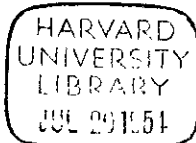


ADEN POWER;
OR,
THE COST OF A SCHEME.

BY
FARLEIGH OWEN.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY T. O. H. P. BURNHAM,
143 WASHINGTON STREET.
1862.

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ADEN POWER; OR, THE COST OF A SCHEME.

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CHAPTER I.

IN BRETTLER'S BUILDINGS.

"THE babby's gone, then, at last? I knew it couldn't live; I only wonder it's held out as long, and her with that fever on her, poor soul. You've got the box of Mr. Asher, of course; he's a convenient man he is." The speaker laughed a sad, unpleasant laugh, as she glanced at the burden of the other, half-hidden by her apron.

She who had been arrested on her way up the dirty narrow stairs by her fellow-lodger's gossip, paused, one foot on the first step of the next flight, and resting her load upon the one above, replied, —

"Well, it ain't to say gone yet, poor brat, but it can't live, that's certain; and so, as Asher's got another job in the morning, and he'd told me I could have the box, I just brought it with me, for it'll be best put out of *her* sight, poor gal."

"Ay, dear heart, yes; then she's no better?"

The old woman shook her head, stooped to resume her burden, and continued to ascend the stairs.

"You've got *your* hands full, and no mistake," said the other, as she stood a few moments with her flaring candle-end in a bottle-neck, holding it to light the elder woman on her way to the topmost attic, which having reached, she once more paused, panting for breath, and fumbling in her pocket for the key of a door which she opened, and entering softly, closed it after her.

It was a miserable place; the very articles the room contained told of

abject slatternly poverty far more than bare walls could do.

The ceiling sloped at one side down to the floor, the window, patched and cracked, was curtained by a ragged apron, which had dropped from one side and left a space, where the clear frosty moon looked severely in upon the dreary attic. A carpet was on that part of the floor near the fireplace, ragged and filthy with the accumulation of dust and grease. The small round table, covered by a ragged checked cloth, was littered with some tumbled articles of baby attire, a cracked tea-cup, a black tea-pot scorched and chipped, and in the midst a bottle of the dusty-cobweb exterior, suggestive of "fine old port." There was but one chair, its rush bottom sadly dilapidated; a twisted, broken wire fender was heaped with ashes, that must have been the deposit of a twelve-month, judging from the scanty fire which to-night twinkled below the second bar; not to mention the egg and oyster shells, lemon-rinds, and apple-pearings decorating the dingy mound, to which the latest contribution appeared in the despoiled stalks of what had evidently been fine bunches of grapes. A rusty saucepan handle surmounted the whole, promoted to the dignity of poker, or, indeed, of the whole set whose place it filled.

Not a thing within those four walls that would have fetched twopence, even to the dress of the old woman herself, which was frowsy, neglected, and meagre in the extreme, with the exception of her bonnet, which was decent, and had been apparently a tasteful and expensive one; perhaps

that had been found unavailable as capital, or it would not have remained.

Beside the window, resting one end upon a low wooden bench, the other on a broken chair and a handleless pail turned upside down, were laid two deal boards, such as laundresses use for ironing dresses on. Placed on these was a straw palliasse, a flock bolster, a folded woollen rug, and over that a small ironing blanket. This was the bed. With a poor attempt at appearances, where sheets should have been visible at top was laid an old calico petticoat, unripped and spread open, then another threadbare blanket, destitute of nap, and lastly, a piece of patchwork, so washed out and tattered, not even the sanguine pawnbroker at the corner of the "Buildings" would have bestowed a second glance upon it.

The moonlight came in slantwise across this miserable pallet, and showed the form of a woman apparently sleeping, huddled to one side; an old handkerchief was tied over her hair, her face was almost hidden under the covering, and beside her some odds and ends of poor feminine apparel were huddled together upon the outside, as if even this trifling addition had been resorted to in hopes of shielding the occupant of the wretched couch from the biting external air. For it was cold! bitter, keen, cutting, that November night. The very stars seemed frozen into the solid block of blue icy sky too fast even to twinkle. The flood of moonlight was a bar of frosted silver that pierced you like an icicle, and the wind, that every now and then ventured out in a sudden bluster of intent, might have been nipped as it came, so suddenly was it hushed into silence. It was past even the pleasant experience of a brisk walk, made agreeable by the contrast of the cheerful home picture awaiting one; people in warm houses, and plentifully clad, drew closer to the roaring fire, and said, shuddering, "Ugh! there's no keeping the cold out;" even in beds of down, and with well-

lined hangings and muffled doors and windows, nipped toes and aching shoulders were by no means rare experiences. How then fared the poor inmate of that miserable garret, where the cold seemed positively more intense than in the open air? There stood, beneath the window, an earthen pan of dirty water—a cake of ice covered it; a tin bowl had been hastily turned upside down to serve for footstool—a ring of ice now held it to the floor, and that within a foot of the hearth.

Upon a ledge of the window, near the bed head, stood a candle in the remains of an old lanthorn; a thimble, cotton, and scissors were beside it, and among the loose articles drawn over the sleeper was a piece of finely-stitched linen-needlework, half completed. There was also a plate, with a cold potato, a scrap of bread, and a portion of a gaunt coal-shed red-her-ring. The smell of the lately extinguished candle floated through the atmosphere of the attic, which already combined those of fried fish, gin, fat, tobacco, dirty linen, and, alas! the faint unmistakable odor of the sick chamber, unsoftened by any of the thousand artful niceties of luxury and taste, which can succeed in rendering even such far from unbearable.

Depositing her load in the corner by the door, the old woman shuffled across the room to the grate, and stirring up the red cinders, managed with some difficulty to light a piece of paper, and the long wick of the candle at the bed's head. Putting it on the table, she turned towards the bed.

"Mary," she said softly; then again louder, "Mary, dear."

There was no answer. "She's asleep," muttered the old woman; "and thank goodness she can, poor girl."

Crossing the room she set the candle on the floor beside what seemed a heap of rags; old bits of carpet, and dismembered matting, partially covered with the scarlet uniform jacket of a soldier. Hurriedly he lifted this, and looked beneath and around.

"Where's the child?" she cried,

flinging the rags here and there. "Good Lord, where's the child?"

"Mother, is it you?" said a faint voice from the bed, for her loud exclamation had aroused the sleeper, who had raised herself on one hand, and was looking round her for the moment in the bewilderment of sudden awakening. She was a very young woman, not more than twenty, certainly; but the face was pallid, the eyes sunk, every feature shrunken and emaciated, more from starvation than even the recent pain of illness; in every gaunt, hollow, and sharpened outline there was the semblance of a corpse restored to life, as in a weak voice she repeated—

"Mother!"

"The child, Mary! I can't find it."

"He is here, mother; I've got him."

"You have! How on earth, Mary, how dare you?"

"Don't be angry, mother," said the poor creature, as the other hastily approached the bed; "I couldn't help it. My eyes ached, and I felt so faint I couldn't see to work, and I put out the candle and laid down; but, oh! I was so cold I couldn't sleep, and I heard the poor babe whine so, I thought he must feel it too, and that we'd both be warmer—"

"How ever did you get out, you fool of a thing as you are?"

"I helped myself along by the shelf, and then I pushed the chair before me till I reached the corner. Oh, *don't* take him away, mother! we've both slept since; the poor lamb nestled so in my arms, and I was just dreaming, oh, so beautiful!"

"Dreaming—fiddlestick!" said the old woman, as she lifted an infant of some few days old from the bed, where it had lain rolled completely in the threadbare blanket, and covered up by the few extra things heaped over it. The poor mother had stripped herself for her child, and close huddled in her arms both had slept, soothed by the mutual warmth; but it awoke, and set up a pitiful wail as the elder woman tried to remove it.

"I'll tell you what it is, Mary," she said sharply, "you'll be the death of yourself, and the child too, with that fever and cough too upon you. You heard what the doctor said—"

"That I was not to nurse him, mother, and no more I haven't; oh," she cried, still holding on to the child with her thin hand, "mayn't he stay? mayn't he just lay here by me? I won't touch him, mother, I won't: I'll lay the other side, only let him be near me, pray do. I'm better, mother, and so is the baby—I'm sure he is, since I had him—"

"I tell you, Mary, the child can't live; *there*, you may as well know it first as last: we all saw it plain enough, and the only chance for it is you letting him be; you're stronger, and the fever's gone. Do you want to see him go sooner than maybe he would?"

"No, no, no; take him, then, oh, take him!" cried the young mother, as she put the babe from her, then drew it again hastily to her breast and kissed it, while the tears poured down her hollow cheeks and into its wan little face. "Take him away, mother, but oh, don't say that he'll die, *don't*. He's all I have left of *him*—it's poor Jack's child, you won't let him die, mother, oh! take him then, till I may have him myself."

She fell back, covering her face with her thin hands and sobbing feebly, while the old woman bore off the child to its bed of rags, and returned to her daughter.

"There, don't you be fretting yourself ill again," she said roughly; "I've had work enough, Lord knows, with you. *Poor Jack*, indeed! I don't know what you'd snivel after him for, taking you over to foreign parts, and then leaving you to come back to me with your trouble, and me next door to the work'us; it's me need to fret, I think. Drat all the red-coats, the pack on 'em, say I!"

"Don't, mother," sobbed the sick girl, "don't say anything again him that's dead, and was always good to me, and that I loved. I know it wasn't

right of me to leave you as I did, and I'm a trouble and a burthen to you now, I know, but I hadn't nowhere else to go to when my time came, I hadn't; and, indeed, as soon as ever I can get up I'll work for us all—the lady'll come again, won't she? and she'll maybe know where I can get word. She promised, mother, didn't she?"

"Oh, ay, she promised; but them fine folks don't think much of promises to us."

"But, mother, you said she spoke kindly, and the wine she gave you did him good, you said. She *will* come again."

"I wish there was a drop left for you," said the old woman, going to the table as she spoke, and turning the bottle upside down for the twentieth time over the tea-cup.

"Give it to him, mother, if there is," said the girl eagerly, "I don't want it."

"There ain't, child, there ain't a drop; you had the last, but there'll be more, Mary, there'll be more."

"You think she will come, then, mother, and you'll ask her about my baby, won't you? It's likely she'll know of what may do him good. God bless her! and you won't let him die, dear mother?"

She was sobbing again, as she laid her head on the hard pillow; the harsh old parent soothed her in her way—"There then, hush! here's the physic that you was to take, and try you to sleep a bit. I'll take care of the boy, never fear; it may live after all, there's no knowing."

The girl took the medicine passively from her mother's hand, who, after covering her up, stood watching her for a few minutes as her eyes closed, and her breathing became more steady.

"He said it was to make her sleep," the old woman said to herself, "and he's right. I've given her a little more than was put on the bottle, it'll do her no harm to sleep a bit till I've got something for us to eat."

She put the bottle of medicine on

the table, shaded the light of the candle from her daughter's eyes, and, going to the heap of rags in the corner, took up the child, and sat down with it in her lap.

"It does look bad, for certain," she muttered to herself; "likely enough she'll be off her bargain if she sees the thing like this."

Moving cautiously about she set about washing the child, and put on it a bed-gown, very coarse and old, but clean; then—for the poor infant had not ceased to whine and fret since taken from its mother's side—the old woman dropped a few drops of the medicine into the food on which the babe had been fed since its birth; a few spoonfuls of this she administered, and the little creature was soon asleep under the tattered jacket of the dead soldier.

The old woman stood for a minute or two looking down at her sleeping grandchild, and as she moved about the room, making here and there an attempt at tidiness, she let fall now and again a word which intimated some conflict in her mind.

"It does seem hard too—she'll never see him more. But the brat *can't* live, and surely when it'll save her and me from starving—"

She opened the door of a cupboard which the blackened walls and floor showed to have served the purpose of a coal-cellar, just as if she had not done so half a dozen times before, and did not know how empty it was.

"Not a atom, not so much as a crust, nor a drop, and her so ill! A better child never was to me till she took up with him. Only to save her. It can't live neither—it's only a little sooner to part 'em, after all."

Putting the candle on the hob, at length she sat down near the door upon the little deal coffin, rolled her arms in her tattered shawl, and, huddling herself into a heap, sat shivering, but evidently intent on listening for some expected approach, as she now and again applied her ear to the door, opening it stealthily an inch or two,

then closing it as the keen draught swept up the stairs, and cut her to the bones. The candle guttering on the hob threw its light no further than the heap of ashes, whose component parts it made only too distinctly visible; the rest of the room was in shadow, except where the moonlight fell across the low bed, and showed the pale tear-stained face of the sleeping woman. She huddled in her arms a portion of the blanket which had covered the child, and this she still clasped closely to her breast. Her slow, faint breathing hardly broke the deep stillness of the room.

From the gradual quieting of the court below, and the dulled roar of the great thoroughfare on which it opened, it was apparent that the hour was late. The old woman was growing anxious, her listening grew more eager, and she cast frequent looks towards her sleeping daughter.

Presently she started up as a stair creaked, then another; she stood up, opened the door of the attic, the faint rustle of a silk dress was heard, but not a footstep, and the next minute the door was opened to the full; the old woman curtsied low, as a tall female figure, clothed in black, and wearing a thick veil, glided in, and closed the door hastily behind her.

Curtsying again, the old woman hurried to the fire-place, and was in the act of lifting the candle to the table, when the stranger said in a clear whisper—

"Leave it there, leave it there, we have light enough, quite. Now, quick, tell me, have you made up your minds?"

"Yes, my lady," replied the woman, with another curtsy.

"Smith—Mrs. Smith is my name, I told you before," said the other, in an impatient tone.

"Then your daughter is willing to part with the child?"

"Yes, ma'am," whined the old crone; "you see we are all but starving, and what is a body to do? It was all I could do to get along when it was only myself, and it comes

hard upon me, ma'am, I assure you—"

"No doubt; then I take the child at once.—Is it there?"

The stranger made a step towards the bed near the window, but the old woman hastily stopped her, catching her by the arm.

"Not there, not there, my lady! ma'am she's asleep, I don't want her waked up, you see she took on so about the boy."

"Where is he, then? be quick, woman, I have no time to waste."

The lady threw off the hand of the other, and by an involuntary gesture made as though she would rid herself of the momentary contact. She followed the other to the corner where on the heap of rags the child lay, and looked eagerly down as the old woman removed the old scarlet jacket, lifted the child and turned towards the caudle, so that its light fell upon the small, wan, sleeping face.

Stooping over the shoulder of the grandmother, the tall stranger half drew aside her thick veil, and gazed with eager, dilated eyes. Her face even by that miserable light was the perfection of that proud classical beauty which we are accustomed to specify as aristocratic; but it was scarcely less pale than the sleeping mother's close by; the muscles around the mouth and chin firmly set, the lips closed tightly, the delicate nostrils slightly distended, mere evidences of a mood not favorable to beauty, yet any who had seen that face, even then, must have pronounced it to be of an order of attractiveness most uncommon. She dropped her veil, then asked in the same clear calm whisper, "Did you give him the sleeping medicine you spoke of?"

"Yes, ma'am, he'll sleep, poor dear, right away to morning, for I've been obliged to give it the poor lamb before once, that's how I know."

"Give him to me," the lady said, suddenly putting out her hands, and speaking above the whisper they had conversed in.

The old woman hesitated, as she turned half towards the lady, who took from the large black muff she carried, a packet of notes and gold, which she threw upon the table.

"There, there, give me the child!"

"God bless you, my lady! notes is no good to me!" said the old woman, in an ominous whisper, and edging further from the bed, towards which she glanced every moment in evident alarm. "Where'd we get 'em changed, ma'am? they'd be taking us up, or something."

The strange lady struck her hands together with an exclamation. Taking out a purse, she shook its contents upon the table. Gold and silver coins, sovereigns and crowns, florins and shillings and half sovereigns, fell in a heap among the rags, dropped and bowled along the filthy carpet.

She threw one of the notes upon it, then with a gesture that defied opposition, she almost snatched the child from the arms of the old woman, who threw herself upon the money, eagerly striving with both hands to hinder it from rolling, gathering and clutching at it with her long bony fingers, and covering it up with the rags upon the table.

The stranger, heedless of her movements, was meanwhile hastily scanning the limbs and features of the infant, but she did not again raise her veil.

"He has no mark, you say, nothing by which you would ever recognise—"

"No my lady, no, ma'am, not a sign; bless you, a dearer child, nor a healthier, ma'am, doesn't breathe—a bit delicate, ma'am, but he'll not be hardly used with you."

"He will be well cared for, never fear, but as I told you, he will have no great position or wealth, you understand he is not to be made a gentleman; I am not rich myself."

"No, ma'am," whispered the old woman, glancing towards the bed anxiously.

"I would like to have spoken to his mother," said the strange visitor, again making a step towards the bed.

"For God's sake, ma'am, don't

wake her!" cried the old crone, stepping before her and speaking in an earnest whisper. "You see it's almost broke her heart to part with him, and indeed so it has mine for the matter o' that," and she began to whine as she raised her gown to her eyes; "but what could we do; it would have been only starvation for us and the child, and you will be good to him, I'm sure you will my lady."

"Do not fear," said the other haughtily; then drawing from under her cloak a dark shawl, she bade the woman wrap it round the child.

"And I won't ever see him again, the dear darling," said the grandmother, affecting to cry, as she kissed the infant's cheek; "poor lamb, bless it and keep it, you'll be better off than you'd ha' been with her, poor creature; a better daughter never was till she went off and got married to him, my lady."

"She has never nursed the child, you said so?—" asked the stranger haughtily.

"No, ma'am, no, the doctor forbid it, for you see—"

The other motioned for her to cease, and taking the child she moved towards the door; the old woman hurried to precede her with the light, but ere she had reached it, the strange lady in her haste stumbled and nearly fell over something lying near the door.

It was the pauper child's coffin, which the old woman had neglected to put out of sight. The other, however, had not seen it, she recovered herself, opened the door, and bidding the old woman come no further than the stairhead, she descended, as swiftly and lightly as she had come up; holding the infant close to her upon one arm, with the other hand gathering up her skirts from the reeking nastiness of the walls and staircase. From half open doors came strange sounds, foul language, oaths, and cries of drunkenness and violence; in more than one place the dilapidated state of the staircase made the descent even unsafe; but she never paused nor

hesitated, till she again stood outside the wretched dwelling. Then standing for a minute beneath the shadow of an archway, she unrolled the great black fur, which had seemed a muff, enveloped the little creature in it; so, holding it before her, by one arm drawing her ample black cloak about her, she appeared merely as when she entered the court, well provided against the cold, shrouded in a furred mantle, her large black muff pressed to her breast.

So she swept hurriedly up the lane; a few paces further turned a corner, jostled momentarily with a mixed crowd just flowing from an adjoining Cassino, calmly beckoned a cab, seated herself and drew up the windows. As they drove on, she eagerly bent over the child, hastily and carefully disposed the wrappings to give it air, and re-arranged its position with a view to its comfort, yet still for effectual concealment. She consulted her watch, then leaning forward, she renewed her directions to the driver, and was soon, with her singular purchase, rattling over the stones at the highest speed which the incentive of double fare may command, to a certain railway station.

CHAPTER II.

THE COFFIN.

LONG before her singular visitor had reached the outer door of the doubtful dwelling-house, the grandmother was again within her attic, and had barred the entrance with such means as were at hand, ere, with greedy trembling hands, she proceeded to gather up the money from the table, glancing every instant fearfully at the sleeper.

"I wonder if they heard it underneath," she muttered, as, setting the candle on the floor, she groped for the scattered pieces which had rolled beyond the limit of the ragged carpet, and now glittered upon the stained hearth and filthy floor, in the very wantonness of mockery.

"What a fool the woman was to go chucking the money about in that way! If them wretches underneath caught sound of it, I'd stand a chance of getting my throat cut among them. I think that's all—no there's a shilling, and what's that? a half-crown, drat her," grumbled the old crone, as she reached under the bed after the last of the scattered coins. Then, with a sharp glance round, she returned to the table, and softly counted the money out upon the rags which lay there.

"Two, four, ten, fifteen, twenty, and four—no, yes, that's right; why, it never *can*," and she counted again with trembling eagerness. "She said twenty, and here's seven over and above! Well, *her* money comes light, that's certain. What a fool I was," grumbled she, "I might have got thirty pound out of her, I'll be bound, if I'd stood out; but there, I mustn't grumble, it's a godsend surely, for, as you may say, a poor dead babby."

Muttering to herself in this fashion, the woman now sought a place of safety for her newly-acquired store. She hesitated for some moments apparently between the chimney and the pile of rags which had formed the bed of her grandchild; finally she decided on the latter, and reserving some pieces of silver, she wrapped the remainder in a strip of cloth, and hid it beneath the whole.

She then hastily tied on her bonnet, and drew her old shawl about her, depositing the light in the chimney-corner, preparatory to going out.

"I'll have a fire and a drop of something hot again she wakes," she said to herself, as she hurried towards the door, and stopped for a moment to push aside with her foot the little coffin which had formed part of her temporary barricade. Something of snowy whiteness at its corner caught her eye, and with her head full of the bank-notes she had lately seen so profusely displayed, she stooped to detach it from the nail on which it stuck. It was soft and yielding, but not of

paper. The old woman carried it to the light, and found it to be a tiny embroidered pocket-handkerchief. As she held it up by the corners before the light, she uttered an exclamation—

"Lor-a-marcy! who'd ha' thought it! and yet my mind misgave me somehow all along. Mrs. Smith, indeed!"

Hurriedly she stuffed the perfumed and delicate little article into her bosom, and quitted the room, securing the door after her as well as she could. She returned in about twenty minutes, bearing a load which must have made her course up the rickety staircase inconvenient, to say the least. In one hand she grasped a bottle, in the other a paper bag filled to bursting, under her left arm was a loaf, the other huddled to her side a piece of cheese and a cold knuckle of ham, while the skirt of her dress, turned up in front, appeared to contain some heavy substance, under which she puffed and panted terribly.

Setting down the bottle and loaf, she advanced to the fire-place, and pulling out the hair-pins which had, Crusoe-like, converted her garment to a bag, she shot the contents into the fire-place with a noise that caused the poor invalid in the bed to start and murmur in her sleep.

"It's no odds now when she wakes," observed the gentle nurse to herself, as she looked towards the bed.

Short as had been her absence, the mindful creature had not neglected her inner woman's cravings; as the new odor which her entrance had diffused through the chamber sufficiently testified. Perchance conscience may have had as much share in doubling the dram as the cold, which stood for the excuse. As she lighted the fire, stopping now and again to break off a crust from the loaf, or a morsel of cheese, she muttered at intervals her thoughts aloud, as people are wont to do who have led a solitary life.

"If I could but ha' guessed at that! money's no object to such as her. And 'he's to be no gentleman,' says she;

'No, ma'am,' says I; but she didn't think how true her words was. Poor brat, it's short his time was to be, any how, and my lady will bless me when she finds the bargain she made."

She went to the corner and felt among the rags, to be sure that her treasure was untouched.

"It's all right," she said, with an ugly smile, or rather grin; then she set to work to extract the cork of the bottle, which having effected by means of the scissors, she poured out a tea-cup full of the contents, and drank it off; then cut off a slice from the ham and a piece of bread, which she eat with great relish, and finally repeated the draught.

"Well!" she ejaculated, as she warmed herself at the fire, which had risen into a fine blaze, and glowed through the garret, imparting even there an aspect of comfort; "that's a little better, I think, more comfort to her and me too, than the poor little corpse would ha' been laying there."

As she glanced at the small deal coffin in the corner her own reflections seemed to remind her of something she had forgotten. She crossed the room to where the coffin lay, carried it to the opposite corner by the heap of rags, and set about the performance of a singular task.

First, from among the ashes on the hearth, she took two bricks; these had been used for purposes of economy, when the grate needed diminishing in size to accommodate a scanty supply of fuel, but with her newly-acquired wealth the old woman disdained such narrow appliances to shivering, and had heaped the rusty bars with live coals. The bricks she wrapped round several times in pieces of old flannel and stuff, placed one at each end of the small deal receptacle for other clay than that; between she laid, in folds and rolls, larger pieces of rags, and stockings, and cast-off clothing, and over all a child's bed-gown. Several times during the operation she weighed the little coffin and its contents in her hands with the air of a connoisseur,

and when all was done she placed on it the lid, slipped in the screws, which had been left loosely in the holes, and with her fingers partially secured it.

She had just risen from her knees and approached the table, with an eye to the contents of the bottle, when with a heavy sigh and a start, her daughter awoke, and half raised herself upon her pillow, with an exclamation of surprise at the bright glow and comforting atmosphere diffused through the chamber.

"Ay, deary, *ain't* it good?" cried the old woman, hurrying to the bed with the tea-cup, which she had half filled for herself; "drink it up, child, there's plenty more, plenty more, and more yet, where that come from."

"Has the lady been again?" asked Mary, as she lay back on the pillow after putting her lips to the wine.

"Yes, that she has," the mother hastened to make answer, "and she left this bottle o' wine, and some more of them grapes as you took such a fancy to, and some ham, and I don't know what all."

"Bless her for it! And how is baby, mother—did she see him?"

"Yes," replied the other, hurrying on confusedly, "she wanted to speak to you but I wouldn't wake you, you was so sound, I wouldn't let her wake you."

"I was dreaming again, and I thought I was at the camp, and *he* was there, and I heard the guns all as plain—"

"That would be the coals, likely enough, when I threw them in. See what a fire I've got, and all. Now, you lay down till I get you a bit of something; what could you fancy, now?"

