn the conversation back to Lord Prudhoe.

"No;—he is going to see Mr. Marsh and Mr. Lacy, and then he's going to see his mother. He won't be back for three days."

Isabel spoke as if she rather enjoyed the prospect.

"That's a long time," said Edith.

"No, it isn't—it's very short. I would rather he should stay away longer."

"What, don't you want to see him again?" asked Edith, in surprise.

"Yes—some time—but not now."

With this, to Edith, incomprehensible speech, Isabel kissed her, and retired to her own room, there to reflect upon the strangeness of life.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MR. ARDEN PLANS FOR THE WEDDING BREAKFAST.

By one of those singular revulsions of feeling which we see sometimes take place, reversing probability and defying

explanation, Mr. Arden had no sooner given his consent to Edith's marriage, than he appeared inspired by the same interest with regard to it as if it had been a pet project of his own. He rapidly arrived at various comfortable conclusions concerning the new state of affairs. It wasn't a bad thing that Edith was to marry a man who would not insist upon taking her into the world all the time, but who would be contented to let her stay in the evenings quietly at home with him—; for although the physicians had sedulously concealed from both Mr. Arden and his daughter the precarious nature of his hold upon life, he felt, nevertheless, an internal conviction that he never again should be as strong as he had been;—and of course Edith wouldn't think of leaving him while he didn't feel well. Then, after all, Edith's children would have Arden Hall. True, Walter Arden wasn't a great match for Edith, but Edith didn't care for great matches, and since she did care for him, there was nothing to be done about it but to let her marry him. And she was a good girl; very tender and affectionate she had been. He didn't know how he could have done without her during this illness. Yes, Edith was a good girl, and she should be happy her own way.—

When Walter appeared on the evening of the day that he had received Edith's letter, and Mr. Arden, wasted and wan, shook him cordially by the hand, saying, "Make her happy," the young man's look and words were such as to infuse renewed satisfaction through Mr. Arden's mind. For all Walter's hostile impressions disappeared at once before the sight of the change wrought in Edith's father by the last few weeks. He could not feel anything but sympathy and compassion for the altered and broken man. He did his best to amuse and interest him, and succeeded beyond what he could have hoped. His pleasant voice, his cheerful smile, his equable gaiety, soon grew necessary to Mr. Arden's comfort. He missed him in a hundred little ways

when he was not there.—It was very annoying to have him all the time going away. It was so pleasant to look round in the evening as he sat in his easy chair, on those four cheerful faces;—for Lord Prudhoe, in right of being Isabel's accepted lover, had now taken his place in the family circle;—when Walter wasn't there it was quite a different thing. He didn't see why Edith shouldn't be married at once, and that would put a stop to these vexatious interruptions.—So Mr. Arden, before long, informed Edith and Walter; and as no valid reason to the contrary appeared, it was decided that they should be married at the end of the ensuing month.

This point was no sooner settled than, much to Edith's disappointment, for she had hoped for a quiet wedding, Mr. Arden began to lay plans for a ceremony of state, to be followed by a breakfast that should surpass any breakfast that had ever been eaten before. She had some faint hopes that Sir Joseph might interfere and forbid it on account of the fatigue; but Sir Joseph did not take this view of the subject at all. He said that the amusement and occupation would be very good things for Mr. Arden; and as to the fatigue, if he were too tired on his return from church, he needn't go in to breakfast, that was all.

Edith submitted, resignedly; and Mr. Arden plunged forthwith into interviews and consultations with various leading authorities of the industrial world of *luxe*. This, together with the choosing the designs and inspecting the progress of the re-setting of her mother's diamonds, happily filled up Mr. Arden's time, and allowed the lovers much more liberty to be together than would otherwise have fallen to their share. So the days passed, and brought them to within two weeks of the wedding.

Edith had resumed her drawing since Walter's appearance at the Court. She had not drawn before since she had left the Hall. It had been too painful to take up again an occupation so associated with past joys and pains; but now,

with Walter beside her, how pleasant it was to sit and draw.

She was sitting at her drawing-table; Walter, who had dined on the preceding evening with Mr. Hungerford to meet the Abbé Hulot, had just placed upon it a fine photograph.

"Mr. Hungerford insisted on my taking it for you to copy. It will make a beautiful drawing if you leave out the foreground, which is bad."

"The foregrounds in photographs are always ugly," Edith commented.

"Just that tower, and the wall, and the waves, and clouds beyond, you see."

"Yes, I see," said Edith, looking at it attentively. "What a strong and peculiar character it has. How strange, and wild, and desolate. But you didn't tell me—What is it?"

"Iona. They are going to make a tour among the Western Isles. They will touch there. The Abbé wants to examine the ruins; he expects to find some valuable information for his second volume. You remember you read the first."

"Yes, I remember," replied Edith, still gazing at the photograph. "So they are going to Iona. I half envy them."

"Would you like to go there," asked Walter. "Then why can't we take that for our wedding trip?"

"But Papa—would he be willing?" objected Edith. "I don't think he will want me to go any where."