But the girl took no heed of what her mother was saying; she had risen herself higher on her pillow, and was straining her eyes to look across at the heap of rags in the corner. Suddenly she cried out,—

"Mother, what is that? I can see it over there; oh! it isn't gone, my baby *isn't* dead—mother, tell me!"

Putting her apron to her eyes, and beginning to sob, the old woman whimpered out some fragmentary consolation, "The poor lamb, better out of its trouble, if Mary wouldn't take on."

"Oh, my child, my poor baby!" wept the sick woman, burying her face in the pillow, and crying hysterically; "for him to go off and me not near him; why didn't you wake me, mother—*why* didn't you wake me? It was cruel in you—my poor baby, my little child! why hadn't you woke me, mother?"

"It weren't no use, Mary," said the hypocrite, sobbing in company; "he was gone in a minnit, afore I could look round, as quiet as a lamb; but he changed awful, all in the instant, and as I might cross the room with him, so he went off in my arms."

She exhorted Mary to take substantial comfort, again replenishing the tea-cup, and set the example herself by a copious draught, but the young woman only moved away from the touch of her hand, and continued to weep, sobbing out broken lamentations for her child.

Presently she grew more calm.

"Let me look at him, mother," she said feebly, "let me see its face again."

"Now, Mary dear, I tell you the poor thing's awful changed, it is, indeed, and you'll only be a knocking yourself up, and getting regular ill again. The lady says we're to get out o' this 'ere place at once, for the air's killing of you, and where's the sense of you making yourself worse than ever? I tell you the child was made all comfortable and right, and its to be took away—"

"And me not to see his face!" almost shrieked the sick girl; "it's my baby, and you wouldn't let me nurse him, nor have him when he was here, and now he's gone! Oh, mother—mother, for the sake of my poor husband let me only see the boy before he's laid in the ground—for God's sake, *mother!*"

She made as if she would have risen from the bed, but fell back fainting,

and the old woman's strong arms were about her, laid her down in the bed, spread the clothes anew, tucked them in, with the addition of the scarlet jacket and other remains of the heap in the corner, rating her daughter the while, now with sobs, now with a virulence that bordered on cursing.

"I do think it a sin and a shame, Mary, after all the trouble you've been to me—after all I've done to make you comfortable in your trouble, a denying and debarring of myself in every way for you and yours, and for you to turn again me!" here a sob; "people call children a blessing, I know mine's never been but a worry and a sorrow; and to be casting up to me of your husband, too! a pretty husband he was! cuss all the redcoats say I, then—"

Here she drowned her indignation in the contents of the cup, and almost forcibly administered the same to her sick daughter, who took the draught passively from the hand of which she had long ago learned to stand in awe. In like manner she accepted some more substantial nourishment of which she stood greatly in need, and had just resigned herself to sobbing composure, when a low tap at the door summoned the old woman.

"Oh, here you are; come in," she said, and a lean pale man, of cringing meagre gait, and most uninviting aspect, entered the room.

"Sit down by the fire, Mr. Asher, and you'll take a drop of something this bitter night," said the hospitable entertainer, in a whisper, and handing the cup which she had newly filled.

"It is a bitter night," replied the man, who was what is called underhung, and besides afflicted with a cold in the head. "Why, what's this?" he added, looking into the cup; "you're in luck, Mother Lucas."

"It's a lady that has come to see her a time or two, and has sent it with a few odds and ends," she replied, still in a whisper. "I've nothing else handy, or I wouldn't offer you that, for to my mind it's nothing like a drop of good gin."

"No," observed the man, replacing the emptied cup upon the table; "the gentlefolk think a deal o' their port; but, as you say, there's nothing beats a drop of sperrits for night work, and keeping the cold out. It is bitter to-night, and no mistake; seems fairly to cut one in two. I don't remember such a night since that we buried them twins—remember that, Mrs. Lucas?"

"Eh! lor yes, what pretty corpses they made, to be sure; you never heerd no more about 'em, Mr. Asher?"

"Not a word."

"Well, well, there's some queer things done in the world, that's certain."

"I guess there is," said the man with a laugh, and a keen glance at the black bottle, as if there was one particular thing he could have been well pleased to assist at just then.

"Well, is the box ready, mother?"

"Yes, I made it as fast as I could; just you give it a turn."

"All right," said the man, and he proceeded to make fast the lid of the well-packed deal coffin, with the implements he carried, when the young mother started up, renewing her entreaties to be permitted one sight of her child, ere they took him from her forever.

"You mustn't heed her," urged the old woman, in an anxious under-tone, to Asher, "she's being going on so all the time; the poor babby changed so, you'd scarce know it, and she's not right in her head a'ready. It's not a bit of good, you know—"

"Not a bit," said the man, screwing away vigorously, "poor soul, not a bit; you go and pacify her a bit, I'll soon be done."

"Would you like a bit of anything there, Mr. Asher? help yourself," said the old woman, crossing over to her daughter, whom she tried to pacify, the lean man adding his mite of consolation in the intervals of helping himself to bread and ham, and screwing down the brickbats with renewed determination.

"We must all come to it sooner or

later—no use in fretting," and "it was better off." With such trite and staple sentences he backed the old mother's whimpered representations of how she made the poor dear comfortable, and what a mercy it hadn't any more to suffer; but all in vain. The lid was screwed down, the "convenient" man of obsequies had fortified himself by another application to the bottle, and finally departed with his burden, remarking that "it was pretty heavy, too, considering," yet the bereaved mother never ceased, with clasped hands and pathetic entreaties, to implore for a last look at her dead child.

With anxious eagerness the old woman lighted her second visitor of the night down-stairs, he having added to his load by another similar charge at a door on a lower landing; she remarking with satisfaction as she returned to her attic, that "thank goodness the bones were so exact alike, it was all right now, and nobody the wiser."

She felt so much relieved by having disposed so far of this damning witness against her, that she refrained from any expression of harshness towards her unhappy daughter, and never once upbraided her when she bemoaned her husband and child pitifully, till worn out by grief and suffering, she slept.

The old woman made one more expedition to replenish a bottle, not the cobwebby one, and by which the attic was made newly redolent of "old Tom;" then she set herself to the watching of the invalid, beguiling the time by the toasting of some cheese, and by frequent applications to her own peculiar bottle, varied by a second investigation of the *handles*.

So the night wore on. I will not say but that conscience, not wholly laid to rest by either of these engrossing occupations, did leave her entirely to their enjoyment. I fear that with all of us, its strength and alertness are apt to sad variations; to be comparative, to be influenced sorely by change of circumstance, and early habit, and

temptation. Still I would like to believe that it never loses entirely its power of castigation, and that the unnatural mother had need of the frequent appeals she made to the creature comforts around her, for answer to the small still voice. "What would we ever have done without, we were just starving," she thought again and again, repeating to herself that "it was for her poor gal, and surely all this was of more service to her than just that poor dead child's corpse could have been."

She seemed to draw some comfort from this conviction, just as my dear Mrs. So and So has done when the affair between her daughter and young Franklin was broken off *a propos* of the match that was so cleverly managed for the girl with old De-Gums the rich merchant.

Now Franklin was poor, had to "make his way, you know," and De-Gums has nothing to make but his will, and is "positively rolling in money;" can there be a doubt about the wisdom of the bargain? What though the daughter, silly child, don't seem to see it, and is breaking her heart, and drying up her young life in unavailing remorse and misery? It is all for "her good, the dear girl," and when you look at her silks that "stand on end, my dear," and the "silver she eats off every day," mayn't she thank her stars she has a wise mamma to know how to bargain for her good?

There are such sales made, my friends, every day of our lives, in holier and higher places than garrets; and the next time, my dear madam, that you—studying the comparative eligibility of rival competitors for the honor of your connection, make inquiries of their rent roll, amount of income, or value of appointment held, and make your selection accordingly—will you think with more indulgence of the unnatural bargain of Mother Lucas in Brettell's Buildings? For so far as the dead outweigh in value the living, as the soul and affections rank

higher than the mortal clay—does her sin exceed yours.

CHAPTER III.

THE SILVER SPOON.

"On the 30th ult., at Deansholme Abbey, Deansford, the Viscountess Honiton, of a Son and Heir."

So ran the leading announcement in that portion of the daily papers asserted to be most attractive to lady readers. Not that it would have been easy to hit upon any topic in the columns of the enlightened journals of that particular locality which did not in some way bear upon, or connect itself with, the great event of the day within their immediate circulation. Paragraphs repeated the advertised announcement in varied forms, whole columns were devoted to a description of the festivities in course of preparation, which were to mark the "joyful occasion." *Soi-disant* correspondents related remarkable coincidents, or supernatural phenomena, which had anticipated the coming event; advertisements revelled in headings certain to attract the bright eyes of fair customers by any allusion, even of the faintest, to the new arrival at the Abbey. One leading article was devoted to the genealogical history and ancestral achievements of both sides of the house, to whom an heir had at length been given; while another took the opportunity to air some pet orthodoxy of his own as to the fitness of all things made and provided, illustrated so forcibly by the providential intervention which had, after so long a period of misgiving and regret, saved an ancient and honorable name from extinction, and preserved a noble family in all the prestige of its hereditary greatness, to the humble vassalage of Deansford, and to the protection of the interests of Great Loftborough and all the adjacent belongings; concluding with an enthusiastic exhortation to all "our readers," of whatsoever age, sex, or denomination, that they

would join, heart and soul, in the public thanksgiving to be offered up for the blessing so signally and auspiciously vouchsafed.

The position taken up by the eloquent and pathetic writer might have been somewhat shaken could he have known that it was to the poor camp-follower the uncertain blessing had fallen—that on the heritage of the tattered jacket, and the Lares of Brettle's Buildings, not on ducal canopy, or the descendant of conquering Normans, it was that Providence had seen fit to bestow its favor.

But Brettle's Buildings is far away now, and we are at the Abbey.

Without, bells are ringing, and bonfires blazing upon the hills; the most devoted of the inhabitants have illuminated their windows for two successive nights, and all the musical talent of the village has been called into requisition at the respective public-houses—noted for their loyalty to the reigning potentates of the place from time immemorial. Since the certainty made known of her Ladyship's safety and that of the infant heir, all Deansford has blazed, chimed, fiddled, and drank without intermission.

But within, all is still and quiet, hushed congratulation and joy. Not a sound of the outer world's boisterous acclamation is allowed to penetrate those heavy draperies, those double doors and windows, impervious to every breath of winter.

Lacqueys glide noiseless up and down the wide staircases, the vast halls echo back no sound louder than the step of the velvet-shod nurses, or the faint rustle of my lady's own maid's silken apron. Every bell is muffled, every iron bar, or latch, or ponderous knocker swaddled in woolen, and gates creaking incurably have been tabooed, under solemn injunctions of the stately housekeeper. The domestic animals have been banished the lower regions; the pets of the drawing-room and boudoirs removed to other quarters; the very horses conveyed to the most distant stalls. Conversation is limited

to whispers, signs have entered into general use, and become easy of translation; but though a smile is on every face, the females, more especially, no sign of mirth, or emotion of any kind, disturbs the halcyon repose of the favored Abbey.

Soft dreamy odors float up and down the staircases, every lamp, even to those over the coach-house doors, shine with a subdued radiance; night is scarcely distinguished from day, since the day is scarce less subdued, the night hardly more hushed, for there is watchful service up and afoot, gliding to and fro, felt more than heard or seen, in all the hours. Where the velvet steps glide noiseless, where the rich draperies hang thickest, where soft carpets are softest, where float the perfumes most voluptuous, yet least palpable—where all this luxury is trebled and the repose perfect—is the chamber.

In one adjoining, furnished with costly splendor, yet with hushed silence and subdued light over all, sit two gentlemen, grey-haired one—florid and stout the other, who are sipping wine; they have before trifled with the evening luncheon beside them—and in sage whispers conversing, comparing opinions or experiences, and from time to time consulting their watches.

Those venerable gentlemen had so sat, so sipped, whispered, shaken heads, looked grave, and compared notes for some five days past, and though all apparent need for their urgent services was past, they so continued to sip, look wise, and shake their heads.

"Yes, it might have been serious, might have been *very* serious," observed the grey-headed gentleman, "with such inadequate attendance, too, such wholly inadequate attendance."

"True, yes; but the Viscountess has a wonderful constitution—wonderful, and it is well, considering all things—considering *all* things—" the grey-haired gentleman shook his head.

"It was a terrible risk."

"Risk! madness—say madness!

but she always was, always was so."

"Rather eccentric, yes," whispered the other.

"Obstinate, sir! obstinate as it is possible for a woman born to be," returned the elder physician in a rather louder key; he had lately been knighted, his younger and stouter coadjutor had still to look ahead, and could not yet afford to announce so fully his private sentiments.

"It is horrible to think of! the hopes and happiness of the Viscount intrusted to the blundering unskillfulness of a female quack! horrible!" and the good physician emptied his glass at a draught in the indignation of the moment, which must be pardoned on the ground that he was the medical attendant of the family, and justly felt aggrieved at the untoward circumstances which had deprived him of his due connection with the honors of the event.

"I cannot wonder that his Lordship should desire the occurrence to be kept private," remarked the younger man; "he is doubtless annoyed, so opposed as it was to all his wishes."

"Certainly; he should be here by now, I imagine," and again the venerable medico looked at his watch, his brother professional of course following lead, as men almost invariably will, as though it were in the usual course of things that the time of day is decided by a majority of showings, and not at all matter of certainty.

Leaving the professional gentlemen to sip their wine at their leisure, we will glance into the inner room, sharing in the universal invisibility which seems to pervade all manner of men at this season, for, save the privileged elders in the outer apartment, we meet none but of the feminine gender, the order of things on these occasions being, for the time, reversed: the "worthier" gender repulsed and snubbed by the "unworthier," till even the lowest and neuter state of inanimate creation appears enviable by comparison.

Double doors open and close; the

velvet hangings are lifted and fall behind us, sweeping softly to the ground, and we are in the room.

It is bitter cold weather; this past week the snow has been falling, it is heaped upon the window sills outside, and clings round the bare arms of the old trees in the Abbey Park.

But here it is summer weather, not the heat of noontide, nor the glow of fire, nor the pent-up suffocation of gas-lit and ill-ventilated chambers. A soft delicious atmosphere pervades the apartment, as if the breath of a southern climate had passed through and lingered there. The room is so spacious that by the subdued light the eye hardly takes in its full extent. Easy chairs and luxuriant couches are scattered about, tiny cushions, too, into which the foot sinks at a touch.

The windows, three in number, are marked only by the long velvet hangings which conceal them, and the massive golden cornices. The furniture is of mingled blue and crimson, the toilette appurtenances are of gold, so are the mirror frame and candelabra; the ornaments are solid, good, but few, and nick-nacks are scattered with a sparing hand; there is no crowding—room, air, warmth, and perfect repose are desired and obtained. Most of the mirrors are covered; the reflection would, perhaps, vex the eyes of the invalid.

On a small table, covered with a thick cloth, are collected the varied delicacies admissible to the sick chamber. Jellies, hot-house fruits, light cakes, wines, caudles, and a host of nameless nothings, which are indispensable to such occasions, and which vanish with them. Upon another table, near an ample easy chair, are a book, some needle-work, and a half-emptied glass. She to whose use these are evidently appropriated, is just now busied at the other side of the room, her robust figure dimly visible in the mimic moonlight shed over all from lamps in alabaster shades at either end, placed in such a way as to light, without disturbing, the occupant

of the bed, which is the chief object in the chamber,—with its purple hangings and rich fringes, its quiltings and fine linen, its laced and downy pillows, its ease and completeness, its sleep-inviting warmth and freedom.—A woman's face is just discernible; in the silvery light it looks as colorless as the pillows that surround it; her eyes are closed, but she is not asleep. The lace cap, and the dark hair beneath, are pushed back behind her ear, while she listens intently, as if in expectation. All is so still she may hear her own breathing, and even another sound is audible, but not the velvet-shod nurse gliding over the carpet to her capacious night chair.

A clear, smokeless fire burns in the wide grate, and some few paces from it stands a small shell-like article—it might be a couch, it may be a basket, or a combination of the two—heaped with rosy satin, lace, and finest flannel; thence comes that faint breathing, with, now and then, a small, low sigh, or a chirp like that of a nestling in a dream, and then the burly velvet-shod nurse rises up, and gliding to the bundle in the shell-like basket, peers anxiously therein, and administers a pat, or a stroke, or a soothing hush to the occupant, for here all the willing service tends; here centres all the gratulation, the rejoicing, the anxieties, the thanksgivings of the day.

The puny flame that had like to be puffed out by the cold draughts of Brettle's Buildings, had revived under more genial airs, and bids fair, at least by living, to do credit to the superior feeding of the proverbial silver spoon, which has undoubtedly fallen to his share.

A sudden start in the bed aroused the nurse from her contemplation of the sleeping child.

"Give him to me, nurse, quick! bring him here!" cried the lady hurriedly, as the old woman hastened to the bedside. Half-raised upon her pillows, she extended her arms eagerly—

"It is the Viscount—he is here, I

know; I heard his horse—bring me the child."

As she spoke a sudden vibration through the house of the muffled bells, and the quick opening and closing of distant doors announced an arrival.

The nurse laid the infant on the arm of her lady, first carefully adjusting about her shoulders a richly quilted dressing-gown, and withdrew, as the door hurriedly opened, the curtains were hastily thrust aside, and a tall handsome man, though by no means young, rapidly advanced to the bed-side. He was heated with anxious haste and swift travelling, but joyous expectations shone in every feature. With a flush on her pale beautiful face, and a light in her dark eyes, the lady placed the child in the arms of her husband, which had opened to receive it.

Now she half raises herself upon her elbow—with parted lips, and shortened breath, and dilated eyes she watches him, as he thrusts back the drapery for the light to fall upon the baby face, and gazes eagerly into it. The dark hair has escaped from her lace cap, and falls over her face—beautiful, and pale, and eager; it is the same face I showed you in the squalid attic of Brettle's Buildings, peering over the hag's shoulder upon the subject of their strange bargain.

Uttering a fervent exclamation of gratitude, the newly-made father kissed the sleeping infant again and again, and as she saw it the Viscountess leaned back upon her pillow, and breathed more freely.

"God bless you, my dear, dear Julia," cried her husband, as, kneeling down, he tenderly laid the child beside her, and now in turn bestowed his caresses upon her. "This is the happiest hour of my life; my dearest hopes are fulfilled. Bless you, my own wife."

She had returned his kiss, and one arm had lingered around his neck, but he did not repeat the caress; his eyes were fixed upon the boy, and, following his gaze, the arm dropped

slowly off, the flush faded from her face, and, with half-closed eyes, lay looking at her lord, as he caressingly passed his hand over the puny form and diminutive limbs of his new acquisition.

As he was so employed, the infant suddenly awoke, opened its eyes, and fixed them unflinchingly on the face of the Viscount, who with a sudden exclamation clasped it to his breast, kissing and embracing it; when the proud man again stood up, his eyes were dim with the excess of his emotion.

"He is but weakly now, love," the gentleman remarked to his wife, who had looked on, coldly enough, at the demonstration; "Sir James tells me, the greatest care could alone have preserved him to us, and indeed it is not to be wondered at; you too must have run fearful risks, Julia," added the Viscount; "you may imagine what I endured on hearing of it, unable to be near you too; it was a relief that the same message which told of your accident assured me also of your safety and the child's."

"It is all past now, Frederick," she said, "we will not think of it."

"It is, thank God, and there must be no more said about it," he returned. "I have been vexed to hear the gossip already, but it shall be stopped. Indeed I scarcely know the facts myself, but I shall hear all from you, love, and meanwhile you are safe, and my son."

The Viscountess turned her head upon her pillow, and the babe performed his part of the contract by a feeble cry, at which the velvet-shod reappeared. "But, my love, you will not indeed nurse him yourself?" The newly-made father put the question in a tone which quite contradicted his words of expostulation.

"You will not forbid me at least, Frederick," said his wife, looking anxiously at him, as the nurse made some trivial arrangements about her.

"Only for your sake, dear Julia, your health," returned the husband,

with hesitation. "I fancy Sir James scarcely considers it advisable."

"We have not waited for Sir James's permission," said the Viscountess, as the nurse laid the infant in her arms, and he with the readiness of accustomed habit took his natural nourishment with as little ceremony from the noble source, as if his very being had arisen under velvet canopies and in swansdown wrappings. The noble Viscount looking down complacently upon this late realization of his constant dream—which even the disappointment of six years had failed to disperse—was building up a glorious fabric out of that morsel of material, the career of the Honorable Aden Power, the triumphs of his success at school, at college, in the world, his political course, the brilliancy of his future, the added dignity and honor to the name, the augmented glory and importance to be derived by an alliance such as might be demanded by "my son."

Oh! Mary Selden, *nee* Lucas, could you but have learned to what bright destinies your offspring was foredoomed you would not surely have grudged the toil and tending, the forced marches, and the soakings, the aches of head and heart, the pains and sorrows and contumely that were yours, and which is coming in by no means lightened; you need have wept less bitterly looking on the rough mound, the torn, stained jacket, and the vacant pallet which wrote your boy fatherless even before he saw the light, could you but have foreseen how the patrician heart would rejoice over his birth!

A faint note of admiration, uttered by the satiated young honorable, recalled the Viscount from his reflections, and as a natural result of them, he bestowed a husband-like caress upon his lady, then graciously vouchsafed

some observation to the nurse, who, curtsying, immediately availed herself of her special privilege to contradiction.

"Oh! indeed my lord, indeed he is not so small, and a lovelier child, or sweeter temper, I never saw. It is not the biggest and most robust children grow up the healthiest by any means, my lord. The eyes are my lady's, but the nose is your lordship's very model. I said so from the first; in a few days your lordship will see the likeness plainer. Yes, my lady, I will take him, your ladyship must be tired,—indeed, my lady, you should rest more."

My lady closed her eyes wearily, as the child was carried away sleeping, and the father's eyes followed it.

Did she guess something of his thoughts? Little indeed could he have conjectured hers. Yet the task had been bravely done. In the mother's part she had held the child to her breast, though not, like the mother, did she look down smiling into the upturned face, nor stroke the tiny head, nor press closer to her the wandering little hand. She had learned now to repress the shudder which had seized her as the pauper lips first touched her bosom, and a slight contraction of the brow, a faint compression of the lovely mouth were all the signs that escaped the woman, who humbled herself for her pride's sake. *Her* thoughts had not ranged, even to the christening of the son and heir, even to the day when those baby lips should first utter the word "mother." She toyed not with the future, the past filled her visions; there she walked alone, and the only picture she drew was of that which might have been.

ADEN POWER; OR, THE COST OF A SCHEME.

BY FARLEIGH OWEN.

CHAPTER IV.

MOLTO VIVACE.

It is noticeable, that when we seek to excuse or account for anything, not perfectly in harmony with our ideas of what should be, we most frequently do so with the observation that "It is only natural."

Sometimes, no doubt, such an excuse stands good; but more frequently, I fear, we pervert terms, and set down to the account of nature much of the wilful perversion and base coinage of habit, custom, or evil passions.

It might have been more pleasant for me to record how Mary mourned, refusing to be consoled, for the loss of her babe, and that even the added comforts of her home, which, as soon as she could be removed, had been exchanged for one in a more reputable and less unwholesome locality, failed to turn her thoughts from the melancholy contemplation of her last buried.

But I am bound to confess that, whether natural or not, Mary's regrets were, ere long, transferred to the memory of a loss which, though more remote, had taken even greater hold upon her heart—of him she had tended and wept over on the bloody field where he breathed his last. She spoke seldom now of the infant, to which the tender duties of a mother had never been permitted her to fulfil, and her hardened old parent could easier endure her tearful reminiscences of poor dear Jack than those of the child she believed to sleep in the little deal coffin she had seen carried from the attic.

To do the old crone justice, she tended her daughter kindly, in her fashion, and in the plans she laid for the future gave Mary her share.

But, unfortunately, these were not such as the daughter could pretend to sympathize in, or partake of, and as she grew stronger, and gradually permitted herself to believe in the possibility of again returning to the world, and making her humble venture therein once more, her disinclination made itself more apparent, and again discord seemed but too likely to arise between the amiable parent and her child.

The old woman's great aim and ambition was—to keep a beer-shop. When she quitted London—which she had her own reasons for doing as expeditiously and completely as possible—she had betaken herself, accompanied by her daughter, to the vicinity of a small watering-place on the coast, where she had dwelt in better days, and now, by the skilful working of such interest and old connections as she possessed, by dint of a respectable appearance and no stint of falsehood, she was making her way very satisfactorily to the attainment of the delectable situation she coveted.

She had counted much upon the assistance of her child, and doubtless regarded as an especial intervention on her behalf the removal of poor Jack and his offspring, and the return of her pretty daughter, free of encumbrance, to serve her turn.

For Mary was very pretty—not less so for the fainter roses which slowly returned as she rose from her sick-bed—hardly less so for the widow's cap,

which did not quite conceal her dark brown hair, and which she contrived to make positively not unbecoming—shall we say “only natural?”

The son of the worthy brewer, with whom Mrs. Lucas was in treaty, had seen Mary when he called. I don't say that the vision of the pretty barmaid entered into his anticipations too, but it certainly could not have decreased in his calculations the chances of success, and the wish of the old woman's heart (?) was achieved.

But not to the full.

True, Mary assumed the office appointed her, and I need not say the effect of the pretty widow barmaid was great, or that the potent compounds of Messrs. Stun and Instuph acquired new potency at her hands, nor that old Mrs. Lucas became almost devout in the excess of her grateful self-congratulations on the success of her plans.

But when were human desires destined to total fruition?

I have said that Mary was pretty, and she knew it; if I said she was indifferent to admiration, come whence it would, you would not believe me, and justly. She had not forgotten the poor soldier—far from it. Many a sorrowful hour of bitter weeping did she enjoy after her mother slept sound at night, and of which even the reflection of swollen eye-lids in the glass next morning had not cured her. The looking-glass, be sure, was never forgotten, the hair never neglected, nor the time grudged due to the exact adjustment of the fatal cap. I will not say but that a smile or a blush now and again answered the outspoken and commonplace flatteries of her male customers, yet it did so fall out—not before she had, by her evident value in the position, assigned her, made glad the heart of her respectable parent—that Mary, one night when all was closed, and Dame Lucas sat casting up her gains—and by the opposite process disposing of some hot flip, spoke her mind—after the following fashion—

“You said I should try it, mother, and I have, and I can't abide it no

longer—I can't, so that's the truth. If you'll let me have the little side parlor, for what I told you, I'll stay, and do all I can besides to help you in-doors; but if you won't, I must look for a place, indeed I must.”

The old woman looked up at her daughter, as she sat leaning her head against the side of the chimney-piece—some work lying in her lap—and a savage expression passed over her face.

“So! that's all the thanks I get for taking care of you and your brat, beggaring myself, and forgiving and forgetting your running away like a graceless huzzy as ye was, with that dirty—”

“You shan't say anything against him, mother,” said the girl with some spirit, and making as if she would go; “I'll go right away at once if you go on like that. He was good to me, God bless him, and he'd have been good to you if he'd lived, and come back—” her voice choked in her throat, but the old beldame, nowise pacified, took a draught of the steaming compound beside her, and returned to the attack.

“And what ails you, I'd like to know, that you can't stick to the business? There's a good deal more life and pleasure than stewing yourself up in that close little room, a wearing out your eyes over caps and bonnets, that you won't get salt to your porridge at, let alone pay me for the room, and find you in clothes to your back.”

“I can but try, mother. You know they always said I had a taste for the millinery, and that—I don't feel the life and spirits I used, or something; perhaps its the standing don't suit me, and I feel I want to be more quiet—”

“Yes, and just be vexing and grizzling over him. I know how it'll be, Mary, I shall be having you ill upon my hands again,—just as you was getting to look so well, too. Mr. Stun was only saying so this very morning, and what a picture you'd be when you left off that fright of a cap—”

“I never shall,” said the young

widow quickly; then turned her eyes to the glass over the mantel-piece, and involuntarily smoothed a stray tress, and set the snowy head-gear a wee bit further back from the lobe of a well-formed ear.

“If I'm ill, mother, there's the hospital—”

The old woman gave a grunt, which passed harmless into the depths of the glass at her lips.

“I can but try,” continued Mary, “and if the worst comes to the worst I must go to service; I'd have my Sundays out, and come to see you, mother, for I don't want to be any more a burden to you, I'm sure, and I'll help you all I can. But I can't abide the bar; I've tried it, and I can't.”

“And who's to take to it, I should like to know?” the old woman broke out.

“Don't you remember, mother, young Mr. Stun was speaking of a young woman that wanted a place of the kind?”

“A stuck-up madam of a thing,” grumbled the amiable parent, “I'll be bound, and the house won't hold us six weeks. But you're so obstinate, and as your mind's set upon it, why I suppose you must.”

So the young widow entered upon her new experience in the way she had chosen.

She rented a small parlor of her mother, which looked upon the street, at a charge not over moderate. Reluctantly the old schemer advanced a small sum to provide the very humble stock-in-trade required. She would not have done this but that she had not yet wholly relinquished her hopes of gain connected with her pretty daughter. Mary might make a good marriage; her presence in the house any way was “a draw,” and, at the least, she was on many occasions highly serviceable as a reference in matters of calculation, and such abstruse points of learning, which were beyond Mrs. Lucas's capacity, of which aid she never availed herself

without a due panegyric on her own motherly self-denial and goodness, in having endowed her child with the valuable attainments denied to herself. *En parenthese* we may observe, Mary had been educated at a free school, of which the philanthropic patrons had had to do almost daily battle with this virtuous parent, who inveighed sorely against the interference which deprived her for a few hours of the services of her little girl in fetching water from the pump, gin from the public-house, or nursing a neighbor's child for the privilege of using her wash-tub or flat-iron.

Poor Mary! her first experience in widowed independence was not a very pleasant nor a promising one. Her taste for the craft was exceedingly correct, and her facility in execution remarkable. Surely nature must have foreseen, even in that normal state of things when

“Wild in the woods the naked
ravage ran,”

the turn humanity would one day take; else how account for the indisputable mission of some women to produce caps and bonnets faultless, and to be envied by many who have spent money and time vainly endeavoring to be initiated into the mysteries of the craft?

But long did Mary Selden's coquettish little head-dresses, and summer bonnets, and well-trimmed hats decorate the window of the small parlor—the pretty widow's face peeping anxiously from behind the muslin drapery background. People stopped, admired, looked round at the name, for the door, found it was the beer-shop, and—passed on.

The inexperienced novice had forgotten, or, rather, overlooked this fact, but she soon became aware of it, and gradually, but surely, came the conviction that it utterly spoiled her chance.

Now and again a servant maid brought a straw bonnet, and had it trimmed, or a child's hat was wanted

in a hurry; by a rare chance a lady, overcome by the seductions of the rare flowers and well-selected ribbons did send her an order by her man-servant or maid, but doubtless even these turned up their noses at the sawdust and spittoons which marshalled the way to widow Selden's territory, and diverted the source of patronage elsewhere.

In vain she spread her varied stores, and each morning re-arranged her pretty show with fresh cunning; her connection did not grow—rather, she had failed to make one, and her cheek grew pale, her eyes heavy, though she had almost ceased to weep for Jack, and the little deal coffin had faded into a dull grey distance among old memories.

There were other causes, too, for discomfort. Contrary to her expectation, old dame Lucas had found in the new barmaid a kindred spirit, a genial companion; and ere she had been an inmate of the house a month an alliance was formed,—certainly not defensive, nor scarcely offensive, but very decidedly irrespective of any consideration for the quiet inmate of the small front parlor.

If work and materials could have counted in lieu of coin, poor little Mary had paid her rent over and over again, and it was not for want of specimens of her skill that her work did not flourish, seeing that every other Sunday, at least, produced a fresh sample in the shape of bonnet or cap, or other adornment, on the persons of the mistress or barmaid of the beer-shop.

Yet a formidable and weekly-increasing account perpetually haunted her, in which daughter figured as debtor to mother the creditor! and not a too lenient or accommodating creditor as the child well knew.

The free and easy, perpetually blooming barmaid was a favorite with customers and patron; the concern flourished, the young widow was no longer a necessity, and in proportion as decreased her importance so did consideration for her. Even her daily

meals were charged to her, and if she failed to appear at the usual hour to partake, she was most frequently left unsummoned till the next; the mother excusing all to her maid—by whom little excuse was needed—by the history of all she had done for her daughter, and of the latter's ingratitude and obstinacy.

I suppose it is a common experience to most persons: the cases where one member of a family seems totally deficient in the quality most prominent in another, as if by some mistake of nature the allowance had been doubled to one, and wholly neglected in the next. Mrs. Lucas was as singularly and entirely destitute of conscientiousness in every form, as her daughter possessed it even to scrupulosity.

Sensible that she did owe her mother much, willing, if possible, to recompense her for the desertion (flight from drunkenness and misery as it was) of her earlier days, she had tried to reconcile herself to the business she disliked. But her mind was to no extent easy on the subject of her mother's sudden accession of means. She knew to what absolute destitution they had sunk when the little she had was gone, and at the birth of her child. None of the many ways in which Mrs. Lucas accounted for it (often, by the way, most contradictory) satisfied Mary, and she was ill at ease, though she said but little on the matter.

Again, without any positive reasoning on her part, she felt intuitively she could not, with self-respect and duty to her best instincts, remain. Had she been so placed before her unfortunate thoughtless marriage it might have been different; but to most womanly natures marriage and maternity are wondrous refiners, and exert a softening influence so beautifully typified in the fable of Undine, where the union of the sprite with man endows her soul, and awakens gentler attributes of humanity.

Recollections of poor Jack, who was a sober and honest man, and brave soldier—nothing more—prevented the

society of the beer-shop loungers being tasteful, and fanciful people might talk of a baby-soul which hovered about her, and made impurity unwelcome. I only say, as she would, she did not feel at home in the beer-shop, and she quitted it; still in the hope that she might serve her mother and be just to herself in her own chosen way.

"And a pretty mess she's been and made of it," was the remark of the motherly parent to her confidante, as they sat, one behind the bar, the other in the hole dignified by the title of "parlor" close by.

"Why, believe me she might have made a good thing of it, if she'd minded her p's and q's—young Stun was quite took with her." The confidante uttered a deprecatory grunt, and turned back another fold of the jacket she wore open, in compliment to her exuberant and by no means grudgingly concealed bust.

"Puling and moping and stiving herself up," added the mother, with an expletive which I would rather omit,—"I shall have her ill next, and then who's to nuss her, I'd like to know? What's that stopped at the door?—why, who on earth, Jane, is that coming in?"

Mary Selden had been sitting at work—very slowly progressing, for it was not in request. She had taken some dinner in her own room, as she mostly preferred doing now. The morning had been so bright and cheerful that she could fain have strolled out for a walk; it would have done her more good than moping there, and business would be none the worse.

But there was a chance, and it would not do to neglect even that. So she contented herself with letting the warm sun stream in across her room—at risk of fading the pretty pink silk bonnet, or damaging the plumed velvet hat which graced her show window. She had ceased now to start and lean forward and listen when the shadows of a group fell upon her lap, or voices discussed her work. Disappointment was her daily fare.

She had been looking through the columns of a London paper, borrowed from the shop, in hopes of seeing some more than usually attractive situation which might offer, and induce her at once to conclude the tantalizing suspense she now endured.

Her eyes had wandered from her work to the paper which lay on the floor at her feet, when the sound of light wheels stopping in front of the house drew her attention. The next moment a shade fell upon the newspaper where it lay, as the light was intercepted from the window, and a voice, raised as if speaking to some one at a little distance—

"Why, it's the very thing!—the nobbiest little idea I've seen since we left Paris; and here's a bonnet too—just suit you, do come down, Linda."

"I cannot descend indeed, and we had better drive into town," returned another voice, in very sweet accents, evidently from the lady who sat in the small pony carriage drawn up to the road side, and which Mary bending forward could make out but indistinctly, for the sun shone brightly, and her curtains were thick. All she could see of the admiring gazer at her window was the dark outline of a figure, and a head bent down—now turned to the carriage, as in reply the first spoke again, impatiently.

"What's the use of driving on to Buzboro' just to see what we've seen fifty times before? We know those musty old shops by heart, and if I buy anything there I shan't wear it, I know; and here's just the very thing, if you will but look—"

"But how is it possible, dear, in a village shop?" returned the soft voice. "What can they know of *gout*, or the mode?"

"Know of a fiddlestick!" said the impatient tones; "can't I believe my own eyes? I shall go in;" and again the speaker turned to the window.

"Claudia! it is the beer-shop!" cried the gentle voice, slightly elevated with an intonation of alarm. "Let Latimer go, dearest—"

A scornful "ha! ha! what fun!" was the only reply, and the shadow disappeared.

The chaise remained in waiting, a lad from behind had come forward to the horse's head.

Mary hurried to the door, as voices were heard in the passage between the beer-shop and her parlor. She stooped on the way to pick up a few odds and ends scattered about.

Meanwhile the ample Jane had risen and stood bobbing in the bar, awaiting the order from the visitor, and Mrs. Lucas, peering from her post behind, was glorying in such a customer.

"The milliner—hats and things? is it here?" said the same voice Mary had heard without.

She listened eagerly now. "Can it be for me?" she said anxiously.

She heard her mother speaking as she approached the door of her room, ushering the stranger.

"Thank you," said the voice,—then there was a sharp whistle.

"La! it's a gentleman!" said the widow to herself, and involuntarily her hand went to her hair and cap.

She opened the door, as a hand touched the lock without, and a young lady entered. Mary curtsied, and still held the door open; the young lady turned towards the passage,—*"Come here, Luck, Sir,"* she said, and, to Mary's amazement, repeated the whistle she had heard.

It was answered by as ugly a specimen of the canine species as ever she had beheld,—a cross between bull-dog and terrier, if such there be. He had an ear torn, apparently in some recent conflict, from the effects of which he had probably derived the limp that by no means added to his attractions, as he stood just within the door, and casting one eye up at the milliner, uttered a deprecatory and uncivil growl.

"Lie down, Sir," said the fair stranger, authoritatively, administering at the same time a slight twitch with a small riding-whip she carried.

"You needn't mind him," she con-

tinued, "he never bites, at least not when I am with him."

Mary's heart was throbbing meanwhile at the prospect of such a customer; the little parlor had never surely received such a visitor before.

Her appearance is worthy of note.

She was young, fresh, attractive, had an agreeable face, though not a beautiful or indeed girlish one. But the peculiarity of her dress in no small degree detracted from the feminine expression of features, which, if not regular, were very pleasing.

Her dress, of the material and color of the rough pea jackets worn by seafaring men, was almost destitute of plait, fold, or gather; the straight heavy skirt, not long enough for a habit, too long for comfortable walking, was looped at one side to the needless elevation of some inches, disclosing a beautifully-formed, though full-sized foot and ankle, cased in a thick leather boot glittering with massive buttons, with above more than was strictly required of a bright-colored stocking.

A jacket of the same material as the dress was furnished (I cannot say adorned) with rows of huge saucer-like buttons and wide pockets, from one of which protruded the corner of a silk handkerchief. She wore a small grey hat with a bunch of shining green feathers at the side, the brim in front looped carelessly back by a clasp in size and brilliancy matching the buttons on the dress.

Her hands were covered by black leather gauntlets, and from one wrist hung a small silver whistle, but which the young lady had shown herself perfectly able to dispense with.

Her light brown hair was parted unequally to one side, and would have hung in slight natural ringlets, but only one or two strayed out rebelliously from the broad scarlet ribbon which confined the mass in a thick bunch or queue at back, the wide ends fluttering out from under the hat, in not too apt contrast with the fair Saxon hair and complexion of the wearer.

Her eyebrows and lashes were dark,

the last very long, and so taking off somewhat of the sharpness of a glance which had else been bold. Her mouth was rather wide, but one forgot it in studying the wealth of pearly teeth it so often displayed to view; the nose and chin were good, but not beautiful, the whole pleasant to look upon, yet scarcely leading you to wish to inquire further, rather telling that the best was set forth to view, and better not beyond, and perhaps raising a something of regret for that which you felt was wanting, though you might not at once give it a name.

Walking in a garden bright with autumn flowers, have you felt somewhat of this? The blossoms are very rich in color and pleasant to the eye; but were you wholly satisfied?

The lady had nodded, in acknowledgment of Mary's curtsy, then she hurried across to the window, and without ceremony pulled aside the muslin curtains.

"I must let Linda see I am safe," she said, "or she'll think I am come to some dreadful end in the beer-shop."

She nodded laughing to the lady in the carriage, who languidly returned it; and then directed the lad to lead the ponies gently forward.

"Now then," said the brisk young stranger, sticking her whip in one of the pockets aforesaid,—*"you've a hat here,"* and she lifted it herself from the stand. "I believe it will just suit me. My sister and I want something for the Regatta next week, and we were driving over to Buzboro'—stale old hole!—to see what we could see, when I spied your things. Just try it on, will you?"

She threw off her own hat carelessly, flung into it her gauntlets, and disclosed a pair of remarkably well-formed but large and very ill-used hands, roughened, scarred, the nails not over clean, and of unequal lengths. She seemed to notice this fact herself, and laughed a little defiant laugh as for a moment her hand was contrasted with the white paper on which Mary had set some of her goods.

The hat was tried, suited to admiration, but some trifling alteration or addition was needed, and the impatient girl requested this should be at once attended to, and the hat brought to Merytvale, about two miles off.

"And you may as well send that bonnet there, it is just the thing I know for Linda,—Mrs. Merryt, that is my sister—only she's too lazy, or too ill, or too something, to come and look for herself. Oh! yes, you may send those too, if you like, there's no knowing, she may buy them all, or perhaps I may, but I don't often wear the things,—can't keep 'em on,—before six, mind. Come along, Luck." This time the metal did do duty, and the whistle roused the pug from its slumber. With a parting snarl at the widow, and a turn of the eye strongly expressive of a desire to make nearer acquaintance with her skirts, the brute followed his mistress, as she went trailing her dress in a feminine march through the beer-shop, marshalled by Mary, and rather enjoying as it seemed the free gaze of the rough customers who lounged here and there about the bar and door of the beer-shop, Luck licking his lips, and evidently deterred only by the vicinity of his mistress from making a lunch upon some of their muscular developments within reach of his nose as he passed.

The pony chaise drew up to receive the young lady, who sprang in, and taking the reins from the hands of the boy, touched with a forefinger the brim of her hat to the widow, who stood curtsying at the door, and then she drove rapidly away, but not before Mary had had a glimpse of the face of the other occupant—the loveliest she had ever seen; and in all her joy at her unexpected good fortune, she felt a positive pleasure in the thought that she should perhaps see that face again, and, in the spirit of her profession, she set herself to think what would best become that brilliant yet fair complexion, and that profusion of jet and silken ringlets.

"I shall be as glad as possible if I

can but suit her," she said to herself, as, with two or three of her choicest specimens, and the jaunty little hat and feathers that had done her such good service, she set out on her walk to Merytvale.

CHAPTER V.

PRIZE—A BLANK.

THE little "Honorable" flourished apace amid the lavish cares and tender solitudes of Deansholme, its lacqueys and nurses, its privileges, possessions, and—its blindness. For, see you, there is one thing for which, in rendering due thanksgiving for all blessings vouchsafed us, we fail to recognize as we ought, and with heart doubly grateful, head lower bowed, and with more utter sense of great and merciful prevision to give thanks—our imposed blindness—the ignorance that is graciously and wisely bestowed upon us, of what is passing around us. Were it but made clear to us at the day's close, as by our day-books and ledgers the profit, loss, gain, expense, receipts of the day—were but so made clear, I say, that which the lips we have kissed, the hearts we rest upon, the bosoms that are our stay—what these have done, and said, pondered, devised, enacted! Ah! my friends, let us render thanks for this peace-keeping blindness!

The child grew and thrived apace; was a beauty, was a pet, was a genius too. Can you doubt it? Was he not the son of a Viscountess? the Earl's first-born, after years of disappointed hopes and hungering ambition? So like his noble father, too, he grew, you might trace the very blood of the Powers in every trait of that delicately chiselled countenance.

So, at least, the doctor said to the artist who took the young honorable in his mamma's lap asleep, with a Skye terrier holding the infant's shoe in his mouth, which had just fallen off (the shoe I mean) so as to display the elegantly-made toes, and that arched instep, which "even at that

early age bore testimony to the pure descent and unsullied lineage of the noble family whose representative he was."

Not a bad period that, you'll allow, for the artist; he flattered himself he had outstripped the doctor, but, bless them! their forte is not generally in that line, to do them justice. But this, you see, was a courtly man, and I am afraid as great an adept in humbug as umber; could lay one on as well as the other.

The wine was so good, too, the sittings short; the Earl would have them together, and my lady could not sit long at a time; so the job was first-class. And a very pleasing picture they made: the beautiful lady—she was haughtily beautiful, as they make Juno, and the pale little boy asleep in her lap, a mass of lace and satin, and surrounded with flowers, with the terrier (that was put in by Gumption, who came down on purpose. It pleased my lord that the man who painted his son and heir couldn't do the dog.)

Poor Gumption was a dab at umber, but not at the other *hum*, and actually had the audacity to say he "couldn't see" the likeness in the boy to the Earl. That did his business at Deansholme for evermore. My lady looked at him once, and no more; the Earl thought the dog too fat, and not dark enough; the atmosphere of the Abbey grew so chill, Gumption was fain to go smoke his cigar at the basket-maker's in the village, where he took that marvellous sketch of the basket-maker's daughter, which afterwards won for him fame and name: the daughter he won for himself, and I don't think *she* takes any interest in the divorce cases in the papers.

Well, well, as I said before, let us be thankful for our blindness; and even a little obliquity of vision may be well at times, to see things as they *should* be, not as they are.

To you, who know as much as I have told you, I may say that the little honorable was, in fact, a very

quiet, very delicate, and not over bright child—at least up to the age of seven years, with which period we are just now busy.

The Earl was a sensible man, minus his inordinate pride of rank and regard for the world's dictum—*mais que voulez vous*. He took the little fellow more under his own eye than ever perhaps did noble parent before or since. For even his errors were on a grand scale, and if he looked to what people said it was on subjects of more import than the cut of a coat, the color of a cravat or the ordering of his domestic economy.

Young Power had a tutor before nurses left him, of course, but he read to his papa, he sat with his parents, even at unlawful hours: he slept in a little room opening from his father's dressing-room, and the sensible hints of the noble lord, I believe, did more to achieve that wonderful acquirement of horsemanship, or ponyship, for which the little lad was remarkable, than all the servile instruction which was purchased for him.

Doubtless the good gentleman often bored the small person in his great anxiety to make a man of him—one mighty in council, and in the world—before he was out of embroidery and sashes; but he also saved his son from much that is only short of poison to such young and tender blossoms on life's tree.

And the lady—the beautiful and happy mamma of her lord's desire. Why, she loved her boy! She had nursed him, his birth was to her an era of fresh attention, of proud and joyful considerations, and recognitions, and approval, which, in some stations, and with some folk, do duty for love. How could she but love him? You and I have nothing to do with her inner thoughts. Was it not something to have fulfilled the constant prayer and desire of the lord she had loved—to have frustrated the greedy hopes and ambition of that far off, hated, unknown branch who lay in wait for

title and estates; to know that, with all her grand beauty, and wealth, and vast connections, there was no longer one boast that less gifted dames could have over her—was this all nothing?

Now and again my lord spoke laughingly of small shades and hints of character, as it were, which made themselves visible in young Aden; how, after some erudite lesson or parable, given with a view of instilling a just and proud consciousness of rank, and value of station, into the young mind, the child would deftly pervert the moral, overturn the subtle theory by some simple remark, and actually seem to see the man behind the emperor, and detect wrong by the light of right rather than by the glitter of the crown or coronet.

They brought her tales of how young master would interest himself in the games and disputes of the village boys, and how, on one occasion, he actually emptied his pocket of all it contained into the hand of a little rustic whom the squire's son, as big again, had kicked and bruised; how he insisted on the boy riding his pony to the door of his mother's tumble-down cot, and told the squire's son that he should never come to play with him again, and that he would ask "my mamma to send your mamma no more flowers and shrubs from our green-house."

"Aden is quite a young Radical," the Earl said laughingly, yet proud of his boy's spirit, when he had got up a baby encounter with some bigger boy who had ill-used the dog of a laborer.

"It is the Power temper, my love, but it needs directing; we must change his course of reading."

Perhaps, poor lady, she felt it was less the reading than Nature which was stirring in the boy. Yet she had nursed him, and she believed she loved him.

God pity her! when she learned how little—when she felt the first fear, that time confirmed to the worst.

When young Aden Power was

seven years old, there was feasting, and drinking, and bell-ringing again at Deansholme, though in lesser degree.

It was well that the succession should be secured; yet this was not the heir, and with subdued joy they welcomed the new little stranger.

For a second time the papers announced the birth of a son to the Viscountess Honiton, and the Earl, with a decorous coolness, kissed his infant, and blessed the mother of his younger son.

CHAPTER VI. THE TIDE TURNS.

MERYTVALE was a pretty place; and, unlike many as sweet spots, did not shut itself up in high walls and thorny fences, reserving all its sweetness for the exclusive enjoyment of its possessors. With its smooth lawn, well-kept flower-beds, and plentiful evergreens, with here and there a rustic arbor, grotto, and coolly-plashing fountain, it was a boon to the eyes of every wayfarer, many a time and oft pausing to drink in all the beauty of the scene, and going on his way refreshed and gladdened by the rustic quietude of the nest-like abode.

It was a long walk from the village street where Mary lived—further than she had thought, and she arrived very tired at her destination, though still a full half-hour before the time appointed, such was her anxiety to please her new patrons.

The house lay a good distance back in the grounds, but a glimpse of it was caught here and there between the plentiful shrubbery, through which wound the circuitous path, by which a knowing skill had deceived one into the belief that the grounds and gardens were of three times their real extent.

Pleasantly situated, too, it was. From the top windows a good view of the sea was obtained, and on this quiet evening, as she stood within the gates admiring the well-kept little demesne, the never-ceasing voice of the

sleepless waters came softened from below.

"How beautiful! how sweetly quiet! how clean and lovely!" said Mary to herself, now and again pausing to rest her basket, and looking round with eyes that took a more than ordinary pleasure in this unaccustomed glimpse of the combined beauties of art and nature; for, hardly nurtured as she had been, mingled as were most of her recollections with the squalid and unlovely, there was in her nature an innate admiration for the pure and beautiful—a spice of that longing after the unswaddled reality of the true life, which the world is apt to christen "romance."