"He spoke to me yesterday as if he expected it, and said he hoped we should not stay away more than a fortnight. We can go on a yachting trip there if you like."

Edith, who, like most fair-haired women, was fond of the sea, consented.

"I should not be sorry if we were to meet them," she

said, after a while. "I want to see the Abbé, and I would rather meet him for the first time among such scenes as this, than in a drawing-room; though I don't quite know what makes me feel so."

"A sense of the fitness of things," replied Walter. He mentally resolved that, if possible, Edith's wish should be gratified; and that she should meet the Abbé among the Isles, perhaps at Iona.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

FAR to the west, amid the sea-green waves of the Atlantic, rises a solitary isle, rich with the records, solemn with the memories of the past. Royal dust sleeps there its endless slumber, to the sound of the chanting of the unceasing waves. The white-winged sea fowl circle around its deserted fanes, wherein the ocean breezes are now the only choristers, whose priests have vanished centuries ago, whose rites long ages since have ceased to be. The small, scant grass grows green around the sepulchres of knight, and priest, and nun; and the purple heather and the yellow gorse gleam up from between the broken columns and shattered monuments that strew the holy ground. Solitude eternal, unbroken, has claimed possession of the spot, and the still sunshine broods over it like silence visible.

Hither Walter and Edith had come. All the early hours of the day they had passed amid the ruins, watching the yellow sunshine, the soft, white clouds, the dark blue heavens, and the restless waves.

Edith turned her eye from the sunshine towards a tombstone which lay near her in the shade of the ruined wall; bending over it she began half absently to decipher the inscription—"Ignatia, Priora XII. Requiescat in pace."

"Ignatia—that was Lady Tremyss' name," she said, thoughtfully; and her lips moved silently as though repeating the graven entreaty, "Requiescat in pace."

Walter had kept silence to Edith on the dark story of Lady Tremyss. He did not care that her pure eyes should rest on such a crime-stained life. He wished to guard her thoughts from all that might trouble and annoy; he sought to surround her mind with all that was peaceful, beautiful, and of good report. Despite his care, as he re-echoed her words, "Requiescat in pace," there was a tone in his voice that arrested his young wife's attention. She gazed up at his face, and saw upon it a shadow deeper than that which rested on the tombstone. She looked an enquiry, but Walter did not reply. His thoughts had wandered back over the past, his memory was busy with scenes gone by. Again that still presence passed before him, those long, black eyes flashed up on him from their tomb, that soft, low voice broke its dumb silence, and came whispering inarticulately upon his ear.

"Was that mystery never to be solved?" he asked himself. "Was it to haunt him even to his grave? Had the waves of life closed over Lady Tremyss and her past so utterly that no floating fragment should ever come back to tell its tale at last, no clue whereby the light of day might make its way at length into the inscrutable recesses of that dark existence?"—

He was roused by Edith's light touch upon his arm.

"Look, Walter—a boat. It is they—they are coming."

He rose and went down to the shore to meet and welcome the expected travellers. Edith retained her place, awaiting them.

She was still sitting in silence beside the tombstone when she heard the sound of approaching steps. Cordial voices echoed amid the ruins, friendly hands were outstretched, and Mr. Hungerford and Walter stood before her, accompanied by an old man clad in foreign ecclesiastical garb.

Introduction, congratulation, question, and reply were interchanged awhile, breaking the stillness with the unaccustomed tone and phrase of social life; then at Edith's request, Mr. Hungerford and the Abbé Hulot took their seats near her, and yielding by degrees to the influence of the place, the conversation changed its character and took a graver tone.

"I did not think, when I undertook this pilgrimage, that I should meet one so young, and I must believe so happy, in this distant and melancholy spot," said the Abbé, who had taken his place beside Edith in the shadow of the wall. "These emblems are scarcely fit for such as you," he added, glancing around on broken cross, and shivered capital, and grey and sunken graves.

"I do not find it sad," she answered. "I only find it tranquil. I like to hear the sound of the waves as they echo over the tombs."

"What do they say to you?"

There was something in his expression that drew Edith's thoughts beyond their usual resting-place, her lips.

"They tell of what outlasts Time, and is beyond Space," she replied, in a low voice; "of that Might, and that Glory, and that Love which we can never fully understand."

As Edith paused, the mighty chorus of the waters took up her words, and repeated them in their deep acclaim.

"It is well," responded the Abbé, and was silent for a while; then again turning to her,—“but does no painful memory, no more immediate association assert itself in presence of these graves? I am old. I have lost many of those whom I loved, and, despite my faith, a churchyard is a melancholy place to me.”

"Scarcely," Edith replied. "I never think of a grave when I am remembering those who are gone. I think only one name has occurred to me since I have been here, and that was suggested to me by this tombstone," and she pointed out the inscription in the shadow.

"Ignatia," repeated the Abbé, reading from the ancient stone, "that is a favorite name of mine."

"It has a strange sound to my ears," replied Edith. "I have known only one person of that name."

"Yes; it is especially used as a religious name among us. It is not an English name at all."

"And yet it was an Englishwoman who bore it," she remarked.

"Then probably an Englishwoman of our persuasion."