Thus she had made her election of the penniless, but young and honest soldier, who loved her, while rejecting an old and well-to-do admirer, the agent, in fact, of the rich miser who owned the wretched dwellings where she and her mother lived, and who paid a weekly visit to the miserable inhabitants, duly empowered to extort by any means the pittance due for rent.

The indulgence purchased for Dame Lucas on more than one occasion was so evidently attributable to her pretty daughter's influence, that great expectations had been built thereon; but the girl failed to enter into them, and—though I will by no means exonerate her from the suspicion of a little coquetry at the expense of the hard-visaged Corydon—she was nowise inclined to be the subject of a bargain, and by her unannounced elopement with the poor foot soldier she incurred the heavy wrath of her mother, augmented by the fact that all arrears of rent were demanded, and payment summarily enforced by the discomfited agent.

But the dream had been very brief; happy they had been, for through all the toils and privations she had shared with her brave soldier not a wry word, not the shadow of an ill-feeling, misunderstanding, nor complaint had arisen; and when he fell at last gallantly

in the thick of the fight, with his feet to the foe, she was at his side to receive the last breath that spoke her name, that blessed her and the child he was never to see. Well, well, it is time she had done thinking of all this, we cannot weep ever for the dead, and Merytvale does not in the least resemble the field of battle.

"I don't know why I should think of him, I'm sure," she says, wiping her eyes. "Dear Jack! ah! if he had but lived!—oh, how sweetly quiet it is, and the sea, too! Oh, my goodness! what will the ladies think? my eyes all red!" With a sigh the widow took up her fragile burden, and went on.

At a sudden turn in the path she came upon the small lawn in front of the windows, facing the south—the back of the house was towards the road.

A gardener, amusing himself in a thicket of laurels, stood up, and looked at her as she passed; a nurse was leisurely knitting under the shade of an ash, an infant sleeping on her lap; further on a child of some two years was playing under the charge of a young female in a sad-colored dress, governess or upper nurse.

"Oh, dear! how easy they all take it," sighed the young widow; "it would be a blessing to be a servant even in such a delightful place."

Again her eyes filled with tears, but she hastily wiped them away, and was about inquiring of a passing domestic by which door she should enter, when a voice cried out—

"I do declare here's that dear soul with the things!"

The next moment, from a long French window sprang the young lady who had visited her in the morning.

She had, apparently, just returned from riding, for she wore a habit and jacket, with bright buttons, which, at the upper part, disclosed a plaited shirt-front and tie, *a la* Byron, and the skirt, drawn down through her belt for ease in walking, left to view considerable of certain under garments, in fashion,

texture, and make, entrenching most decidedly upon the prerogative of the other sex, and, judging by the portion of the boots which were thence visible, there should be an article which hitherto we have failed to meet with in our bootmakers' catalogues, viz. "female Wellingtons." Her hair was twisted and knotted completely out of sight, under a velvet cap with long drooping tassel; in her gauntleted hand she carried a riding-whip, with which, in the heat of argument or energy of description, she switched her boot, or what should have been skirts.

Altogether, had not Mary recognized the voice in which she was greeted, she would, in the uncertain light, have taken the figure which so suddenly appeared for that of a very young gentleman impressed with a profound notion of his own charms, and intent on making the most of them.

"Now you *are* a good creature," the voluble young lady repeated, urging Mary towards the window by which she had herself emerged; "so different to most of those horrid people one gives an order to, keeping one waiting ever so long. Come in."

She went on, entering first, and beckoning Mary, who paused to look for some means of wiping the dust from her shoes.

"Come on! never mind—never mind!" cried the impatient lady; "Linda, here, here is the milliner with the hats and things; open your eyes—wake up!"

"I wish you would not make such a noise, Claude; I am not asleep at all, you know it," said a very sweet voice, and a figure half rose from a couch at the opposite side of the room. Mary recognized the lady who had waited in the pony chaise before her window that morning.

"Pray come this way, my good girl," she added in a very condescending tone, and the widow obeyed, thinking, as she did so, that her eyes had never before beheld so exquisite a piece of finished beauty and softness.

She was dressed in a loose robe of

some fleecy cloud-like material, sky-blue, and trimmed with rich lace and needlework. Her brilliant complexion, the profusion of golden-colored hair, her large dreamy lustrous eyes, softer in their glances than her sister's, but with the same long dark fringe of lashes, her small but perfect figure, tiny hands and feet, all united in one harmonious result. She looked, indeed, almost too lovely for mere beef-eating, beer-swilling humanity, but might be rather taken for a spirit wandering for a time upon this coarser earth; the cloud-like and cerulean tissues that hung and floated about her,—remnants of the fairy walls through which she had broken bounds, while the golden stars which sprinkled the blue network imprisoning her ample tresses, and which trembled and glittered at every movement, contributed to such a fancy.

"Now then," said Claudia, throwing off her velvet cap and gauntlets on the floor with the whip; "let me see how you understood me. Ah!" she added, as the milliner's basket was unclosed, and the hat made its appearance—"that's it! I see you will suit me first-rate, you carry out my notions exactly—just the thing. I wish we had met with you before. Look, Linda."

"*Mais oui ce n'est pas mal*," said the other languidly, as her sister revolved rapidly before her, and even went down on one knee the better to display her new acquisition.

"*Pas mal!*" exclaimed the latter, rising impetuously. "You put me out of all patience with your coolness. I tell you, it's just the very thing; could not have been better if I had hunted all Regent Street for a season!"

"*Mais ma chère c'est a vous*!"

"*C'est a fiddlestick!* why on earth, Linda, can't you speak English? it's good enough for you, I hope. Now, then, are you going to patronize Mrs. —What is your name? for, upon my word, I forget."

"Selden—Mary Selden."

"Ah, yes, I remember."

"You have a chapeau will suit me, my sister thinks," Mrs. Meryt began, as she gradually drew herself to a sitting posture on the velvet couch; *cœur de rose*, I wish—"

"A—a pink bonnet, that's what my sister means!" burst in the downright damsel; "the fact is, Belinda, I shall have to stick to you wherever we go, if it's only to translate your lingo into plain English."

"Claudia! for shame, such words,—where you learn them I cannot conceive."

The other laughed her short reckless laugh; she loved to shock the delicate sensibilities of her fair sister.

Meanwhile Mary had drawn forth the said bonnet, which was in truth of such an elegant and tasteful design and delicacy of finish, as to deserve all the praises Claudia had bestowed, and drew forth a languid approval from the beauty as she rose from the couch and bent her head for the milliner to put it on her.

"You must put my hair all below it," she said, with as much helpless sweetness as if she had been a petted child under the nurse's hands; "there is so much of it," she laughed, as Mary made the needful arrangements with light and gentle touch, and the lady turned to the glass to view the general effect.

The milliner smiled a deferential smile; her own work had never appeared to such advantage. The young lady in the buckskins lashed her right boot energetically, and cried,—

"By Jove! Linda, it's the best thing you've had this season," which elicited an exclamation from the beauty.

"*Mechante!*"

In truth the trifle did become her bright complexion and sweet face wonderfully, but she was not yet satisfied.

"I must see it on some one else," she objected, "I never can judge on myself. Will you, Claude, *chère fille?*"

"Not I! I feel as if my face were tied up, in them; besides, my hair is all in a frizz; you might as well try it

on Lolotte there. Mrs. Selden, she'll put it on, you're much of a cut—that will do."

The beauty did not quite like her sister's suggestions, but she had no alternative, and requested Mary to try on the bonnet.

The young woman took off her bonnet, laid aside her widow's cap, and set the bonnet over her glossy bands.

The effect was truly magical; relieved of the heavy crape and unbecoming weeds, her fair complexion and placid features set off by the pale tint of the silk and lace, it was no longer the same face.

The sisters looked at one another, and the secret of Mary's success in her trade was divined. Working to suit the model in her looking-glass, she could secure elegant and graceful effects.

"A step or two off, if you please," said the married lady; "would you be so good as to close the window? the dew is falling."

"*Elle est veuve*," she said, turning to her sister, who for once answered her in kind.

"*Oui, n'est elle pas jolie?*"

"*Mais, un peu trop de paleur.*"

"*Pauvre fille, elle a peut-être—*"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," interrupted conscientious Mary, who had been out-blushing the bonnet on her head during the brief dialogue—"I beg your pardon, but I can tell what you are saying."

"Ha! ha! well, that is good," cried Claudia, with a lash at her left boot.

"You speak French!" exclaimed Mrs. Meryt.

"No, ma'am, I can't do much in speaking, but I was abroad you see, ma'am, with my husband; he was a soldier, and I had to understand the people and my husband,—he was a soldier, miss,—he talked foreign tongues easily; and so I came to be able to tell most of what is said both in French and German."

"Well I declare that is good."

"*C'est bien singulier!*" so both exclaimed at once.

"Ah, ah, Linda, you'll beware in future how you *parlez vous*; but the bonnet, Linda?"

The beauty had begun to express her satisfaction when a lash of the restless whip was followed by an unearthly howl; the married lady screamed in concert, and throwing aside the cherished finery, sprang towards the couch.

"*Cette chère Lolotte!* what have you done, Claude? you cruel creature, you careless girl, *ma pauvre, ma ma petite, bonne!* oh!" and she fondled and bent over and kissed a little mass of white flossy caninity, which Mary had taken, as it lay on the couch, for a swansdown tippet; but which was now answering the endearments of its infatuated mistress by yappish howls of feminine asperity, and shaking like a blanc-mange.

"I never touched the brute!" exclaimed the younger lady. "It was only because she heard the whip, and her conscience told her what she deserved."

"Cruel!" repeated the beauty, her soft eyes filling with tears, as she rocked to and fro, and clasped to her fair bosom and lavished caresses, on the little brute.

"You do not like her, I know, Claude, you have no sympathy, no affection—*ma pauvre chienne!*"

"I've a good mind to translate that into plain English for you," said the nettled girl, "I suppose that would shock you, as if the meaning wasn't the same in one language as the other! I would, but that I see Charles coming across the lawn, and Sir Van with him. I say, Linda, do put down the brute, and settle about that bonnet."

She stood a few minutes at the window watching the approaching figures.

"They are going to the stables; I've a good mind to go too, I do want to hear what Sir Van thinks about the mare."

She opened the window, but her sister interposed to prevent her going, and the young lady contented herself

with a bow and a wave of her whip to the gentlemen as they passed out of sight.

The dog being pacified, its mistress returned to the bonnets. She laid aside a couple of morning caps which the widow produced, and which had the good fortune to please her fastidious taste.

Claudia was delighted. "Wasn't I right now?" she said; "didn't I say she would suit us; I *am* sorry we're going to leave Merytvale, for you would have saved us a deal of trouble."

Mary's heart sank. She was just beginning to feel the sunshine of patronage,—here was a cloud!

"Are you indeed, ma'am?" she said timidly.

"Yes—we go abroad in the autumn. O Linda, look here! here's a doll of a thing; I do believe it would fit Adela, and just what you were wishing for, black and white in squares, quilted—see!"

From the depths of milliner fairyland she pulled out, not too gently, a child's hood and mantle, very tastefully made, and of uncommon pattern. Mary explained she had made it from one she had transiently seen on the important little person of some great man's son, when he with his suit halted for a few hours in passing through the village.

"I almost forget the name," she said, "but the people at the inn said it was a Viscountess—"

"Oh, Honiton! the Earl and Viscountess Honiton," said Mrs. Meryt; "was it indeed their son you took the pattern from? I do hope it will fit baby, Claude."

"Oh, anything fits babies, Linda. Is that the old Earl that we met, you know, at the Franklins' last winter, and you were so beatified at hobnobbing with a live Viscount, and I called him Grimgruffinhoff?"

"For shame, Claude! *old* you say; the Earl is not by any means old, and the Countess is *sa premiere jeunesse*."

"Take care, Linda, take care, you

know Mrs. Selden understands all the bad things you say in French; she is a grand woman though, the Viscountess."

"Very tall, ma'am, and stately?" asked Mary.

"Oh, uncommonly," said Claudia, "quite a Juno."

"Far too tall for a woman, quite masculine," said, softly, the tender beauty.

"What was all that terrible to-do that Sir James wagged his head and looked so solemn to Charles and you about,—something to do with the Honiton people?"

"Oh, I do not remember much about it," said her sister; "only they were abroad at the time; the Earl was on some horrid diplomatic business or another, and he wanted his child to be born at Deansholme, and he could not return as he intended, so the Viscountess came alone, and was taken ill on the journey, and the Earl's son was born at some road-side place or another, I forget where,—*c'est horrible, n'est ce pas?*" she shuddered. "But," she added, "nobody knows it, for it was hushed up; the Earl did not like it spoken of, it was not pleasant *du tout*."

Mary listened to this relation, thought of a certain garret, where the rushlight flared in the draughts, the outcries of drunken men and women, thieves and worse, the odors of gin, tobacco, and foul things, wrangled in the frosty air; of the parish doctor and the filthy hags that surrounded her bed the night *her* son was born; and wondered whether this noble lady had encountered anything of this kind; and whether indeed the young Honorable's course in life would suffer materially from not first seeing light at Deansholme.

How little we know, when we measure one state against that of another, how in the dark we weigh and decide and accept, and murmur at fate; how in the dark!

She started from her brief reverie as Mrs. Meryt spoke.

"Yes, I rang for nurse; tell her to bring Miss Adela."

Nurse came quick upon the summons; and upon Miss Adela, a little creature of some ten months, the hood and mantle were tried, and pronounced to be, with a little alteration (that ladies dearly love), just the thing, or, as Mrs. Meryt pronounced it, "*a ravir*."

The infant was fair and pretty, for a baby, and, wonderful acquirement, maintained a well-bred silence during the interview. Mary's heart yearned towards it, and again she thought of a certain small deal box, alas! alas! and she almost asked herself, Why should it be that great ladies, who had all else, should be spared the trials of? &c. &c.

"Not down there, nurse, not there," fretfully cried the sylph, as the nurse, hastening on an errand for something or other from baby's wardrobe that was to be shown to the milliner, attempted to deposit her charge on the couch. "You will disturb Lolotte, *cette chere petite*. I would not have her disturbed; she caught a cold through that dressing-room window being open last night, too."

Mary's arms had received the child, the pretty mother just put her finger to its cheek, holding back her lace sleeve the while. The nurse had just returned, and was resuming her duties, when there was a slight scuffle in the hall.

"I will see amma!" cried a small voice; "baby is don in to amma, an to will I; et me! et me! else I *will* bite loo!"

Another scuffle, a suppressed exclamation, and a bounce at the door intimated that the threat had been carried into effect, and, as the nurse opened the door, the young rebel appeared, in the shape of a dark-eyed little maid, of about two years old, who stood for a moment in the doorway flushed with the struggle, then rushed impetuously to her mother, crying,—

"Amma, I want loo, I *would* tum."

"Take her away, nurse; Miss Lea,

where are you? take her away?" called the beauty, sinking back upon her sofa, while the child clutched at her dress, and strove to climb her knee, and Claudia laughed.

Entered on the scene the pale young lady, clad in sad-colored stuff, whom Mary had seen upon the lawn. She was ruffled and torn, and one hand was hastily wrapped in her handkerchief.

"Why do you let Miss Sydney behave so!" cried the young mamma with more asperity than one would have supposed her to be capable of. "What is the use of you, if you cannot keep her away from tormenting me! Go away, miss, when I bid you," she added, unloosing the child's fingers from the dress.

"Baby tum in, and tho will I. I will *bite* loo!" the child added, with flashing eyes turned upon her governess, who was venturing meekly to interpose, but who retreated in visible terror at the threat.

The younger lady now approached, and endeavored to draw off the small assailant.

"Loo do way, aunty Claude! I not want loo, I want my amma, do et me be wis loo," the little one pleaded, appealing to her parent in milder tones, and with anxious looks of yearning affection.

But there was no response, though the lovely mamma was sufficiently aroused to impose her authority decisively.

"You rude, disobedient little girl!" she said, as she released herself from the tenacious grasp, and the child submitted without a word to her.

"Take her, Miss Lea, and I do hope you will be so good as to teach her better behavior; really it is shocking! She does not seem to improve, and—stop!" she exclaimed, as the governess and her charge were moving away, "whatever has she on? Dear me, Miss Lea, I think I mentioned before that dress does not become Miss Sydney at all; the color positively kills her complexion, and that bodice

is quite *passee*. It is really hard to have to see to these things myself. Pray, Miss Lea, do not let me have to speak of it again. Now, dear child, kiss mamma, and go, and be good."

The little thing ran eagerly forward for the proffered caress—it was coldly given.

"God bless you, Sydney; do not omit to say your prayers, my love. *Bon soir, cher enfant*. That is what comes of being kind to poor relations," she added, when the door closed upon her children and their attendants. "I told Charles how it would be; they never think they are to do their duty like other servants."

Her little daughter went, the tears in her eyes, but haughtily refusing the hand her governess held out. The child was aware of injustice somewhere, and revenged itself blindly on those who strove to intercept her intercourse with her parent, whom she loved, in spite of all.

The nurse followed with her younger charge, and the lady sank back upon her sofa exhausted.

"Dear, dear, the responsibility of a mother's life! Ah! Claude, *ma chere*, you little dream what it is!"

"Oh, indeed the dream will suffice for me, I assure you," said the vivacious young lady, nodding her head knowingly.

"But there is the delight of knowing we are rearing them for good and truth, that we hope to render back those souls given into our charge as pure and lovely—"

"Ah, I dare say," abruptly put in Claudia; "but isn't it time to dress?"

"Yes; have you made all your purchases?" asked the other, fondling the poodle.

"I? yes, indeed."

The ladies then proceeded to settle accounts with the young widow, to whom, be it observed, during all their interview neither had offered a seat, or suggested the slightest refreshment, after what they knew to be a toilsome up and down hill walk.

"I wonder," sighed the pretty blonde, "Mrs. Selden, I wonder you do not select a more suitable spot for your business. I never noticed your window really till my sister pointed it out."

"The beer-shop frightened you," said Claudia; "you should go to London, Mrs. Selden; you would get on there."

Longing for some sympathizing ear in which to pour out her cares and anxieties, the young widow launched at once into her little history—how she had no liking for the beer-shop or its vicinage; how she had ventured into the millinery alone and unassisted, but with how little success until their present patronage, and how, if she were fated to lose that too, she saw nothing for it but service; concluding, while she almost trembled at her own boldness in speaking so freely, with asking the ladies if they could give her any idea how best to set about finding what she wanted.

Little interest had her tale excited in the minds of the two hearers, Claudia flicking the poodle's ear as near as she dared, her sister hunting beneath her cushions and Lolotte, and once interrupting with a question of her sister, "Have you seen my Balzac?"—till the milliner spoke of her desire to obtain a situation; then the sisters simultaneously broke off in their occupations, looked at each other, and then at Mary till she had finished.

"The very thing!" cried Claudia.

"*Mais c'est charmant!*" warbled the sylph.

"We want a maid—"

"Claude—my head!" said the rosy beauty, putting her hand to her temples with a suffering-angel demonstration.

Claudia shrugged her shoulders, but let her sister go on, as she proceeded languidly to tell Mary how that she was about to part with her maid, a French girl, who was a very good maid, but—

"I hate her!" said the incorrigible.

"Yes, you have made her worse, I believe," said the gentle beauty, this

time very energetically. "But she does not quite please me in some things; she objects to sitting up for me, as of course is necessary sometimes, till morning; and as I am not strong, I can bear no contradiction, and she is so very *tranchante* in manner—you are quiet, I think?"

Mary hoped so, modestly.

"And she's as ugly as sin!" said Claude.

"Claudia, indeed you will not be dressed, and here comes Charles and Sir Van—oh! where is my Balzac? Do find it, if you please," she said to Mary, who kindly was assisting in the search for she knew not what.

"A book it is, under the sofa very likely; oh, here! Lolotte has got it, and, oh! she has nibbled half the leaves out—*mechante chienne!*" and she patted the dog fondly.

Claudia had escaped, as the gentlemen were heard eating. They passed on to the library, but Mr. Meryt stepped back, hearing voices, and opened the door; then, seeing his wife, came in.

"Have you brought my flowers, Charles?" was the wife's first greeting. "I cannot do without them."

He embraced her very fondly as soon as the door closed on the widow, who was to wait.

Charles Meryt was a good man, a man of true impulses and earnest purpose; he had been married nearly three years to the exquisite piece of heartless inanity which he now sat beside, and had not yet shook off the spell which possessed him to call her his own.

Blindness again is it? Yet who prays to be lightened of such blindness?

He toiled hard, mentally and bodily, indeed, harder every year, for his wife's increased expenditure and caprices; for the fast coming family, whose care, delegated to others, dipped heavily into his purse. Yet he never felt it irksome, nor deemed that she should share any of his many cares and anxieties. He saw her still the loveliest and gentlest of creatures; he

heard her pretty platitudes and soft aphorisms, her empty quotations, and her meek endurance of all the vexations she declared oppressed her.

"How you do humbug Charles!" her unceremonious sister would sometimes exclaim, when more put out than usual by Belinda's affectation, or denunciation of her own follies.

But Claudia was not much in favor with her brother-in-law; he saw in her everything so directly the opposite to his adored wife, and even sometimes debated within himself if the fast young girl were not a little crazed; but the sisters had never been separated. At the death of their uncle and guardian he had bequeathed his trust to Meryt, and her sister's house became her home. On the whole they got on pretty well together.

On one point only had Mr. Meryt of late found the shadow of a shade on which to remark in his wife. He was very fond of his children, and would have had them more about him; indeed, he had little idea that their mother was so wholly neglectful of their welfare, and, according to her own showing, she never failed in a duty.

"Have the little ones been with you, love, to-day?" was his second question.

"Oh, yes, for some time, and baby grows so; but Sydney gets such a tyrant. I do not think Miss Lea is at all efficient, *mon ami*."

"Poor Miss Lea! I wish she were, for she has no home, and might be comfortable with us," said the good man; "you must advise her, my own darling, and I am sure she will attend."

"I advise!"—she looked up at him with her large liquid blue eyes, and shook her head till the stars rolled off, and the golden hair escaped down upon her shoulders over his arm. Ah me! poor Miss Lea!

"There is the second bell; you must dress, love—where is Claude?"

"Don't you hear her laughing with Sir Van—they are well matched."

The lady soliloquized in her dressing-room—

"I shall get rid of her; I will not rest till I do, and I am sure this woman will be glad to have charge of Sydney—she said she was fond of children. I shall tell Charles I would rather have the care of *la petite* myself till she is older, and so I shall manage to save that to myself, for Charles will never think of the difference in the wages."

So lovely! so selfish!—are they inconsistent? Does the gardener never spoil his best flower, the mother her child, the world its darling, by over petting?

These two, different in character, as in features, had yet that common substrata of selfishness. Each to itself was all, and nought beyond, though each so variously asserted.

Reared, from an early age, under the auspices of an eccentric uncle, who, disgusted with the innovations of modern systems, which he persisted would make all women priests and doctors, had insisted on adhering rigidly to the most feminine and superficial mode of education, these girls had been early cast by his death upon the world, their weaknesses fostered, their foibles unreprieved, their good qualities unstrengthened. Dependent, feeble, affected, mean, the one; the other bold, unwomanly, and reckless: wholly selfish and heartless both. The one, by an assumption of delicacy, and divine forbearance, and morality—the other, by that of candor and honesty equally false—seeking to veil their relative defects.

That so much naturally lovely should be so spoiled! But, such as they are, it is with these our young widow sets sail once more on the tide of life. Literally too, for in a few months they are to depart for France, Paris, Germany, the Rhine. "*Que sais je? pour Rome peut-être,*" as the fair lady says, smiling out her directions to Mary Selden, who thinks her the sweetest, nicest of ladies, though she did beat her down in the price of the bonnets and caps; and, as Mary has

heard, is giving her four pounds less than her last maid had.

It is a certainty, and she is so sick of the beer-shop and its concomitants. Her mother will not break her heart; she only wishes Mary well, and it is "all of a piece, her ingratitude," &c. &c., and the buxom Jane consoles her with seething comfort from the bar.

But there was an attraction, almost unconsciously to herself, for Mary, in those baby eyes—those tiny hands. How often, as she went up to her bed at night, she would pause to chat with nurse, and peep at the little cot, that always seemed somehow to fade into a deal box, as she went on up the stairs.

"Oh, Jack! my poor dear Jack! if you had but lived!"

Before they left England Mrs. Meryt came to the conclusion, all things considered, that perhaps it might be as well to keep Miss Lea, and when nurse must give up the care of *that* baby—then the beauty sighed—why—Mary might as well take to it.

"She is fond of it, and she will still have time for the millinery, and if you think you can do without a maid, Claude, *ma chere*."

"Oh, do? yes; but you are not to have all the benefit of the saving, Miss Linda," was the reply of the amiable sister.

CHAPTER VII.

IN MY LADY'S CHAMBER.

My readers will have perceived that, in mentioning the birth of the younger Power—that comparatively insignificant personage of my history—I anticipated matters a little; but in my last chapter having seen the widow fairly started in life, we are now at liberty to resume our narrative at a still further lapse of time, during which little of note has occurred, the boys growing up chiefly at Deansholme, sometimes in London, once, for a brief space, on the Continent; and progressing much in the

same ratio as other lads of the same station, and placed in like circumstances—one, perhaps, not much the more for the infinite care and attention everywhere his portion; the other certainly not much the less for the comparative ease with which he is permitted to imbibe, rather than urged to plunge into, the sacred founts of knowledge and wisdom.

But the course of the two brothers had been gradually growing wider and wider apart. The difference of years, which in early childhood do not disqualify as playmates, and again in manhood are less calculated, in youth constitute a barrier to free intercourse. Twenty and twenty-seven will do, but seventeen and ten scarcely consort agreeably; and these are the respective ages at which the Earl's sons have arrived when this summer morning we look in upon the Abbey, with its stately turrets, its gothic arches, and its painted windows, that the morning sun is reflecting in a thousand dyes upon the wide stone floor of the old hall; its rookeries, ancient even when the Abbey was young; its noble park and waters, fields, woods, and rich pastures, that are all alive with summer life, and glad in the promise of plenteousness and peace.

But it is to the stables we are just now more particularly attracted, that are a little domain in themselves, and kept with that peculiar perfection of appointment which it is the Earl's especial ambition should be the feature of everything identical with himself or his belongings.

It is early morning with great people, though the sun is high, and the only domestics to be seen stirring yet are these now talking, as the one paces up and down a couple of high-bred horses, the other, an in-door servant by his dress, has his hands in his pocket, and is taking it easy, as the phrase goes.

"Well, there's no accounting for tastes, I know," says the groom, a very young man, "but give me the eldest. No, it ain't that the other is

but a boy; you may tell which way the wind blows by a feather, and the man's seen a deal in the boy."

"I can only say, in my 'pinion Mr. Arthur's far more becoming to what should be a lord, in my 'pinion, than is Mr. Aden, with all his learning and travels, and his haughty ways—"

"*Haughty!* Mr. Aden's ways haughty!" exclaimed the other; "why, Dixon, you must be making game now, and no mistake. Why, a young gentleman more affable, nor kinder, nor better speaking to a poor man I never did come across, and never shall—what's more, never shall."

"Ah, I wasn't speaking of poor people, you see; it's his ways with *us*, you know, in the house that I hallude to—"

"Well, I'll speak for *myself*, and this I do say, that if it hadn't been for Mr. Power, I never would stand where I do now. A good master is the Earl—a good and a liberal master; but he's hot, Mr. Dixon, he's hot, as we all know, and when I was new to the place, and easy put out, my word! I'd ha' been sent flying at a moment's warning more'n once, but Mr. Power put in a word for me, and even begged me of his father, for that I should be his own man; and with his own lips have many a time set me right and give me courage; ah!—"

"He's fond of his horses; maybe that has something to do with it," said the footman; "but this I will say, and I do repeat, that all the years I have had the honor of serving the family, Mr. Power have never been the gentleman to say an obliging word, nor act a liberal way towards me. Why, it were but the very last time I saw him in London, before he left for college, he were dining alone with a young chum of his own, *tate-e-tate*, and if he didn't turn round, and, says he, 'We can dispense with your services,' he says, 'Dixon,' and if he didn't pack me off, and he must have got up to help himself more than once at the sideboard, for he never rung till the table was to be cleared. I

don't call that a gentlemanly hact, whatever you may think, Mr. Bant."

"Maybe the young chaps was a talking their love affairs?"

"No, they talked of nothing particular at all out of common—that is to say, I mean, you know," said the man of plush, getting confused, "you see, they were laughing and going on not any way secret."

"Well, perhaps he doesn't care for gimeracks and fal-lals; I shouldn't, if I was him, I know."

The favored being who accompanied the family to London looked for a minute on his fellow-servant with ineffable scorn, but the lack of words in which to repudiate the imputation of gimerack or fal-lal kept him silent. The other went on.

"I know when my poor mother laid a dying, and me and my sister, with never a creature to give us comfort, nor a thing to turn our hands to, and Mr. Power found us out and came; he were but a boy too, then. Well, well, I ain't forgot. I don't want to say nothing again Mr. Arthur—Lord forbid; but it 'll be long, I'm thinking, before he would trouble his head to look for grief and wretchedness in a lone old cottage off the estate."

"Ah! now that shows what a poor judge of human natur you are, Bennet—a poor judge. Now Mr. Arthur—that there young gentleman—never fails of Christmas or Easter, or any tide that may be, and of the Earl, his pa's birthday, and of his own, he never fails to come down handsome to all round; when there's Mr. Power—why, Bennet, you'd scarcely believe it, but—it 'll go no further, of course—but we don't know the color of his money, not a man nor a woman of us in the house. There!"

Bant looked down and said something to himself in a low voice, shook his head, and seemed in silence to be recalling some pleasant recollection. Presently he looked up and said—

"You see, Mr. Dixon, though, as I say, I haven't a word again Mr.

Arthur, who is pleasant and free with me as a boy, still, mind you, it is known that where he can get of my lady anything he asks for, the Earl has kept rayther a tight hand with young Mr. Power; and it isn't over-much, I expect, he has left, what with his books and his charities."

"Charity begins at home," argued the footman—meaning, of course, at himself; "but you're right so far as this, that it is wonderful the influence, as you may say, which that boy has with his ma', he can turn her round his finger, as you may say, though she ain't easy to manage—my word for it."

"He's the youngest, you see, and a pretty boy to look at."

"Well, it's figure generally takes with the women, I find," said sententially the six foot five man, straightening his back, "and Mr. Power is a fine cut of a man, that I will say; but any how, like the child as she may, my lady's hard enough with him sometimes; when it was talked of his having the tutor at home, or going to school, my Lord was for the school, and so was the boy, but no, my Lady stuck to the tutor plan, and the tutor he's got. Ay, I've heard her lecture him myself, and ask him what he would think if his papa had done so and so, and of him being an honor to the name, as if more he was the heir than the Honorable Aden Power himself."

"Ay, he never will be that, I should say," laughed the other; "my young master's not the man to die a bachelor."

"Well, I wouldn't say nay, for one; I'd rather Mr. Arthur could stand in the other's place, though I wish him no ill, but I would like to see a little life in the old place; it's gloomy enough now, and Mr. Aden ain't the one to make it livelier; he's the devil's own will when he likes, and the Earl finds enough to hold his own, I know, at times."

"Mr. Aden stands up for the poor man; that way can't please the Earl.

Do you remember when there was that row about them poachers?"

"Ah! I shall believe to my dying day that Mr. Power had a hand in getting them off," said the lacquey.

"And the old chap that was bundled out of his farm because his son voted for the wrong man?"

"How you put it!" cried the more cultivated disciple of livery.

"Well, the plain truth now—how does it stand, neither more nor less; but, I say, it was nigh on to a quarrel with Mr. Power and my Lord then; he's pensioned the old fellow, though, ever since, and I wonder does the Earl know it?"

"Oh, ay, my Lord winks at half the things he don't want to see."

"He's greatly proud of him, too, for all that," said the groom, "and no wonder."

"Yes, and that's what I say," continued Dixon, "him with all the honors of the house upon him, as one may say, and my Lady slighting him—"

"But *do* she slight him? It's not her way to make much of a fuss with nobody."

Dixon shook his head as though he could say, if he would, strange things.

"Do you remember about them two ponies?" he asked.

"I should say so; how my Lady insisted upon Mr. Arthur having the best, and when the good-natured little chap would have given in to his brother, she would not have it so. I mind hearing a bit of a lecture, as I rode behind 'em that day. She was a telling the eldest how he should be content with being heir, and that to everything, and not try to get every advantage. Poor chap, I don't believe it was in him to do it."

"Do you recollect the time they were both pulled out of the ice?"

"Oh! my word, that was a go!—eh! and I *did* notice at the time how she flew to the youngest and laid hold of his head and put it on her bosom, and sat so for a good three or four minutes before ever she got up to go

to young Mr. Power, though he was the worst of the two."

"But when they sent off to the Earl at Chawley, where he was—'My horse,' he says, 'quick! my son, O my dear Aden,' he says, just them words."

"Did he now?"

"Ay, there's no accounting for these things," said the philosopher in silken hose. "I've heard my sister say, that my Lady couldn't nurse Mr. Arthur herself, though he tried hard for it,—the doctors wouldn't let her, but she did suckle the first, spite of 'em all."

"That should work the other way, one would think," yawned the footman; "but maybe it will be all the other way now; we've seen nothing of him for nigh a twelvemonth, you know, and the wind may be in his favor. I say, this early rising don't suit me. When do you get breakfast?"

"We can have it at my place here as soon as you like, and I can as well go in now as not. Mr. Power can't be here for a couple of hours yet, can he?"

"No, not for four or five."

"I am that longing to see him," said the young man, whose true friend in need the young honorable had been. He took the horses in, and then led the way to his own quarters, where a smoking breakfast was already prepared for himself and his guest of the morning, a cousin distantly removed, and a servitor, as we have seen, in the house of Honiton.

Early rising did not agree with his plush-ship; what if he had known that she, the noble mistress, whom, as is their wont, the servants had so freely canvassed, that she arisen even earlier, even as the dawn crept to the hill-tops to smile down again on the fair woods of Deansholme, and begin that day which was to welcome home their heir.

From a restless couch, from a broken feverish slumber, filled with weird dreams, she had started, and since had paced to and fro the wide

extent of her lofty bed-chamber, had stood amid its rich belongings, its wealth of luxury, with a despair, a misery at her heart, from which the only refuge seemed in death.

"Not even there!" she said aloud, beginning the restless walk again to and fro, with bare white feet upon the purple velvet pile, her dark hair flowing down her back over the white quilted satin gown she had cast on her shoulders.

"Could I leave them,—if I died with that lie, to live out, to perpetuate—oh! that I should have worked for this, for *this*! who could have dreamed it! who foretold! Was it a crime, and is this my punishment? It was not to please myself; his pride, *not mine, not mine!*"

But as if an asp had stung her, she hurried her walk, and shook her clenched hand, and waved it from her, deprecating the argument, as some one else had urged it.

"It is, it is a punishment,—my child, my *own* child, a punishment, a curse. I must have sinned that it could ever be so, and not to suckle him, not to feed him, my own, as I had nursed that other, that beggar's unclean brat! O God, have mercy on me! how will it end! how will it end!"

She started, for a sound fell on her ear, and she stopped mid-way in her wild-beast walk to listen.

"It is them! he is here again, and I must act out my scheme, the part I have set myself."

From her window she looked upon the court below, saw the Earl and his servants ride into it, heard the joyful burst of welcome pour from every throat, and spread from point to point. Then his voice, loud and clear and manly, calling for old favorites, summoning young Bennet. She saw him grown taller, handsomer, healthier; she saw his bright eyes turn upwards towards her window, and his lips form the word *mamma*, as he would have sprang off, but the Earl checked him. Then came young Arthur, hastily dressed and full of glee, to welcome

his father and his elder brother. The first returned it carelessly, the latter with all the patronizing of a favored mortal; and which the pretty boy accepted as his due only. She saw it all, and she *hated* him.

"*That* the puling white-faced brat I took to fill his place, my son's, to set his foot upon my darling's neck, and put the yoke upon him!" she ground the words between her teeth; "was it this I schemed for, and is there *no* help, none?" She was silent for a minute, then said slowly, "None! but in *his* death."

The Countess sank upon her knees by the bedside, and hid her face in her hands.

Isaac called upon the Lord in *his* affliction, but the patriarch was blind, and stricken in years.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCYLLA.

"But, mother—"

"Why *will* you interrupt me? when it is but to repeat those arguments that are indeed none at all, which I have heard a hundred times, and answered as many. Arthur, once more, what motive can I have but your welfare? to what reason can you attribute my anxiety, save the wish that has ever been uppermost in my thoughts since you were born, my dear son?"

The speaker checked the impetuosity that was urging her further than she had intended, and her companion took the opportunity to reply, in a tone of devoted affection, as he took the lady's hand in both of his own.

"*Motive?* ah, mother, no need to ask me that. What motive, indeed, could you have—have you ever had, for all your indulgent kindness, and care of me, so much more than I have ever deserved, or ever can hope to merit or return."

He was again interrupted, but this time with a hasty movement of the hand, and a deprecating expression. The lady said,—

"No more of that—no more, Arthur; *deserve!* you are my son, are you not? and who could deserve more? As to gratitude for a mother's love, surely that were best shown by complying with a mother's wishes."

The young man still held the hand of the lady within his own, and its fingers had clasped with a warm grasp upon those that embraced it, as he replied,—

"God knows it is in my heart to do so, my dear mother, and I could wish that in anything else—"

"But why, my son? You must marry; you have expressed no disinclination hitherto to doing so. Lady Lineage has till now appeared the chief object of your attention."

"Ah! mother, but by your desire."

"I know it was so; at least it was I who pointed out to you the especial qualifications that I conceived to render her more especially eligible as a wife for you, Arthur."

"She is older, mother; is that one of them?"

"By a few months only, Arthur; it is the circumstances of her position only that give her that air of independence and decision."

"You may call it by its right name, *ma mere*, and not wound me. It is haughty coldness."

"Arthur! the indulgence you have experienced all your life has made you unreasonable. Cold as she may seem, a more unexceptionable wife—a better mother, does not exist than Geraldine, young as she is, and beautiful enough to have been spoiled."

"Yes, she is very beautiful—*very*."

"I am sure you thought so not very long since, my son."

"And I think so still," the young man replied; "she is too beautiful, too high for me."

"What is it you say?" exclaimed the lady, unclasping the hand she held, and turning her dark eyes, full of indignant surprise, upon him, "You! of the oldest families, who have mated ere now with princely houses—too high!"

"But,—forgive me, mother, forgive me," exclaimed the son, as he rose, and paced hurriedly to and fro, "but you forget, surely you forget, it is to my brother you should be saying all this—to Aden, who is indeed the representative, in his own right honorable person, of all the chivalry and glory of the house. To what purpose should you rouse all this enthusiasm of ancestry in me, who can do so little to maintain its dignity? You know I am but a poor younger son—a nobody, who might certainly, if I chose, make good endeavors, and be patted on the back, and approved, by my right honorable brother, and rejoice in the idea that I was 'worthy' of *him*; but I cannot—I cannot; I am fit for nothing but to go my own way, and be left to myself."

He had been pacing hurriedly to and fro during these words, uttered in an excitement quite unusual to him. He had not seen—and it was well he had not—their effect upon the only hearer of them; but he suddenly turned in his walk, and hastened to her side.

"Forgive me! oh, forgive me, mother!" he said, earnestly, and took her hand; her face was turned away upon the back of the couch on which she sat. "I should not speak so, I know, to you, too; but such thoughts are too often in my mind, haunting it, and they got speech before I knew it. Forgive me, do, you who have never tired of me, nor ceased to love me, too—how could I?"

The hand he had lifted was icy cold, and, as she slowly raised her face and turned it towards him, he saw that it was pale as death.

The affectionate son kneeled down hastily before the couch, and reproached himself in terms scarcely less measured than he just before used; but his haughty mother raised her hand, and motioned him to seat himself at her side.

"I do not blame you," she said, in a voice that showed with what an effort she spoke at all; "I can understand

your feelings, and I fear, Arthur, that by my too great indulgence I may have assisted in nurturing them; you shrink from acknowledging even to yourself your position; you rebel at the idea of being second in importance only, where your ambition would have made you first—"

"Nay," the young man hastily put in, "do not mistake me, mother; I have not the shadow of a grudge against my elder. Aden has been ever a kind and considerate brother to me, and very tolerant of follies and whims that he never condescended to, and it is not to be wondered at that the Earl, my father, gave so much of his love and thought to him he had little left for me."

The beautiful face of the Viscountess was contracted by a frown, that deepened as her son continued speaking, and her evident impatience hindered Arthur from saying more.

"Enough of that," she said, as he ceased; "I do not need to be reminded of my sons' good qualities, either of them—at least, Arthur, you have had no cause to complain of my partiality."

"You have been the dearest, kindest, most indulgent of mothers," said the young man, earnestly; "I wish from my heart I could have proved as well worthy of all your care as my brother."

"Leave Aden—leave Aden," said the lady impetuously, "it is not of him we are speaking, and—to return whence we started, why, Arthur, should you have given me cause to speak at all? why delay that which you know is a great desire of my heart? and more, why fail in that which is due to the lady whom you have already shown yourself not indifferent to? Had I not been certain that you could well account for such an omission, I should have felt it more keenly; and be sure, had not you interested her deeply in yourself, she is not the one to overlook your absence of last night."

"But, mother, there is time; surely I am not called upon to decide! I do

not yet feel to have determined upon the subject."

"And yet a twelvemonth ago, Arthur, when we met at Rome, your attentions to the young widow, Lady Lineage, were remarked by all."

"She was your companion, mother—it was unavoidable."

"It was continued on our renewed intimacy, her name has been more than once coupled with yours, the union is in every respect most unexceptionable, and the Earl approves."

"Does he indeed condescend to acknowledge my existence so far?" said the young man, his delicately handsome face for the moment bearing an expression of bitterness.

"Arthur," said the Viscountess, "let us have no more of this senseless argument. God knows, my son, since you were born you have been my hope and comfort, and—why, I cannot say—my every wish and prayer have centred in you. Not a desire you have expressed has been left ungranted, not a wish that I could ever guess at but I have sought to meet it, and that you find yourself to-day repining at the fate that made you a younger son of our house is not a fault of yours, but mine, that allowed you to grow up unimpressed with the truth that your standing in the world was only that you gave yourself; so, Arthur, repine, and blame me, for it is my fault."

"Mother it is not; you must not say so."

The lady went on.

"As you say, indeed, your career must chiefly depend upon the countenance and favor of your brother, and you know, unfortunately, how his mind inclines, and that he has little care for the prerogatives of rank and station, rather upholding the inferior classes in their absurd demands and so-called privileges. You know best, Arthur, whether you can submit to receive prosperity at his hands; you know how it will grieve me to think that this is to be your lot. If I made Lady Lineage my companion

it was because I thought you fitted to each other. She is beautiful; she loves you—yes, Arthur, she does—" for the young man had made a movement of impatience at the words, "she is mistress of herself and fortune; her connections such to which even you need not blush to be indebted for the furtherance of any plans you may entertain. No, Arthur, no, do not take my hand again," she added, rising, "I am weary of this, and can hear no more, only, when you come to me again, tell me on what you have resolved; and be sure I will spare you any reasons for your determination, whatever it may be."

All the tenderness of the mother could not, however, be wholly overlain by the chilling haughtiness of the scheming woman of rank, and her hand lingered on the shoulder of her child, and she even turned again, as she reached the door of the room, and her eyes were wistfully directed towards him; but Arthur sat with averted face, and head bent, communing with himself, in evidently no pleasant mood.

The mother sighed, but the Viscountess stifled the sigh in its birth, and to the footman who entered with letters and papers, said, in that unvarying proper tone,—

"Breakfast, if you please."

For it was early morning—not quite mid-day—with the town establishment of the Earl of Honiton, and from the smaller apartment where mother and son had been conversing, the half-open doors showed a long perspective of saloons gaily decorated for the scenes of last night's festivities—now empty and disordered. There had been a grand ball at the town mansion last evening, and the absence of her son, with an especial eye to whose advantage the ball had been given, was made the point of attack, which the lady was determined should be final.

Now, as she sits in that small and well-appointed breakfast-room, surrounded by every appliance of luxury and elegance, opening her letters, and

gazing upon each with an air of abstraction and anxiety, evidently apart from their contents, we may recognize, though much changed, the face I first showed to you in Brettles Buildings, nearly twenty-seven years ago.

Not wrinkles, nor grey hairs, nor unseemly shrinking of flesh, nor falling in of jaw, at least not to be detected readily, for the cares of the toilette in the sphere where my lady moves are not to be foregone, let other cares press as they may, and art is skilful, and my lady not emotional—outwardly—it is your emotional people who wear quickly.

But beyond the arts of toilette reparation is that pained and anxious expression, that deep, dead, settled gloom that tells of some grief irreparable; that seems as if it would ever be saying, "If only I had not!"

Unhappy woman! who, even in the days of her triumph—her successful scheming, had felt the incompleteness of her wishes, had tasted, if not of remorse, at least, of the bitterness of unreality in the part she acted. Since the birth of her son it would scarce be too much to say she had never been seen to smile, and in the struggle between the impulses of nature, and the imperative necessity of stifling such impulses, a punishment had overtaken her, hardly inadequate to the crime she had planned.

Yet, so far are we impelled by circumstance—to such lengths, once quitting our hold on principle, by tyrannous expediency may we be carried, the woman was seeking by plot to counteract plot, or, at least as far as might be, by skilful generalship to atone for the fearful error which she had unwittingly committed. So she had by subtle finesse, and availing herself of fortuitous occurrences more than by actual manoeuvre, brought about the engagement—so, at least, the world termed it—of her son with Lady Geraldine Lineage, the young widow of a millionaire, a lady in her own right, and the mother of a spoilt son some two years old.

As far as money and connection could go, this was unanimously voted the best matrimonial chance in the market, and young Arthur Power had rivals not a few, but by reason of his youth, his family, or his unapproachable good temper and handsome person, he distanced even more courtly and richer, certainly far more assiduous lovers. It is not improbable, indeed, that the nonchalant indifference with which, after the first fortnight of their intimacy abroad, the son of the Viscountess pursued his conquest, might have had some part in stimulating the fancy of the widowed beauty. That be as it may, she being indisposed to remit her hold of the younger Power, the Viscountess for her part aiding and abetting the astute lady in her designs, it is not wonderful that, at the period we have arrived at, Arthur, being left to make good his account with conscience, found a very heavy balance arrayed against him, which, adding thereto the weight of his mother's expressed desire, seemed scarcely to leave the option even of a negative. Perhaps, too, scarcely acknowledged by himself, was the influence of those words she had spoken that morning. She, with all the intuition of a haughty spirit, reading something of his nobler pride, had touched but lightly on the advantages of such a connection—a proud one even for Deansholme to contemplate. Had the matter been more coarsely touched upon, and literally set before him, the soul of the young man must have revolted at the thought of a bargain; but as it was, the idea just mingled and softened off into the pleasanter one that he was indeed preferred—that this preference went far, too, to absolve him from the need of courting a brother's favor, or the soreness of perpetual contemplation of the superior lot from which Fate had shut him out. Alas! Arthur's education—influenced by the mother's jealous love and desire, always dominant, yet inexplicable—had scarcely fitted him for the arduous distinctions of a profession. There came, too, to de-

cide him, the urgency of that mother's request, which it was not in him lightly to pass over.

For with young Arthur had grown up a tie of no ordinary strength between him and his parent. The length of time that had elapsed before the birth of his second son had given the elder a hold upon the interest and desire of the Earl which no other could ever come to share, and beyond the merest emotion of affection there had been little intercourse between the second son and the father, who was, as the domestics phrased it, "wrapped up in Mr. Aden Power," and who allowed the Viscountess to "spoil" her boy to her heart's content.

And yet with all these weighty considerations combined, Arthur's decision was by no means a hasty one—his foot pacing the length of the adjoining saloon seemed to beat an echo from his mother's heart, as she sat at her writing-desk that morning, having in vain delayed the breakfast, till word came that "Mr. Arthur begged my Lady to excuse him, he should not take breakfast then."

"My own son, my dear Arthur," she said to herself, as she sat with half-closed eyes over the unfinished note she had begun. "His heart is not in it, I can see; but whose is—whose is? It is the best that can be done, he could not do better; in this I cannot be mistaken—a position assured to him scarcely inferior to that which is his right, a beautiful wife, every advantage which connection and wealth can insure, and, above all, anxieties at an end. His unsettled disposition and easy temper might have betrayed him into I know not what unsuitable attachment or indiscretion; but now he will be safe, and she is, above all others, the woman most calculated to restrain him within the proper course. Yes, it is the very best that could be, and even should it ever be discovered—" she stopped abruptly, started from her seat, and took up that pacing to and fro which had ceased in the next room.

"*Discovered!* bah! it never can, never must, never *shall* be! He will be happy, what signifies; and for the other, fool that he is, that betrays his vile birth unconsciously in his grovelling notions, that not even the milk that fed him has been capable of ennobling. Well, well, he may yet fail to fill the rank he is so little worthy to maintain—who knows!"

A sharp crackle under her feet caused her to stop, and she stooped to pick up the crowquill she had dropped unconsciously, and that lay crushed upon the carpet.

At that moment the door opened, and the Earl entered, with a clouded brow, a handful of papers, and in dress so far departing from the conventional carelessness of the morning toilette as to show he had been already engaged in affairs less strictly private than those of the breakfast table.

But his greeting of his beautiful Countess was just as punctilious and elaborate as though they had not been thirty years husband and wife, his attentions as minute and careful as if really dictated by affection, and received equally on her part in the same spirit. To have seen the pair a stranger might really have been led to believe it had entered the mind of either to regret the interval of some eight and forty hours which had elapsed since they last met, or that they could, without some effort of memory, have at once recalled on what particular occasion that meeting had taken place.

The lady took her seat again at the breakfast table; a fresh relay of the luxurious appliances to that meal were brought in, as a matter of form, but needlessly, so far as the Earl was concerned. He drank deep draughts of the fragrant tea, chipped his dry toast, laid ready to his hand, but trenched no further on the tempting display upon his table. There was evidently weightier matter on his mind than the gratification of appetite, had it even so inclined: and after the first courteous effort of politeness, he relapsed, even despite his lady's pres-

ence, into reverie, and stealthy references to the papers which lay beside him, till the Viscountess, nothing loth, favored her lord's abstraction by taking up one of the morning journals, and, thus relieved, he at once resumed the perusal of what were evidently not the most pleasant topics.

An expression of impatience in a tone louder than was usual under the circumstances, caused the lady to raise her head slightly, but it was more with the consciousness that she was in some way appealed to, than with even a pretence of interest in his affairs, that she turned her calm statue-like gaze upon her lord.