"No. She belonged to the Church of England."

"Who was that, may I ask?" inquired Mr. Hungerford from his place opposite.

"Lady Tremyss," replied Walter, who had a certain dislike to Edith's even speaking the name.

"Lady Tremyss. Ah, yes, I remember, that strangely beautiful woman I saw for the first time at your house. By the way, I believe she died lately, did she not?"

"Yes," answered Walter, and anxious to divert the conversation from its direction, he turned towards the Abbé.

"Let me thank you anew for the pleasure I have had from the first volume of your book? I do not know when I have read anything that has interested me so much."

The Abbé shook his head with a sad smile.

"Ah," he replied, "you refer to the great disappointment of my life."

"How so?" inquired Walter. "It has been very much admired. At least, the reviews say so."

"Yes," added Mr. Hungerford, "three editions in as many months. It is a book which marks an era in that study."

"Ah, all that is very well," responded the Abbé; "but, nevertheless, my own inestimable chance of testing my theory has been lost. Nothing will ever restore it to me. I can now never assert, I can only presume results."

"May I ask what disappointment you mean?" asked

Edith, sympathisingly. "Let us hope that it is not entirely beyond help."

"You shall hear, madame, and then you will be able to judge what a blow it was to me. He paused a moment, then continued, "I was already much interested in the subject, when I accidentally found among a tribe of the Northwest a child who struck me forcibly. The region was remote, there was no evidence that it had ever been penetrated by any European until I myself ventured there; yet to my eye the child bore unmistakable evidence of European origin; in her physique solely, however, for she was as complete a little savage as I ever saw. But the tribe stoutly maintained that she belonged to them, and I was completely puzzled. When I go into a new tribe, I always secure the medicine-man for a friend, and to the medicine-man I went. He held the information very high; it cost me half my stock of quinine to purchase it. However, he finally was bought over, and informed me that the child was the daughter of two white persons who had come to live among the tribe, and who had died in its infancy. I asked if they had remained in the tribe willingly, but received no satisfactory answer.

"The child was ignorant of its European descent, and believed itself an Indian. Here, then, was an unexampled opportunity, and I immediately set myself to work to secure it. The point was this: everyone knows that any of the inferior races, when brought into contact with the Caucasian, instinctively recognize their inferiority; and to this recognition many of the peculiarities observable in half-breeds and semi-barbarous nations are to be ascribed. Now if I could obtain that child of purely European blood and bring her up among Europeans, giving her a European education, but leaving her under the impression that she belonged to an inferior race, the nature and extent of the peculiarities she would evince would offer most precious indications for

the solution of my great problem as to how far early training and conviction can alter the tendencies of blood. I did my utmost, and finally the child was given into my custody. I had hard work to get her to her destination. She almost strangled me once during the night, and twice she threw herself out of the boat into the water. The boatmen could scarcely overtake her; she swam and dived like an otter. At length I got her safely into the city, and placed her in secure hands, as I thought, in a convent. Every one believed she was an Indian, as she could speak nothing but the dialect of the tribe. I said that she came from a very distant region, and to that they attributed what differences they saw between her and the usual Indian. She was about twelve. I had intended to take her out of the convent in time, but as she grew older she showed such extraordinary ferocity of temper that I dared not let her loose. Sending her back to the tribe was not to be thought of."

"Why not?" Edith inquired.

"Her spiritual interest alone would have forbidden such a step; and, moreover, in that case I should have lost all that I hoped to gain, accordingly I decided that she must take the veil."

"Did she wish to do so?"

"It was the only thing to be done, *ma chère dame*. When we cage a tiger, we do not ask whether the tiger likes it. Her native violence and sullenness had been, I afterwards discovered, much developed by the provocations she was constantly receiving from the novices, who, it seemed, were in the habit of taunting her with her Indian descent. You look very much interested," he observed, glancing at Edith's look of commiserating pity, and Walter's face of rapt attention.

"Yes; pray go on," Walter replied, somewhat hurriedly. "What became of her?"

"There you touch on the very heart of my disappoint-

ment. She escaped from the convent and was never traced, despite all the exertions that were made. It is not only in a merely scientific point of view that I so deplore her evasion. I am certain that she did not return among the Indians; she had become too far civilized for that. I feel that I was the involuntary cause of letting loose a scourge upon society. Her footsteps have been hidden from me; but this I can surely predict, wherever they have been impressed they have been marked with crime."

"Was there no evidence of her parentage?" Walter demanded, in a voice so peculiar that Edith turned and looked inquiringly at him.

"None, except you may call such what she wore as an amulet on a necklace of wild cat claws,—an old ring set with an orange-colored stone."

"What is it, Walter; why do you look so strange?" exclaimed his wife, bending forward.

Arden hesitated to speak. He shrank irrepressibly from opening before his wife the blood-tainted page of whose long-sealed mystery he had but that moment discovered the key.

Edith's quick intuition needed no more. The questioning glance she darted back along the past rested on a shrouded form.

"You knew her," she exclaimed, fixing her eyes on Walter. "It must have been—it was Lady Tremyss!"

THE END.