"It is unbearable!" he exclaimed, so far carried beyond himself as to omit even the apology which would else have followed the outbreak. "Look there! and here! and this again!" he hurriedly laid before his wife some of the papers he had been reading. They were various cuttings from local papers, letters addressed to his Lordship, extracts from reports, notes of meetings, a pamphlet or two, various in kind, but all tending to the same topic, all evidence on the same point, and by a glance the lady assured herself of the fact that they all resulted only in the confirmation of that which had long been no secret.

"It is only the same story," she said, at the end of a few minutes, during which the Earl was goading himself by a further perusal of his aggravators.

"The same, yes, but worse, far worse. I did hope that time and experience would have toned down the first hair-brained enthusiasm which, after all, often has possessed young men to distinguish themselves in some way rather than none. But he grows worse, more headlong and determined every day. You see, Julia, you see this, presiding at this meeting in the North, identifying himself with a set of people—a set of people, the scum I may say, the dregs!—you will pardon me, but really I am much disturbed."

"Disgraceful!" murmured her Ladyship.

"No, scarcely that, scarcely that!" hurried on the perturbed nobleman. "Our son never will disgrace himself; all he does, however he may oppose himself to my views, to all established and time-honored principles, carries with it the stamp of earnestness and high purpose,—he reasons too, convinces; I have found it difficult myself at times to listen unmoved to his arguments, so urgent and impressive, however mistaken in their object. It is not surprising that he gains such influence with the prejudiced and inconsiderate ranks of the cause he has so unfortunately espoused."

"Your Lordship has been hard in enforcing your own authority sometimes?" put in the Viscountess interrogatively.

"I cannot take blame to myself there," was the reply. "To do Aden justice, he is ever respectful, never for a moment forgetful of his position; he hears me always to the end, and rather than attempting to refute my opinions, urges so calmly yet determinedly his own. Good heavens!" added the old gentleman, as, after a pause, he swallowed his tea and gathered together the scattered papers, "such a treasure as he might be to us but for this strange, this unaccountable perversion! It is terrible, our prayers for offspring seem to have been answered scarcely as we had desired."

"And in what does Arthur disappoint you, my Lord?"

"Poor boy, yes, Arthur means well, very well, but you spoil him, Julia, you spoil him; he will scarcely make much way in the world. By the by, is it settled, that matter of his marriage with Lady Geraldine?"

My Lady bowed her head slightly. "It is," she said, in a low voice, and just then she seemed incapable of saying more.

"The best that could be for him, the very best," said the Earl, carelessly, and reverting, even while he spoke,

to the concerns of his eldest hope; then, after a few words to his wife, he quitted the room.

She, with closed eyes and a cheek even paler than usual, sat a few minutes as he had left her, then a momentary impulse parted her lips scornfully, and she repeated the words "Poor fellow!"

It was not the first time by very many that the same subject had been mooted, and with the like results.

The Liberal tendencies of Aden Power, so totally opposed to the stanch Conservative views of his noble father, had long since been matter for bitter rumination and open objection with the old nobleman; the more painfully felt as time, that added to and strengthened the cause of complaint, also developed those qualities of the younger man which, as the Earl had so justly said, won upon him even despite himself; and yet again to deplore that the spirit, manliness, and loftiness of soul that were his son's—by inheritance, the good nobleman flattered himself—should be manifested in a course so diametrically opposed to all that was natural and proper to the name and rank he inherited.

With horror the proud father heard his worshipped heir dubbed "the man of the people," the supporter of the Right, not as viewed from the one peculiar pinnacle appropriated to his own caste, but simply as opposed to Wrong, associated with Justice and Truth, beheld him ventilating doctrines as abhorrent to the soul of the exclusive old Tory, as inexplicable as the facility with which the enthusiastic Aden could at once figure himself in the place of those whose case he espoused, and by that simple process, so ably and powerfully argue out his cause, as to set the conscience and prejudices of the right-meaning high-caste man at uncomfortable variance, and cause him many hours of fruitless self-communing as to where his own flesh and blood could possibly have imbibed the monstrous doctrines,

which were yet delivered with a convincing fluency and force solely paternal.

Yet in his innermost soul, vexed as it was, the nobleman would not have exchanged his elder, rebel and democrat as he was, for the unoffending, universally-loved younger, the "poor Arthur," as he pityingly styled him, and who passed them as, arm-in-arm, father and elder son walked down Pall-Mall, the younger listening deferentially to the earnest talk of the elder.

"Yes, yes," soliloquised Arthur, as Aden returned his greeting, and he rode on at a slightly increased pace, as if conscious he should oblige them by getting out of sight;—"you cannot offend; my good brother, do and say what you please, you have bewitched our dear father, and cannot offend by your notions and speech, outrageous as they may be. And for me, poor devil as I am, that could so well appreciate the advantages you seem to prize like a foot-ball to kick at, I may content myself to sit under your shadow, or at best get in by the back door to station, and set up a throne that is to stifle inclination, and young days, and happy memories all beneath it."

I do not mean to say that in exactly such words young Arthur soliloquised, but this was the substance of his thoughts.

His pace had subsided as he lost sight of his father and brother, and as he entered the Park, almost deserted at that early hour, he suffered the reins to fall loosely on the neck of the animal, which, as if cognisant of its rider's reflective mood, subsided into a walk, and the young man into deeper meditation.

"It was so fortunate I did not see

Josephine again. It certainly would have come out, and if it had—well? do I not love her? and she? shall I ever see such another?"

A sigh took the place of words. There are sighs in Rotten Row, and the fine spring mornings are not made only for the joys and woes of rustic lovers.

"I knew it must come, of course I did; I knew my mother's heart was set on it. I thought I cared for her then—what a fool I was to think of Josephine, to see her again and again, fool!" He laughed then a short bitter laugh—"As if I could help it! but it is over, over now, all done with—I must forget."

A longer pause, and the young man became aware that he was the object of attention to a staring group of nursemaids and their charge, under the impression doubtless that the rider was a somnambulist, and that the horse was wandering

"At its own sweet will."

"Pshaw!" he muttered, "what have I to do with love! am I not a younger son, and the best I can do is not to disgrace the noble house of my fathers. It is done, and where's the use of thinking! Allons, Capri, are you asleep, sir?"

Capri resented the imputation by setting off at a speed that might have had for its object the leaving thought and memory behind.

That morning the heart of the Viscountess was made glad; and the welcome she gave the Lady Geraldine was that due to an expectant daughter-in-law.

ADEN POWER; OR, THE COST OF A SCHEME.

BY FARLEIGH OWEN.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARYBDIS.

IN a secluded nook formed by the conjunction of two shady lanes, one—a mere bridle-path indeed—running from the verge of the Deansholme estate to the town, the other into the woodland country, and out over the hills beyond, a small house—almost a cottage in fact—formed an attractive though by no means prominent feature in the landscape. We can all remember, who have had any experience in rambling journeys of leisure, the glad surprise with which we have greeted such unexpected signs of habitation, the cosy little homestead or picturesque cot, all isolated from the world, so quaint and fanciful, or trim and neat, where Nature, as if in return for the preference shown to her, had delighted to lavish her favors on the solitary dwelling and its surroundings, till the spot has become a very gem of beauty, an oasis of sweetness and delight to every sense.

How we have paused, drawn rein, or gladly sat down by the wayside, or leaned upon the fence or low stone wall, to take in the fair picture, to mark how full and perfect the blossoms on the trees, or the fruit harvest how abundant, the flower-beds how rich and well kept, yet with the lovely beauty that is best; the rustic arbor, with its tokens of recent occupation, the garden tools just quitted, the blackbird cage, whose open door gives such a pleasant earnest of the terms on which man here dwells with his

winged inferiors; the white curtains swayed softly to and fro at the open windows, the door set wide, through which, by the cool, matted hall, we have a long vista of bushes laden with their blushing burden, tall lilies, and the honeysuckle trellis, or maybe a vine; and as with closed eyes we drank in the drowsy murmur of the bees, the coo of the wood pigeons, the low rush of the little spring just below, and breathed the hundred perfumes that mingled in the air, how we envied the dwellers in that delicious spot; we wondered, half unconsciously, who they were, why they should have been so especially favored by fate with such an abode, who built it there, and why? think how blest it would be to settle down at once there ourselves, never to see again the old mother city with its smoke and stones, and din and rattle, its distraction and its rivalries, its headaches and heart-wearing. And then, as we perforce foot it away upon the road again, and with a turn of the path vanishes the vision of peace and repose, and we face again the long, long miles of dusty way, or leafy wilderness, between us and the next town or village, we find ourselves wondering how these blessed denizens of the miniature Eden contrive to obtain or forego the common conveniences—not to speak of luxuries—essential to this fallen state?

The "Times" boy must have a hard walk of it up these rocks—a good three hours, even for his active legs, from the town below; the beer would be apt to arrive rather "flat" than

Aden Power; Or, The Cost of a Scheme.

otherwise, or did the family favor the more wholesale purchase, the florid myrmidons of Barclay and Perkins would look twice at either of those ways up before attempting the convoy, which, by the usual method of dray, would be out of the question. But for a hundred matters—the last from Mudie's, the weekly journal or monthly review—the blue pill and draught, the postman, the cobbler, the glazier, the hasty chop or impromptu steak, the ball of cotton, the razor to be set, the tooth to be drawn, the horse to be shod—what become of one and all of these common and most ordinary of daily wants?

We get more reconciled as we call to mind the countless conveniences of that far-off region of smoke and unquiet, and our envy subsides into a placable and endurable sort of goodwill at our fellow-creatures' enjoyments, of which we no longer wish to deprive them.

Much such a spot was this to which I would now introduce my good friend the reader. Sheltered, though at the distance of many miles, by the ancient trees and hills of Deansholme, commanding, from its own vicinity, a glorious view of the sea, and beach, and the deep bay, yet nestling among verdure and softness itself, as if the little tenement had taken fright at the vastness on which it opened its eyes, and had edged further and further back, and turned its face timidly from beholding the great restless ocean.

So the windows, none of them actually looked upon the sea, though through the fragrant wall of shrubbery and vine which just veiled the deep blue, came the unceasing monotone of the waves far below, and a hundred steps brought one to the grottoed retreat, which by some persevering hermit, had been built of genuine marine product, transported from the beach below at much cost of labor and wind. From this most alluring of observatories and summer-house combined, the full view was gained of sea and sky, wide beach, and far-

off crags and cliffs rainbow-hued in the sunshine. Here came the full cadence of the ocean, in her many-toned symphonies, and her health-bestowing breath lifted the long sprays of clematis, and vervain, and young ivy, which grew in the wildest luxuriance over the stones, and flint, and shells, and hung down over the entrance, forming a light curtain, which the full summer sunshine made quite desirable. This was at one side of the cottage, and separated from it by a low outbuilding, and by that wild shrubbery which hid the view coastwards from it.

But round three sides of the dwelling ran the garden, rich with beauty and usefulness, filled to overflowing with the loveliness and fragrance I have spoken of; shielded from adverse winds, breathed on by the kind south, and, till very lately, tended by hands of proved skillfulness, which had, alas! now made acquaintance with mother earth in another way, and the garden had run slightly to neglect—rather to too rank luxuriance, perhaps.

Past the garden gate ran the bridle-path (but little used) leading to Deansholme and the Abbey; on the other side came the lane (little more trodden) which conducted to the railway station nearest to that sequestered home.

Some one was riding up the bridle-path now, through the fields where it wound, and whence at intervals could be caught glimpses of the cottage, and on the rising ground still plainer the grotto, covered in its kind green trellis-work of flowers, whose sprays wanted from time to time upon the breeze, but would quickly subside again, like a sprightly woman of tender years who has given herself in marriage to age, and who, at times, awakens to the memory of the things that more especially are her pleasure, but is anon recalled to the duty she has assumed of softening and cheering the harsher asperities and stern worth of him she clings to.

Now if in the ramble we have but

now been supposing, you or I had so paused to look upon this tranquil spot, we should have indulged in all the aforesaid reflections on the loveliness and desirability of peace and repose, and a contented mind, and so forth—assuming as a matter of course that these virtues are bound to flourish in such and such a locality, as a particular flower or vegetable does—as if where the heart of man buds, and blooms, and comes to perfection, its corruptness innate ever got license for suspension—as if, whatever an Eden he build himself on earth, the poor original humanities were ever one whit for that the nearer Paradise—as if all human emotions, good or evil, were to be associated and consort only with creaking of cranes and lashing of whips, or adding of figures, or rattling of wheels, or elbowing in crowds, or sweating at engines, or picking and delving in mines.

Thus, on one side of this picturesque nook—supposing you to take a bird's eye view—you have a young man on horseback, riding as if his life depended on his speed, and from time to time straining eager eyes to obtain a sight of that you are contemplating with perfect ease—a young girl, who is working in the garden with evident desire and intent of repairing that disorder which I said was beginning to be apparent in it.

Do you think that because their fate has not disposed them in White-chapel, or at Cheapside, or Cannon Street, that their hearts are beating as equably and their pulses keep time to as true a measure as the tick of your watch, or the rise and fall of those chimes yonder? Pshaw! we all know the contrary. Is there no crime in the still night? Does the chaste-eyed moon look on no obscenity?

What a mercy it is that the inferior creatures we lord it over are not endowed with instinct sufficient to inform them of the correctness of the duties we urge them to. If Capri, now, had taken to argue the matter with his young master, and, instead

of humoring him to the extreme of his desire by flying over the velvety turf like a very Pegasus, had turned to and raised scrupulous doubts on conscientious grounds, what a very inconvenient possession such a quadruped would prove. But however sensitive to the slightest touch of the spur, good Capri was insensible to any other pricking which might have been going on in his vicinity, and in the briefest space of time he had performed that journey once more which brought him to sight and earshot of the pretty cottage.

There was no sound from earth, or seas, or sky, that could confuse itself with that clear, quick ring, as the small hoofs flung from the turf upon the stoned path up to the gate. The young girl looked up—she drew in her breath with a low, glad cry, and, flinging down the rake she had held, bounded to the gate with clasped hands, that the next moment were caught in both those of the hasty rider.

“Josephine!”

“You have come again!”

Those words crossed each other from the lips of each as they met, and for one moment the young man gazed down into the face that was turned up to his, all aglow with the pleasure of his coming.

Did you ever know the sensation such a sight produces? because, if you have not, it is worth trying—that is, if you can have the unmistakable assurance of its genuineness. I will back it against the Turkish Bath in that case, but there is a deal of the counterfeit current.

The girl drew away her hands, and preceded her visitor to the house, and from a side door a stout German servant-girl appeared, and, with an exclamation in her native tongue of pleased surprise, she proceeded at once to take charge of the docile Capri, whom she conducted to some premises in the rear of the building, evidently not unfamiliar to him.

The lady and gentleman entered the house, crossed the matted passage,

where were stands of flowers, a tame squirrel on his stand, and a large Newfoundland dog reposing, which bestowed a joyous greeting on the visitor.

The apartment they entered was not very large, and simply furnished, but in good taste and order, with more view to comfort and ease than luxury, and there were many articles of foreign manufacture and design about, while the most remarkable feature was the great number of books, which filled several ingenious contrivances for their accommodation and the economising of space. Though it was summer a fire burned in the wide grate, and near it sat in a large easy chair an old woman bowed with age or infirmity, dressed in black, wrapped in a shawl; her snow-white cap, too, was of German style, and she was at that moment, diligently engaged in taking a nap.

She woke up, however, at the entrance of the two, and lifted up her head, but made no sign of recognition, though the young man acknowledged her presence by a bow.

“Grandmother has had one of her bad times again, and I fear she is worse after each,” the young lady said, as she went forward and arranged the cushions, &c., about the old lady, and then from one of the recessed windows shook back the long curtains which had half concealed an ancient high-backed chair that stood within it.

“The old seat,” said the young man, as he threw himself into it with almost a sigh of relief; “how delicious it is here!”

The window was open, and the nodding sprays of the honeysuckle and jessamine that grew over it touched his head and face where he sat, and filled the room with the sweetest of all perfume, which the twilight was beginning to distil to essences for the toilette of Queen Night. His hand touched a book that lay on the window-seat before him—he opened it.

“My poor old Schiller,” he said, “just as I left it, too, with the vine-leaf to mark the place; why, it seems as if it was but last night, not months ago, that I had left it.”

“Yes,” the young lady said; “I had almost lost any hope that the Schiller would ever be opened here again; but I should have left it there, and the old chair all just the same, as a sort of superstitious observance, I think.”

She spoke lightly, but as she continued to stand by him with her hat and gloves in her hand, going, yet lingering, there needed not the frank assurance of her words to tell.

“And I am so glad to see you again.”

Then she did go, for tea was to be got, and Marthon was by no means accustomed to the imperative mood—bare and unassisted. She was so accustomed to the helping hands of her young mistress, that without them she would have been apt to misdoubt even her own capabilities.

The gentleman had run over the leaves of Schiller, glanced here and there at a passage, and repeated a line or two aloud, and in the purest accent. He looked round the recess.

“The other chair is not here,” he said to himself. “Poor old Stranzlaine! good old teacher! Ah! well, that is past; but shall I ever care to benefit by his lessons? I think not.”

The book was put down again, and, leaning back, he sat, in the fast-coming twilight, listening with a soothed ear to the distant murmur of the sea, and the soft voice issuing directions to Marthon in her own tongue.

My readers have perceived by this time, I doubt not, that I have no care for plots and surprises. The plot must be a clever one indeed which will not be seen through, almost at the outset, by the astute reader. There is not much satisfaction, and some sense of the humiliating, in playing at a mystery which is none. “I knew it all along,” says the astute reader, triumphing over the author.

So I show you the strings which move my puppets. *You* are acquainted with the springs and mechanism, are in the secret of all the leaps, and starts, and false moves they make, and may amuse yourself with their mystification of each other, yourself being unmythified.

You know already that the young horseman just arrived is Arthur Power, who has ridden over from Deansholme, —where he arrived, per express train, this morning,—to take his farewell of the cottage and the young lady who lives there, and who is the daughter of a German professor, who took up his abode there some eighteen months back, when his health was broken and enfeebled by a too sedulous course of study, added to slights and disappointments he had undergone in his native country, and which had been the chief inducement for his determination to reside in the land of which his wife had been a native, she having died some years previously. With his only child, a daughter, and the mother of his wife, who had long resided with them, he settled at a watering-place on the coast, of some note. There, his name being pretty widely recognized as the author of several well-known works, he became popular, and, more from love of occupation than for the necessity—he was already very comfortably off—he was induced to read with some young men who had the desire of becoming perfect German scholars.

In one of his fitful moods Arthur Power had taken up the notion from an acquaintance or two, who talked greatly of the old professor's quaint and peculiar notions, and his pretty, singular. They were a sort of fashion then at St. Liddard's.

Young Power was taken with them too, but in a different way to his companions. Weary with everything, most of all with himself and his position—he found a relief in the novelty of the old gentleman's conversation and opinions; the daughter, whom the other men, mistaking her indepen-

dent fearlessness, thought to flirt with—perhaps worse—found a charm with him that grew day by day, till when the old German, with failing health and spirits, gave up his pupils, and proposed to travel with his daughter, Arthur bethought him of "Sea View," as the cottage was called; and, after some months of ramble, father and daughter, with the grandame, came to live there—with young Power, by no means dissatisfied with the change, for his only pupil.

So far the foregone history of our new personages. Since his residence at Sea View his garden had become his sole care and pleasure; young Power's visits also were a source of gratification; as an appreciative and creditable pupil, and a warm admirer of his country's poets, old Strauzlaine welcomed him joyfully. For the rest the old man saw no cause for alarm; his daughter had been brought up in a certain mode—she was no untried novice in the world's ways, and knew, so the old man flattered himself, the worth of young men's affected devotion. Besides, she was all in all to him; while he lived she would never leave him, and he should watch over her and guard her for the dear young mother's sake, who had died just when he could have purchased competence and ease; the wife, too, of his autumn, for in study Strauzlaine had let the years go by, and by the kind-faced, gentle young Englishwoman had been surprised into a marriage every way a disparity, in age, disposition, and station, yet which had been happy even as its duration was brief. Then came death, and the garden ran to decay, the Schiller was closed. The pupil, in the one visit he dared to pay, while yet the fair daughter's eyes were wet with tears, had been moved to ask himself a question, and had not been able to answer it satisfactorily to himself. Then arose other events, and Sea View had been, not forgotten, but thought of less frequently; and, be it understood, there had never arisen anything out of that intercourse

which need make such a course at all questionable even to the nicest honor.

There had been no talk of love, still less of that despicable and empty folly which may be made to mean much or nothing, the small base coin current among fools and those who would be worse if they dared—flirtation. I am not going to say the young people were as brother and sister, which would be simply stating an impossibility; nor, perhaps, as friends, who, by some unmistakable limits, know themselves forever fixed as such, but as companions whose society each knew to each to be very dear; as unwearied gossipers, readers of the same themes and books, drawers at the same wellspring of poetry and truth, admirers of the same scenes and flowers, and of Nature, under the same aspects, both abroad and here, for England was Josephine's birth-place. On these grounds I say they had met and become known to each other; and yet no talk of love. It is not a very common position, I own, and unlike my former prescription, I don't recommend it, as it must entirely depend on so many contingent circumstances. Do you see?

Now Josephine was not a beauty by any means. It was singular how she had ever got the name among the connoisseurs of St. Liddard's for being even "nice;" and certain it was that Goëthe and Schiller were too frequently basely perverted as stepping-stones to gain a sight of old Strauzlaine's daughter.

But it is often so. The beauty by reputation would be often shamed by competition with a hundred others made no account of, and a girl gets the name of good looks, and is called "beautiful," or "sweet," or "pretty," when the speaker means something else, with which eyes, nose, and mouth have nothing at all to do, except not to disguise the soul they cover, just as we say a person is well-dressed, when they have not, perhaps, one single attractive article of attire about them,

but simply such as leave nature unperturbed and free of restraint.

I would not insult your understanding by attempting any worn-out sympathy between roses and violets, or moonshine and the sun, &c. &c.

You know Lady Geraldine Lineage was a grand, large-limbed, splendid woman, such as you see going down to the drawing-rooms at St. James's, that look as though ostrich-feathers and diamonds had grown on purpose for them—as doubtless they do; and the whole thing is very beautiful and enchanting to look upon—of course it is.

Two months Arthur Power had been the accepted suitor of this fine creature—the one favored mortal out of all that envious crowd of frownd-offlovers. The lofty Geraldine deigned to bestow all the wealth of her beauty, her name, her fortune, her haughtiness, all on him; he sunned himself in her smiles, and humbled himself to her behests; on all sides heard the congratulations of his friends, and the benisons of those he had cut out. His queenly lady mother was pleased, and loaded him with her tenderness; my Lord, the Earl, had even been graciously pleased to acknowledge his existence, and congratulate him with his usual condescending dignity to the "poor Arthur," and the younger son might henceforth rest upon his laurels, content that his fate had been cared for kindly; that, in his listless, aimless existence there need henceforth be but the thought of how to enjoy.

Yet withal had Sea View never been quite banished from his memory. Time enough had elapsed to serve all purposes of an extinguisher, yet, on that very morning, he had in an instant decided he would go down, and bid it farewell. Yes, he must tell her that he could see her no more—"it was right and proper; it must be done at once."

So he had come per express, found Capri at Deansholme, whither he had been sent for rest and care to young Bant some time before, and so, in hot

haste, to the vine-covered cottage, to the quiet old room, the Schiller, the Goëthe, and the murmur of the sea—to take farewell of the old German master's daughter.

She was at his side now, summoning him to tea.

At the commencement of their acquaintance, when the lessons were over, and master and pupil had wandered into some discussion, or comparison, or what not, the entrance of that meal had often found them so deeply involved that the only way to meet the difficulty was to invite the disputant to the table, and after awhile it got to be the custom, as things when pleasant easily do, so the tea-hour belonged of right to the guest and pupil.

Near the small recess where the jessamine and the vine stole in, and the sea breeze, the table was set, the old dame was waited on by Marthon, and Josephine sat opposite to her visitor at her tray, and pressed on him the little homely dainties of her table, which—most of them—had long ago received the stamp of his approval. But Arthur did poor justice to the hospitality of his kind entertainer; he sat playing with his cup, and absently gazing on the figure opposite to him, the quiet face with its smooth broad forehead, from which the fair hair was rolled back in soft long curls falling upon her well-formed neck and shoulders. The small firm mouth, so ready to smile, so grave when unmoved, the large, deep, thoughtful eyes, the small straight nose, square chin, complexion and figure rather robust than delicate, the perfect serenity that gave to the face and figure a soothing sensation of calm repose, might well combine in a pleasant and attractive whole, very refreshing to gaze upon, and which might prove dangerous to a speculative mind that should seek to explore the depths of a character which showed so little at the surface; but, as for comparison with that beauty we wot of, Arthur might sit, and gaze, and call to mind her he had that morning quitted, surely without much danger to his allegiance.

She was dressed in mourning, of no particular fashion, yet which nothing added to or taken away, could have made more admirably suited to her; her face was still flushed with the animation that had lighted it up on his arrival, and the agreeable novelty of his presence was made no secret of, expressed in actions as well as words frankly and kindly, more than once, yet with no ostentation of attention or fussy demonstration.

The meal progressed for some time in silence. Arthur spoke first.

"It is so quiet, so calm here, Josephine," he said; "I cannot tell you what the relief is after the excitement of town. I believe there is no place like it."

"Yet you have been a long time, Mr. Power, seeking the relief," she replied quietly.

"Ah! but you know me pretty well—the rambling, careless, objectless fellow I am; the thought of a moment decides me. I never think as other folks do, and plan and determine—not I!"

She seemed for the moment as if she was going to answer him lightly, for a smile broke out on her lips while he was speaking, but something in his tone checked it, and she said quietly,—

"I am only glad of what did decide you, since it was to come. I knew, indeed, that there could be no more lessons, yet I said to myself, 'Mr. Power will not indeed forget the old place so soon.' I walked many times down past the Abbey, but no, all was quiet—no signs there, and it seemed yet more dull when I came back to Schiller, and the lonely room, and the dear old man's chair."

He had looked at her while she made this straight-forward acknowledgment. A light came into his eyes, but she raised her calm, kind ones to his—there was no blush or tremor on her face, as she repeated earnestly,—

"But you *are* come, and I am quite glad."

"You mean *very*, Josephine," he said, touching her hand, which rested

on the table; "we are forgetting our Engleesh."

"What wonder!" she smiled and blushed confusedly, correcting herself, "when I have had so little chance to practise it. It is long enough, though, since I learned to say *English*, but my practice has been confined to my poor grandmother, and it is very little she says, or will listen to generally."

Then they spoke of indifferent subjects, of the weather, of the change in foliage and scenery since last Arthur had been there: still putting off the communication he had come to make.

The evening had now quite melted into twilight, the tea-service was removed, one lamp was lighted on a stand by the old grandmother, who was making a pretence of knitting very industriously, the rest of the room filled with a subdued and mixed light from without and within. They had been silent for a little time, Arthur leaning his head against the casement, Josephine occupied with the old lady's knitting, when he said abruptly,—

"You might play to me once more, Josephine."

The words were meant, perhaps, to serve as an introduction to what he had to say; she might not have heard them as she was crossing the room at the moment, and at once opened the small piano and sat down to it.

Singing was no novelty to him; music had been rife among the many luxuries of which life had been composed for him; the Lady Geraldine sang and played like an angel, so her friends said, and had a "magnificent voice," which was, on occasion, at the service of her friends; but there was something in that simple German melody, a farewell to home—no love ditty—that moved Arthur more than he cared to know. He did not repeat his request, but Josephine sang again—a welcome to spring, then an Ave—her father had loved them both; many a time Arthur had seen the old man's eyes fill with tears as he listened to the sounds, and now they recalled days when—when he was *not* affianced

to a wealthy widow, and his fortunes made. He turned from the window, and met her as she left the piano, and together they stood turning over the old pieces of music, remarking here and there upon their merits and varieties. There was restraint upon Arthur,—he evidently shrank more and more from the inevitable confession, the definite purport of his visit.

"Many would have locked away these songs and books," he said, "and avoided looking at them, for the memories they cannot fail to awaken; but you do not, Josephine. You were at work, too, in the garden—the old place."

"Yes," she answered; then, after a pause, "I cannot understand the feeling which should make me shrink from what he loved when he was with me. It seems to me rather, that in continuing to watch over, and cultivate, and cherish those things he loved, I preserve the better part of the dear father to me. While I sing his songs, keep from weeds and decay the flowers he planted, and read his books, and walk the walks we used to frequent together, it seems to me I have him still—that the soul of the good old man that loved me here is still near me, and approves and is pleased. I have thought even that the flowers have a brighter color, and smell sweeter, and that there is a blessed peace over this place, more even than there ever was before, as if he watched it—ah! how do we know, Mr. Power? how do we know?"

Her tone had risen in earnestness as she spoke, till, at the conclusion, she raised her eyes to his, filled with the lustre of tears which did not fall—deep and lustrous—and, for the moment, with a solemn beauty that might well be marked by the beholder; but even as he looked the expression passed away, it was the same calm, smooth, pleasant face again, the Josephine whom he had seen, times and oft, run in with floury hands, or salad basket on her arm, to help the old teacher to some English synonyme,

or listen to the favored pupil's mastery of some passage in Schiller, and confirm the master's prophecy of the rare scholar Mr. Power was to be.

"Very delightful," he said slowly, after a pause, "but hardly orthodox, I fear, Josephine; your theology will hardly meet the sanction of the schools, I fancy."

"It will not be challenged, I dare say," she said, almost coldly; "it suffices for me, and I am happy in it."

"Yes," he said dreamily, "happy! yes, and you should be—you should be."

The querulous voice of the old invalid summoned her grand-daughter to the intricacies of some perplexing knot, and Arthur again wandered to the window, whence he looked out between the vines to the dark sky, where the stars were coming slowly forth, and he thought of the gay ball-room from which he had played truant that night—of the queenly creature whose lovely brows would be ruffled, beneath their diamonds, for his absence that night; he recalled his determination only of the morning, too, to be back in town that evening, but a reckless fit was upon him.

"It is the last time," he said to himself, "let her sulk—she will recover." Then he recalled his better self, and determined at once to go.

"It must come at last; as well now as ever. What have I to do here? I will go." He rallied from his lounging posture, stood upright resolved, looked round, and met the kind, soft eyes of the German master's daughter. His hand arrested itself in its progress to his watch. "Time enough," he said to himself; "the eleven o'clock train will do."

"You are thinking how very quiet it is here," she said, smiling, "'listening to the silence,' as I call it."

"It is very still,—and shall you stay here now? It will be dull for you."

"Stay! Where else would I be?" she said. "Where else would I find such perfect freedom for the life I

love? Besides, with her," she moved her hand in the direction of the old woman, who now, with one of the intervals peculiar to her, appeared to have roused up, and to be interesting herself in what was going on, "could I move her from place to place? Oh, no," she added, sinking her voice a little, "at least while she is with me I shall stay, and indeed, Mr. Power, if I ever should quit it for a time, I hope never to give up this as my real home."

"You are so much attached to it?"

"See you," she replied, approaching him, with some work she had taken up in her hand, and speaking with that slightest possible foreign intonation which she did when earnest in any topic. "See you, it was here he was happiest, my good father; after so many vexations and sorrows, he found much comfort here, and here he died peacefully, and blessed me. I too have been very happy—no, I may in the future leave it for awhile, but this will be always and ever, I hope, my home."

"I envy you the peaceful life you plan," he said; then, with a touch of sarcasm in his tone, he added,—

"It augurs such a complete and absolute contempt of all the world."

"Contempt—no," she returned, gently, "but the most utter indifference to what are called the pleasures of society."

"Ah! that which poor wretches, as myself, for example, find indispensable to their existence."

"You!"—she raised her eyes to his face, but for a moment, they were as quickly lowered; then she said gently,—

"It would not be expected that a man with aims in life to fulfil, with high ambition, with plans to carry out, and dignity to maintain with, indeed, all the objects and ends of civilization to answer, should find his happiness in communion with Nature, in the world that civilization itself seems to ignore. The world opens to

him a far different and a glorious prospect indeed."

He interrupted her almost rudely. "Bah! you talk romance, Josephine; the world, the world indeed!—what does it afford us? what scope for high endeavor, what object for proud aspiration or gallant self-renunciation? To turn to best account those to whom Fate has given the advantage of a few years over us, to calculate, to scheme, to feign, these are our duties and our ends. You talk of gods, or heroes, not men; look at us! look at those in my position. We must not dig if we would, nor beg, if we would not disgrace our noble stock, but we must find our daily bread, and a little more, some way,—conjure for it, so long as we keep the apparatus out of sight, what matter—it is our nature."

As he finished the hasty speech, he dashed away, by a motion of his hand, the caressing vine that trailed in upon the casement; it swayed slowly from him and went nodding softly up and down out upon the night, but crept back gradually to its old place.

"Nature! no," the soft voice of his companion was replying. "I cannot think it, I will never think it. It seems to me that people so often pervert those things which are the bad result of custom or habit, and call them nature."

"Men do these things I know, but are they bound to do them?"

"Aye, if they would live in peace and amity with their fellow-men,—not be set down as Quixotic or fanciful." Her lips were curved with the slightest possible expression of scorn as she repeated his last word.

"I have heard the word before," she said, "and you are not the first who has called me romantic."

"Forgive me," Arthur would have begun, but she went on steadily,—

"Oh! I can bear it; believe me, it does not pain me, but indeed I do often wonder whether the word is not perverted. I wreath my hair with wild flowers, plucked from the hedge—I am fanciful. I deck myself in

hard glittering stones—I am but in good taste. I lose myself for hours in the voices of the sea, the wind among the branches, the murmurs of the brook yonder,—I am fanciful; it would need that I tutor my ear to understand the medley of an orchestra, or the elaborations of a prima maestro, to be in good tone; and then if my toilette be not in the first style, woe to my claims to taste. If I were a wife and desired the companionship of my husband, a mother and insisted on nursing my own child, I should be romantic, but who would question my amiability and tenderness in the care of my French poodle? Oh, they may call me fanciful, but is theirs reason? If mine be romance, is theirs truth? And which is reality?"

She was speaking with earnestness bordering on enthusiasm, when she suddenly became aware of Arthur's eyes bent upon her, with a look in them she had never marked before. She stopped, laughed lightly, but not bitterly, then changing her tone, she said,—

"Am I right or wrong?"

"Where did you learn all this?" he asked in a low tone; then added, "Is this not what I say?"

"Nay, nay," she replied; "you lay it to nature, you talk of it as inevitable. Nature never was false to those who are true to her. She is my deity almost, and I cannot hear her wronged. More romance, you will say, but if to love nature be romantic, why, then, was 'romance' the Creator's first gift to his creatures?"

"There's a three-quarter moon, a three-quarter moon," quaked out a feeble voice from the chimney corner.

The young people looked round to where the poor doited body in the arm-chair sat, with tremulous motion of her head and hands, poring over something she held between the latter; and now and again crowing out feebly some fragment which her withered memory was assisting her to.

"Hi, hi, a three-quarter moon. 'Twas a three-quarter moon the night

they buried it; very cold it was—Ugh,”—shivering. “I’m cold, I’m cold,” she began to whimper, and Josephine hastened to soothe her, and cover her more warmly; with some little difficulty she coaxed from her the short riding-whip of young Power, which had been laid on a table near her, and which she had obtained; perhaps the embossed silver handle, with the coat of arms ostentatiously engraved upon it, had taken the childish fancy of the old woman. She continued to stretch out her hand towards it and to maunder of a “three-quarter moon,” as if there were some hidden connection between the two.

Josephine dexterously conveyed to Arthur the whip. “She always is aware of the changes in the moon,” she whispered, “and has generally a turn for better or worse at the quarters.”

Marthon coming in to lead the old woman up and down the apartment, Arthur strolled out into the matted hall, now filled with the soft moonlight, and whence the murmur of the sea might be heard, like a cradle song, from below.

He looked at his watch, the traitor! as if he had not been quite aware of the inutility now. “Well, he thought,” never mind, “I can as well sleep at the Abbey, after all, and return to town in the morning; it will be the best. Ah! how delicious this cool breeze and the rustle of those leaves. I needed it.” An artful appeal to the young mistress brought her to the porch, the great Newfoundland at her side.

“I shall get no train to-night,” he said carelessly, “and shall sleep at the Abbey. You cannot tell what a welcome relief this respite from the whirl of the town season is to one.”

“It must be,” she answered shortly, as if unwilling to be again drawn out upon the topic.

“I shall not forget my Schiller though, in it all, Josephine, be sure of that.”

“Indeed, I hope not,” was her

answer; “I would be sorry indeed to think I even lessened in facility, and when I return to Germany—”

“When you!—to Germany!” exclaimed the affianced of Lady Geraldine, turning round upon her so quickly that the great Newfoundland, thinking the gentleman meant mischief, growled audibly.

“Oh yes, but only for a time,” was the reply.

“Your relatives there would naturally wish—”

“I have not any relatives; you may remember how the dear father used to say he was the last of his race—he was a little proud, dear old man, of his family. But I have friends, good friends, and kind they had been to my mother, and I have promised some time to return and visit them.”

There was a pause,—the little squirrel cracked his nuts, from the inner room came ghastly, in querulous tones,—

“It was a three-quarter moon when they buried him.”

Arthur broke the silence. “I wish to God, Josephine, I had your sense, your pride, or what it is that can make you despise all this hollow seeming and this heartless world. God knows you are right, and I know it; and you must forgive me if I sneered at it, but I am a weak miserable fool,—despicable in that I see what is the right and good, and wilfully pursue the false; aye, as you truly say, ‘Is a man bound to do that his soul loathes?’ well, I answer, ‘Yes, I am.’ Pitiful and cowardly as I am, accustomed as I have become to that life of enervating luxury, it is necessary to me, yet I despise myself,—I know myself to be useless, abject, contemptible.”

“For mercy’s sake, hush!”—she had laid one hand upon his arm, and was looking up to him, in her eyes again that lustre, and she spoke hurriedly,—“Why will you always depreciate yourself so? Oh, Mr. Power, it is not true, forgive me, it is not I but my dear father, your old teacher,

who speaks,—I know, I have so often heard him say,—he read you so well, the comparisons he drew between you and the rest. He so well read how much circumstance had done to make you what you fancy yourself to be: and of what you were capable. Surely, surely one may begin by trying to despise and vilify himself, till the whole world will help him, and he deserves it. Surely there is strength in the soul of any man, born a man and a Christian, to lift himself out of the miserable snares and traffic of the world,—without despising it,—to his own standard of self-respect and honor.”

“Oh forgive me,” she added in a lower voice, “forgive me for speaking so, but I have been used to talk plainly; my father too, I know how he thought of you, I know how he could have advised and helped you,—I never, never have wept for him more than when thinking what you might have found in him.”

The man whose fortunes were made, whom the Lady Geraldine favored, stood with closed eyes, listening to the low tones beside him; as she finished he so remained a minute as if awaiting more, then he almost moaned out,—

“Oh, Josephine, if I had known you sooner—or myself, or myself.”

She had stepped back a little within the porch, and the Newfoundland, which her sudden movement had displaced, was again between them.

“Mr. Power,” she said calmly, “you wondered just now how I had gathered my notions of society, and learned so soon to make my choice. It was not quite from your point of view, I can assure you, though I do not think it was a bad one for learning the truth. My mother, when my father married her, was a servant—”

She must have noted the start with which Arthur heard that announcement; but she went on. “It was a sort of upper servant, I believe, half nurse, half governess, or lady’s-maid, I know not: but it was service no less.

It was strange the dear old father should have been so taken with a woman in that station; he so proud: but she was pretty, and good, I think, and the ladies with whom she was abroad did not use her very kindly. He had a pupil at their house, and once when an accident befel him there, some hurt he got, she was the only one who had the sense and presence of mind to help him to any purpose. She had been a soldier’s wife, that might account for it. However, my good father had noted her before, and he came to like her, and his friends set terribly against the match, which of course determined it; for the dear old man would always have his way. My father was not then as you knew him, Mr. Power,—he was but beginning to be known by his work, and my mother did so desire to continue the nurse of the child she was attached to, that he consented for a time to her attendance at the house of her mistress.

“I was born then, as you might say, in service, and while the great family were visiting England. But soon after my mother gave up her situation and lived with my father, the lady she had served, a very beautiful woman, but gay and careless, left her husband and three little ones, and ran away with some foreign player.

“The poor gentleman in his distress besought my mother to bestow her care upon his children: she almost lived there for a time, and I grew up with them; till success came to my dear father, and by and by he gained fame and wealth. But my poor mother died before that; so you see I have had more than one point of observation, and may have gleamed some knowledge of the outlying country, may I not?”

What mattered that? he thought within himself. Had she not with her father, and ere her teens were finished, travelled through many of the chief towns of Europe? had he not himself seen her surrounded by young men of social pretensions, whose flatteries she had permitted as if indeed she saw

them not, whose serious attentions, at least in one case to his knowledge, she had decidedly repelled? Why had she told him this? this fatal fact,—needlessly it seemed. He felt chilled, yet it was surely well. It made so easy that he had come to do, had yet to perform. All these thoughts passed through his mind, as he stood leaning against the trellised porch, she just within: Marthon had taken the old lady to her bed, still muttering of the “three-quarter moon,” and now led the horse out to the side of the garden upon the turf, where, as had been her usual custom, she put the bridle upon the rail, and left him.

Still they so stood, watching it may be the chequered shadow of the trellis cast by the moonlight on the walk. The Newfoundland had retired to his mat, the squirrel slept, wrapped in his tail, upon his perch, *hush, hush*, came the soft wash of the waves upon the beach below, and Capri struck his light hoof anon upon the turf with a gentle warning. Yet his master tarried.

“Now for it,” he said within himself, “how shall I begin? yes, that is it.” Then he opened his mouth and the words he had meant to have said were gone.

“Josephine, good bye.”

“Good bye, Mr. Power.”

She had stepped just forth from the door, he turned within the porch, her hand was held out, his not so, for he had more to say.

“Josephine—”

She turned her face up to him to hear, he looked into it one moment, then his lips forgot all lessons save one as they were pressed to hers in one impassioned kiss.

Ten minutes later Capri was flying, at break-neck speed, on the road to the railway station. With that intense desire for reparation which will seize us, the very worst being done, Arthur was now bent on catching the mail train which passed through Loftborough at half-past eleven; by which

he might reach London with the milk and anticipate the hot rolls at his Lordship's table.

CHAPTER X.

VOX POPULI.

THE Honorable Aden Power sat alone in his private room, study, *saucum*—what you will—half built up into his chair with blue-books, reports of committees upon this or that question, yard-long petitions, supported by uncontrovertible proofs, reliable facts, weighty signatures. The ears of the hon. gentleman still entertained certain sounds like unto the creaking of many pairs of new boots down the vaulted staircases, somehow conveying, too, the impression of white waistcoats, and bunches of seals thereunto attached, with pursy, short, middle-aged gentlemen, in Indian file, whom the porter was awaiting, hall-door in hand, with something abated of his usual dignified humility as they made their exit, and reaching the pavement of the Square would, with a decided sense of relief, and a portentous “h'm!” look up at one another, congratulate themselves on the success of their mission, and—being true-born Englishmen—comport themselves as such, and *dine*.

In short, the Honorable Aden Power had been receiving a deputation, and stood pledged to consider the claims of one popular motion, to inquire into the merits of another benovolent agitation, and to give his countenance and support to some half-dozen generic, highly-efficient-and-all-sufficient movements of the day.

The creaking of the boots had ceased, carrying with it the white waistcoats and pursy sensation; the hall-door had closed, not quite so softly as after my lady's carriage, or on the echo of my lord's horse's hoofs—the porter had been reared in the odor of aristocracy, and had no reverence for deputations. Then Aden Power took up a paper he had been previously scanning, selected two or three others from a heap be-

fore him, and, placing them together, touched a small spring bell on the desk beside him. The door behind opened almost immediately, a thin pale man entered, slightly stooping, very grave, very silent, quiet, gentlemanly in appearance and address; the cuff of his right hand was turned back, as if he had been occupied in writing. The door by which he entered the room, left partially open, disclosed to view another and larger apartment, with desks thickly strewn with papers, books ranged on shelves—some lying open, as if for reference.

The new comer bowed, Aden courteously returned the salutation, indicated with his hand the papers he had selected, but continued deeply engaged in the perusal of the last he had taken up.

The secretary, for he was one, took the packet, retired to his own room, in turn scanned the papers, reserved one which he laid upon his own desk, and applying his lips to a tube beside his chair, a second door of communication opened almost simultaneously, admitting a young man rather over-dressed, with promising indications of what at some future day might be the germ of a moustache on his upper lip, and which he carressed encouragingly, while the elder gentleman was engaged in giving him some rather explicit directions regarding the documents he consigned to his care, and with which the younger employé retired into a smaller room, also chiefly furnished with a couple of desks, racks of papers, and a shelf or two of heavy volumes.

Then the elder man occupied himself with the more important details of business confided to him; but he looked now and again at his watch, sighed heavily, and seemed to get paler and thinner each time he made a pause to look up at the window, or lean his head upon his hand, though he still kept on assiduously at his task.

Reading, marking, and writing, extracting, referring, noting, reading on, or at times pausing to think, Aden

Power kept on; the hand of the soft-ticking time-piece on his mantel-shelf had twice made its circuit—twice the muffled bell had struck the hour with a throb more than a chime through the still chambers, where by double doors and windows padded, not a sound of the outer world could penetrate.

So the honorable gentleman worked on, harder than any four of those whose hands merely kept time to the workings of his active brain, laying aside now and again a printed document or written paper, till another small heap had accumulated. He was just going to touch the bell, when he stayed his hand.

“Something seems amiss with him,” he said, half to himself; then he got up and opened the door of communication between his own room and that of his secretary. The latter was writing rapidly as he entered, but ceased, and rose up as his employer entered.

“You are not well, I think, this morning, Mr. Fulton,” Aden said, kindly, and withholding the papers he had brought.

The secretary turned away for a moment. “My wife,” he said, in an uncertain voice.

“Is she so much worse?” said Aden in a tone of concern, “why had you not told me this, Mr. Fulton? Pray return at once.”

“I should have asked your permission, sir, this afternoon,” the secretary said.

“At once, sir, I beg you will leave all this at once; let Messer come in here, I will manage quite well with him; and pray let me hear in the morning how Mrs. Fulton is. On no account, I beg, leave her till your mind is relieved on her account.”

He had rung the bell and given an order, while the secretary gave his directions to his younger subordinate, and, by the time the former reached the hall entrance, a fast cab awaited him, in which he at once departed to the home that death and sickness had made desolate; but with all his desire

to be by the side of his suffering wife the conscientious secretary had hesitated to claim the time he knew just then to be particularly valuable to his considerate employer.

Aden Power returned to his own desk, again to investigate, to prove, annotate, decipher. Presently the little spring was touched. It is probable he had forgotten the change in his diplomatic servitors till a strong sensation of *bouquet de joie* caused him to look up, and he encountered the figure of the fascinating Messer at his side.

The glance with which he took in the points of that amiable young man might have had less in it of admiration than the gallant clerk was accustomed to, but in the midst of his directions to the young man upon that he required done, Aden suddenly wheeled round in his chair, and confronting the panic-stricken fop, thundered out,

"Have the goodness to attend, sir, to me at present."

The fingers of the abashed Narcissus dropped from the tender bud they had been furtively caressing, and he shrank, so to speak, into his shell. In a tone of cold severity the gentleman finished his orders, and with a stern look at his abashed employé, turned to his own desk.

Poor Messer, crest-fallen, betook himself to the temporary dignity of his superior's vacated sanctum, and before even entering on his duties, slid off a brilliant from his finger, which was wont so sweetly to glitter as he handled his pen; he smoothed down the perfumed love-locks on either side his brow; if there had been a razor handy, I doubt not but it had gone hard with the tender hirsute blossom just then—so great was his dread of again incurring that frigid glance. Mentally Messer questioned of himself how this could by possibility be the urbane and considerate gentleman for whom old Fulton was ready to do battle *à l'outrance*. Since the days when he of purple plush, and young Bant, the groom, espoused the cause

of their several masters, there had been opposite opinions as to the merits of the Honorable Aden Power.

Hours passed on, the post came in, leaving him an immense deposit of correspondence; once a telegraphic communication was brought to him, and Messer—to the infinite derangement of his dignity—was despatched to return a reply by the same medium.

It was well on in the afternoon, yet the only refreshment the indefatigable gentleman had tasted was a cup of coffee and some light accompaniment, brought into his room at an appointed hour. At last he permitted himself to lean back in his chair, pushed from him the desk with its remaining papers, and took up a small letter, sealed with a portentous looking crest.

It had been opened early in that day, and read once. He read it now again, and paused once or twice, as if to weigh the full worth of every word and expression used.

"He means it," was Aden's thought, as he placed the letter in a private drawer of his desk, "so do I. He cannot think I could change my principles, or make a feint of doing so, to serve my own ends, even to satisfy the desire of my heart. He should be the first to despise me surely! The Earl himself, my father, is more tolerant; but it is done with—all over! Harriette, too, herself! Well, well,—a disobedient daughter would scarcely make a dutiful wife; still—still—but I must not think of it."

It is a difficult matter conveying the impression to our readers of the communings of solitary thinkers. As a rule, people do not talk aloud, least of all such a man as we are now attempting to portray. But we may suppose something of that nature to have passed in his mind on this occasion.

He was to dine at the Earl's that night; the Viscountess gave a dinner party. His cab drove up just as his brother alighted from his horse at the door.

"Arthur."

"Brother!" so the younger generally styled Aden, "where have you been hiding yourself this age?"

"You are to be envied that you can ask; you cannot then imagine of another existence than that of basking in the smiles of beauty, &c. &c. I have to congratulate you, Arthur. Lady Geraldine is the Queen of beauty and grace *par excellence*; and you are worthy of her too, Arthur, which is saying much."

The younger brother did not appear to receive this kindly compliment so graciously as he might.

"Ah! and you—your election made a little more noise than mine in the world, shall I congratulate in my turn?—but I do, brother, since it was your desire—who knows, if I had such claims as yours upon me I might have missed even so unexceptionable a lot as has fallen to me?"

They went in together. The brothers had always met on good terms; not a shade of envy had ever entered into Arthur's fretful dissatisfaction with his lot; and Power looked with indulgence on the frivolous pursuits of the younger, with the indulgence due from the elder and more stable to the younger and weaker, as it was a sort of creed with the Earl to consider his last born.

Personally they were as greatly opposed as in disposition. Aden was tall, and in his robust and nervous manhood little trace of the weakling boy remained, though he was pale, and the thoughtful sternness of his expression made him look much older than he in fact was.

His dark hair and eyes and massive features formed quite a contrast to the slight form, clear blue eyes, fresh complexion, and symmetrical grace of the younger son, in whose handsome features might be without difficulty traced that reckless vacillating disposition which was more the result of training than a part of the nature so few cared to question into further than the surface which pleased so well.

The House was sitting that night on a question of some moment at that

time, it matters not now its precise import.

Great was the wrath of those unfortunate or tardy individuals who, unable to obtain access, were condemned to hear from afar the peals of applause which greeted the close of the eloquent speech with which the new member had just demolished his opponent, no less to that gentleman's dismay than to the satisfaction of the adverse party. The Liberals were in the glow of a new triumph, their man came to the conflict newly strung, stern of purpose, rigidly braced to dare to the uttermost. Again and again the pæan of gratulations awoke the echoes, swollen by the contumacious groans of the ministerial party, thus adding, in fact, to the tumult which went for applause.

It was a furor; the crowd waited till the small hours to cheer anew. Aden Power, the Liberal member for Loftborough, was fairly carried to his carriage by the arms of sweating and adulatory admirers.

Poor dead Mary, in your quiet grave in a foreign land, you knew not of the honors to be achieved by the son of your poor dear Jack.

After all, what was the cost of a deal box more or less in Brettles Buildings? But that the son of the great Earl, the proud Conservative Lord, should be the darling of the mob, the approved pet of the great unwashed—

The cheers sounded not so loud in the ears of Aden Power that night that they could obliterate the words of a certain letter, where the father of the woman he loved bade him take his choice between her or the principles he had adopted. And he had chosen.

CHAPTER XI.

COMPENSATION.

No more favorable conjunction of events could have been hoped for by the unhappy concocter of so dark a scheme, than that at which we have now arrived.

Her younger son provided for by a wealthy and honorable alliance, of which the issue might at least stand almost on a par with the highest of the land—herself by the step, relieved of a hundred fears and anxieties, which had beset her as Arthur gradually developed into the wayward reckless character on which so little reliance could be placed—too good, perhaps, for the base uses of life, but lacking strength or solidity for any of its more daring purposes. His marriage once solemnized, she felt as if the first stone would be laid of the structure by which—since she could never hope to repair it—she might at least bridge over the fatal chasm which her error had created.

Yet further, she found a secret gratification, and one on which she had never dared even to count. The one whom she always associated with that error as its cause, even my Lord, the Viscount, was not he a sufferer? and had he not sown his share in the harvest which he reaped? The much-coveted son, the greedily-prized heir, and this Liberal leader, this subverser of all time-honored principles and hereditary prejudices—dear as their own life blood to the Power family—they were the same.

With a gloomy joy this proud unhappy woman marked the concealed anguish, or listened to the burst of indignation, which would at times break forth uncontrollably from the haughty nobleman, mourning over this apostate son, whom the rabble worshipped as the embodiment of their ideal, but in whom good men and true saw the earnest, conscientious, and far-sighted lover of unperverted right and justice.

It was a bitter draught for the old Earl, the converse of all his hopes distilled into the cup, and the ambitious plans which he had mingled so plentifully, and sweetened by anticipation, dashed from him violently and forever. Yet was his share not wholly dark, a consolation was left to him which his countess could not feel, for

there was pride even in the distress his son occasioned him. He felt the triumph of that soul which could so sway the minds of men—the sensible and reasoning, no less than the quick-witted but hasty mob; he could not forbid his heart to thrill, nor his cheek to flush, at the cheers which echoed to the roof-tree his son's name—coupled, maybe, with some familiar epithet, yet which told him why that name was become dear. No!—though with imperturbable front, and stolid mien, the old man stood aloof to let the boisterous stream of adulation go by; though he coldly held his own and turned not aside even when the shouts of party proclaimed him of the vanquished, and his son's party victor, in the cause he had all his life opposed; through all the father's pride would not quite succumb, even to the prejudice of the peer, and if the statesman were an alien, the man was still his son.

"Why not? Why could he not set such talents to their legitimate use?" was the Earl's frequent regretful soliloquy; "force and eloquence such as he can command to be wasted upon the very dregs of mankind, to purchase a spurious and fleeting popularity. Yet that is not his inducement; no, no, he is filled with the enthusiasm of a lofty and energetic purpose—mistaken though it be; his motives are as far beyond the comprehension of those who affect to worship him—bah!—he will find out too late for what an empty rattle he has toiled! That my son—that Aden Power, so fit a representative as he might have been, so true a scion of the old noble stock! Good God! it is hard—my eldest, my hope—it is hard to bear!"

Frequent were such sorrowful communings, ending most generally with a stern determination that he would come to a final understanding with his son, when the latter should be made to feel that he must no longer expect even the sanction of his noble father's friendship; that their public differences would henceforth receive the

confirmation of private alienation, and that the Honorable Aden Power would be a less welcome guest at his noble mother's assemblies, or exclusive dinner parties, than the most humble but sincere supporter of the orthodox party and principles.

For the fifth or sixth time the stately lady would raise her Juno-like head to listen to the mandate of her lord, touching the rebel; glad, indeed, to her heart's core would such a resolve have made her, but she had learned its worth, and knew too well the revocation that would too surely follow.

"Your ladyship comprehends I am resolved! We have been too complaisant, and he presumes upon it; but he shall see, he shall feel the weight of my displeasure, he shall be made to understand that I am not to be braved with impunity, and made, for his pleasure, a by-word with those who read my disappointment but too well. Yes, Power shall know that to be the pet of the mob involves, perhaps, the being a stranger in his own family. Your ladyship enters into my views, I believe?"

Her ladyship testified to the fact by a graceful movement of her aristocratic head.

Under the combined effects of gout and irritation the nobleman would fidget about for some short space of time, reiterating his determination; then, after an ominous pause, break out testily,—

"It troubles you little, Juliet; really, for a mother, in fact—dear me—one would say you had little share of the feeling only natural—"

With another of her exasperating frigidities, the lady—

"Pardon me my lord, it is not my custom to deplore that which is past avail."

"Quite a Spartan, really, your ladyship! A mother might be excused, too, some little tenderness for a son whom she sees herself condemned to treat as a stranger at her table. I envy you, madam; really, your calmness—"

"Pardon me," again the well-bred lady will reply, "I might deplore more such results, did I not know full well how certainly your lordship will anticipate their occurrence."

And with the graceful courtesy which was her birth-right, the haughty dame would sweep from the presence of her discomfited lord, leaving him to make his moan alone, or empty the vials of his wrath upon the inferior genus of his establishment in a manner that would provoke those worthies in their turn to vindictive utterances, coupled with the name of their noble patron's son and heir, and emphatic declarations that there really was no standing it, for my lord and my lady had been "havin' a shindy again about young uppercrust, and was fit to snap yer head off, which indeed it was a sin and a pity that young Mr. Arthur hadn't been born in his place, as was worth half-a-dozen of the other with his speechifying and reforming, and if this sort of thing went on much longer," &c. &c., *sic* Jeames and John Thomas.

To which my lady's maid, in her domain, devoutly said, "Amen;" for her ladyship, though in no ways given to the gusty or declamatory mode of signifying her temper, did no less emphatically make it visible to such as knew how to interpret the signs.

And when the discreet waiting-woman had been dismissed to let free the safety valves of her much-enduring mechanism as she might think fit, the lady sat among her extent of mirrors, and with the massive bracelet in her hand over which she had hesitated, and with half-closed eyes, and a wearied attitude for one who was that night to figure as hostess in a grand re-union, she thought such thoughts as she had schooled herself to encourage only when alone.

"And the blessing that was to be is turned to a curse, even for him!" so her reverie ran. "Does he ever think of that time, I wonder? and question whether his importunity—unnatural even as it was—might not have been answered so? What if he knew how

actively and positively it worked out its own punishment! Ah!"

It was terrible that expression which passed over her face as she realized the extent of the awful power she possessed to strike, though with it came the consciousness that she dared not for her life.

"I could! yes, yes, I *could*—and by one word set my own child free to take the rank that is his, and cast that beggar brat—"

She stopped abruptly—she had caught the reflection of her own face in the mirror opposite, and it had a warning in it. She started from her seat, and paced to and fro the dressing-room.

"Why do I let these hideous fancies harass me?" she cried. "Fool that I am! is it not enough, and more than ever I could dare hope for, that his wishes are frustrated? that in his baffled aims he has received the result of his share of folly and sin? I *will* get the better of this weakness. What have I to do with making amends? Did I scheme for myself?"

The bell had been twice rung in that brief soliloquy, and the maid, panting from haste, was ordered to make divers elaborate alterations in the toilette which she had pronounced perfection, and at which the lady herself had not once glanced; yet these stood for the result of deliberation, and were decided to be improvements. Who shall say how much of the fiercer passions which would else work mischief find their vent at the toilette, or how often the care of its petty mysteries serves to veil matters of far deeper import?

But my lady, comforting herself with the reflection that at least her lord reaped small consolation from the son he would fain have been so proud of, with all her astuteness did overshoot her own aim to a considerable extent. The stiff-backed Earl, who would have been proof against any amount of maternal weakness—who would have battled tears, and prayers, and arguments with the most imper-

turbable stoicism, and have prided himself on his Brutus-like impassibility, was aggravated by the Spartan demeanor of his lady to retaliation, which took the peculiar form of coalition with the forces he had declared hostile.

Whether it was by way of intimating his intense absolutism in his private capacity, even to the extent of rescinding his own decrees—whether, actuated by disgust at his lady's want of maternal interest, or by simple obstinacy, which, ordinarily a mild component of the good Earl's nature, was not improved by the gout—the result was the same; and if the Viscountess had been, as she said, prepared for some such result, she could hardly fail to wince when she beheld father and son enter her fast-filling and splendid rooms both together, and apparently on sufficiently good terms. Surely never was such sharp tilting as that within the ring matrimonial.

There were those who said the son must play his cards craftily, and gave him credit for a long head, to keep so well in with the testy old Tory. Not a bit of it! If Aden had had the faintest idea of the struggle that was perpetually being enacted in his honored parent's mind, he would certainly have failed to stand with the old gentleman as he did, for he would then have felt bound to assert himself, and by no ghost of a concession to have compromised party or principle. As it was, he respected his father's stanchness, even in positions he deemed untenable, and, in deference to one who at least tolerated his opinions, often moderated somewhat of their expression, which at the slightest hint of opposition or contempt, would have blazed forth contumaciously. The fact was, that at bottom there went to the make up of both, much of the same solid groundwork of good sober sense and honesty, though overlaid with different stuff, and which was recognized by each in the other. The fact was, too, that to-night, with all the outward seeming, there was a sore place in the

heart of both father and son, and that it needed all the self-command of the former, and all the restriction of time and place, to keep back the bitterness which welled up to his lips, and was ready to overflow.

The broken match between his son and the daughter of the honorable house, by whom the alliance had been declined, was indeed a cruel blow, and one which the Earl had hoped, till the last moment, that his son would have spared him.

"I thought you were really attached to Sir James's daughter," he said, when, unable to conceal his chagrin, he spoke of the affair to his son; "surely she is a beautiful creature, gentle, and amiable—"

"She is all, sir, that could make a man happy," his son hastily interrupted, "and too good a daughter to wish to become my wife under the circumstances."

"Circumstances of your own creating—what madness it is!—and the young lady?"

"Regrets the difficulty, but would not assuredly have me forswear convictions for her sake. If she could even desire it, she would cease to claim my regard—but I can wait, and so can Harriette."

"Aden Power, what folly," the Earl began, but his tone changed even in the breath; he could not so suddenly cast from his side the man who forced him to respect; the answer to so many prayers, though the son that thwarted him. "My son, what is it you talk of? White will sooner become black, or the sun rise at midnight, than Sir James D'Etain swerve from his word."

"So be it."

There was in the utterance even of that brief sentence something that forbade any harsh or hasty dealing with the subject matter of discourse; the Earl felt it, and there was more of expostulation than he had ever meant to convey into the tone of his next remark.

"But why thus wilfully darken

your own prospects, embitter your life, and, worse still, that of—"

"Father," Aden interrupted, almost sternly—then, checking himself, he added, "Your lordship will pardon me if I beg to be spared further allusion to this subject, at least for the present; only be sure," he continued, after a painful pause, "be sure nothing less than the impossibility of the concession which Sir James demands could have forced me to give up the hope, which was very dear to me—very."

A few hours later found father and son entering the gay assembly of the evening, the latter nerving himself to the stern calls of duty in the merest of its items, the former to battle with a new accession of that terrible incubus, the added cause of offence, which yet compelled him to feel pride in the offender.

A few shades paler—a trifle more reserved, Aden Power moved here and there, received the cold congratulations of his lady mother on his enthusiastic reception by his constituents, the rejection of his kindly-proffered services to relieve her in some portion of her arduous duties, and a slightly sarcastic reply to his inquiry after her health. He was used to all this now, yet such things might be matter of habit with him, but never assimilate with his nature, and to watch his self-reliant demeanor, his powerful frame, and all-sufficient resources of mind and body, no one would have thought, perhaps, how his eyes wandered through the brilliant throng, longing to rest upon one tender graceful figure which had been wont to take its place there, and which, of his own act, he had banished. He knew very well that he could not expect to see Harriette there—that it would be very long before he should even meet her in any place where he might be expected; he knew she was at this moment a temporary exile, and on his account; it made the case none the less endurable that, to insure their mutual happiness, it was only required of him to refrain

from a certain course of action—the thing required was to him an impossibility; that was enough. He was a fool, you may say, prejudiced—bigoted. Granted; we have all and each our set standard, you see—the *ultima Thule*—beyond which conscience refuses to budge. It was a case of principle, and Aden Power was stanch, obstinate, bigoted—what you will; so was the father of the lady, who claimed, too, the privilege of making his daughter's hand the price of concession to his views. Sir James believed in the Earl, and by way of intimating that his difference was with the son, and not the father, he made his appearance at the Viscountess's assembly; it was an awkward attention to the family whose alliance he had just declined, but then the Viscount and his son were known to be radically opposed on every point almost, and D'Étain was too stanch an adherent of the Earl to be misunderstood; so doubtless thought her ladyship, who never was more gracious.

Still admirable in that style of beauty which, the most powerful in its zenith, is the first to show the progress of decay, the haughtiness of her demeanor among her equals tempered to dignity, she moved a very queen, whose reign in her own peculiar sphere all had too long contemplated to dream of its diminution or decline. Worshipped by the men with a loyal homage, envied by the women, quoted, copied, revered as the model of lady, wife, and mother, no less than of taste, fashion, and supreme *ton*. It was all an old story now to the beautiful woman, yet how bravely she went through the routine—how staunchly did the fascinating, the happy, and the gracious, the while that heavy weight lay dead at her heart, which none wot of.

There were more of such dead weights, mayhap, in those gaily-lighted rooms—under those jewel-flashing breasts, borne to and fro. Envy, and malice, and much uncharitableness, with even some deadly fear of conse-

quences, and shame, and life-long disgrace, perchance—yet none bore her burden more bravely than the beautiful lady of the mansion.

Among all the loveliness, and gaiety, and glitter there assembled, it would be indeed a bright star which would outshine the rest, yet such a star there was, forming the centre, too, of a constellation of the lesser planets which revolved around its orbit, if not solely in admiration, yet with a hidden envy of its brightness that well attested to the perception of its superiority. Lady Geraldine's whereabouts was intimated where she herself was surrounded by the throng of admiring devotees at a shrine where beauty, wealth, and power united. The connections of the lady were extensive, and their influence almost unlimited—to stand well with her was to have “ample verge, and room enough” to found great hopes; and there is still a class to which those three attributes we have named form an attraction sufficient to even counterbalance much less desirable qualities. But the Lady Geraldine added another claim even to that formidable trio—she sang, and accompanied herself, too, with a perfection of skill not often achieved by lady amateurs, and had a voice well worthy such cultivation. Just now a small crowd had gathered round, and almost filled the recess where the beauty sat enthroned, as it seemed, with the more absolutism for the state which freed her now from being the object of rivalry, for the engagement had been made public by the journals of the day. She had consented to minister to the beatification of her friends and adorers, she had suffered herself to be led to the harp, and none knew better than the lady herself how exquisite was the group which she and the classical instrument formed as she all naturally posed to the well-practised attitude, and struck the first chords.

Beyond a doubt there are nerves in the composition of our humanities which can hardly fail to thrill with

pleasure, more or less deep, at the sight or sound of harmony in shape or tone, and the murmur was not all of flattery—nor had need to be—which paid welcome homage to the beautiful singer. How could those chords—how could that lovely face awaken any but feelings of the purest admiration and rapture?

The Viscountess, who, gliding hither and thither in kindly and incessant solicitude for the well-being of her guests, had been attracted by the dulcet voice to pause near the group, beheld and admired and exulted. Naturally, too, in that exultation, her gaze took in the figure of another whom it concerned—the young man leaning against the marble column, whose scarlet drapery threw out in such dazzling relief the white satin dress and the snowy arm of the lovely Geraldine.

Something that was not admiration—something still further from rapture, darkened the handsome features and puckered the smooth brow of her son, as he gazed on the face and listened to the voice of his betrothed.

What could it be? The lady looked no more at the enchantress; as she gazed more fixedly at her son she, too, darkened, but only momentarily—no more. She was not in her dressing-room, she never betrayed herself by the too facile features, and the next minute saw her radiant, as she swept along entranced, to all appearance, by the feeble cackle of a lisping scion of some patrician house, who detailed his late many adventures by flood and field in the Tyrol.

Poor lady! surely we may pity her when she sees conceptions and plots so deeply laid and intently planned disturbed and vexed by the trivial fancies of a boyish brain. What though he did prefer a request to his bride elect for a favorite song as he handed her to the instrument, and had at least received no refusal to the request made in that soft whisper which he was privileged to use, and which Arthur's voice could make so touch-

ing; what though she had totally disregarded his desire, and, abruptly closing the book which his gallantry had set open before her, had with those first chords broken into a strain of wild gushing Italian melody, for which certainly *he* had never expressed a preference, and which it needed not the scarcely perceptible curl of the lip, and quiver of the fine nostril, to tell him had not been selected in deference to his choice; what though he marked the downcast eye and artistic blush illustrating a passage in some tale, of which *he* had not the key—was this a reason that he, foolish man, should grow cloudy and morose? that he should suddenly become oblivious of the syren's requirements, and leave to another hand—only too ready—the pleasant task of turning over her music, and shifting the stand to an angle, too, at which he deservedly lost her gracious profile? or that, when the song—twice repeated for the enraptured listeners—had ceased, he should be so forgetful of his privileges as to yield to another the duty of leading to her seat the radiant queen of his heart? Fie upon such niceness! Are not all luxuries taxed? Is not beauty a luxury? and shall it not bear the impost of coquetry, and fickleness, to all eternity?

Could it be wondered at if the lady retaliated in kind, and that the remainder of the evening was passed between the affianced pair in a courteous trial of which should be most studiously and coldly polite? while, as light must fall somewhere, though the legitimate recipient be averted, doubtless some of the many were the brighter for the temporary alienation of the goddess from her especial high priest. For the gentleman, I hope—though I will not aver—that his thoughts did not go a wandering to a certain sequestered cottage, where the honeysuckle tapped beseechingly at the casement, and the waves murmured to the shore of the moonbeams' coldness, and that is a dangerous tale to tell in the silent night, and to a pitying ear.

There was another who had marked that little episode between the lovers, and if with not a clearer perception of its full intent than my lady, at least with less interest in its concealment.

The night was past, the last guest of Honiton House had departed, just as Nature, with a coy shudder, yielded herself to the embrace of Dawn, and the noble rooms were all deserted, their lamps paling before the sombre grey which streaked the scarlet draperies with its Puritan fingers.

Upon the velvet-piled rug before the hearth, heaped high with costly flowers—a sculptor's masterpiece in itself—stood the lady of the mansion, beautiful even now, under the envious and chequered shadows of the newborn day, still showing but in little the toil of the night past. Slightly relaxed in its majesty her figure might be, one hand dropped to her side, a spray, escaped from her wreath, trailed upon one shoulder, the dark masses of her hair thrust back from her brow,—this was all; for the flash in her eye, the scorn that had permitted itself to part her well-tutored lips, had no share in the well-played performance of the evening; they were part of the questions to one who stood before her, and to whom she rapidly repeated them.

"What is it to you, I say? why do you meddle in this affair? have you been so successful in your own that you are warranted in interference with that which does in no way concern you?"

"Because he is my brother—my younger brother," Aden replied in a calm voice, which contrasted strongly with her hurried, ill-governed tone; "because it will be my care and duty to shield and protect him in all that—"

"God forbid!" broke from the lady, as she involuntarily clenched her slender hand at her side, and closed her teeth upon the words; yet, as if even then unable to control them, the bitter words would make way. "You protect him!"

Aden went on as though he had not heard the expression.

"I cannot help your ladyship's displeasure, though I am very sorry to

have caused it; but I could not forbear speaking; I feel so keenly that Lady Geraldine Lineage is so unfit a wife for my brother, who, though so little disposed to assert himself, well deserves the love of a true-hearted woman. He is so peculiarly dependent upon sympathy and kindness, his disposition requires the sun of home influences to bring out all its full perfection; and I cannot believe, from much that I have noticed, that this lady—beautiful though she is—will ever make the happiness of Arthur."

"Thank you! is that all?" the Viscountess sneeringly began. "Really Arthur is much bounden to you for your disinterested espousal of his cause; but the same objections will not exist, I presume, to the lady becoming the wife of the Honorable Aden Power! The wealthy widow would be tempted, you imagine—"

"Mother!" he exclaimed with deprecating tones, interrupting her, as he stepped forward to where she stood.

The lady started back at the word, drawing her breath through her closed teeth like one in pain. She raised her clenched hand as if she would have struck him; in the violence of the motion her foot struck against a tall candelabra, and overturned it, in its fall coming heavily in contact with her side.

The blow must have been severe, but she never heeded it, nor the expression of alarm and regret with which Aden rushed to her aid. Disengaging her dress from the wreck, she swept from the room, bestowing no more notice upon the offending Aden than upon any of the domestics who had hastened to repair the mischief caused by the overturn.

He, too, more slowly, betook himself to the solitude of his room, and painfully mused, as he had often done, upon the strange fatality which seemed to have made him an alien from his noble mother's affections, and the cruel perversity which could so interpret his well-meant remarks anent his brother's engagement.

"It is not only," he mused, "that I have before this evening noticed her

behavior to him, but the unusual gloominess and depression apparent in Arthur, and which seem to increase. Surely it cannot be too late to break off this match, though I know my mother has set her heart upon it. At least I will speak to Arthur—he will not, I think, misunderstand my anxiety. Good fellow that he is, in spite of his wayward misanthropy, which is half affected, I should be sorry indeed to see him throw away his chances of happiness.

Perhaps this part of his ruminations brought the young statesman back to his own recently enacted sacrifice, for he sighed heavily once or twice as he exchanged his evening costume for something more easy, and betook himself to the sanctum, where a lamp burned dimly, awaiting him. The daylight had long rendered it unnecessary when Aden Power quitted the desk for brief dreams, which we may be sure—since we seldom dream of that nearest our heart—were not of his forfeited bride.

CHAPTER XII.

HIGHLY INDECOROUS.

JOSEPHINE paced to and fro the limited space of her small bed-chamber, as she had been doing for the last half-hour, unmindful of time, or place, or any outward object. To and fro, backward and forward, quicker and quicker, the little feet crossed the snow-white boards and soft carpeting; again and again her parched lips opened and closed, her hand impatiently thrust back the thick soft curls from the broad forehead, and now and again she paused, and stood looking out from the open casement, where the summer breathed voluptuously its perfume-laden breath, toying with the wave's lazy beat upon the distant shore, and the coo of some doves in douce colloquy upon the eaves.

She looked, but she saw it not, heard nothing of the harmony, scented nothing of the perfume. Light, and feeling, and perception all set inwardly,

and outward was darkness and desolation.

The mirror opposite, which had unweariedly reflected all that long hour her restless pacing to and fro, showed her pale face—her lips, now compressed, now parting—her disordered hair and lustreless eyes. But she as little saw that figure, nor even knew, till a sudden movement reminded her, that she still held in her hand a letter she had that morning received.

A singular enough letter it was, yet, perhaps, hardly containing anything to cause the disturbance visible in her to whom it was addressed. So it ran—

"Forgive me, Miss Strauzlaine, my good friend, forgive me! I was led away by the excess of feelings to which I had never intended to yield. If you could know all—all that I meant to have told you, which indeed I came to say. It was blind, weak, wrong of me to have come again to the cottage, knowing all I did; yet where else have I known such blessed hours of repose and happiness? Oh, Josephine, dear Josephine!" the adjective had been erased, also the name, then again written with a sudden dash and fierceness that spoke too well to the mood in which the writer pursued the feverish tenor of his thoughts; "*we have been long companions—friends, and it is over; yet must it be, should it—why? And I have not told you how weak, how despicable, how vacillating I prove myself! how unworthy! So much the better. My friend—my best of friends, think of me so; think of me as beneath even your pity—as undeserving of your friendship, and do not grieve that I must say farewell.*"

"ARTHUR."

How many times she had read and re-read this frantic epistle since the unfortunate postman had toiled up to Sea-View that morning to deliver it, I would not take on me to state; yet she smoothed it out again before her on the window-seat, and once more her eyes steadily went over the words,

pausing to give each its due sense, and gather, if possible, some new meaning from the whole.

"It must be that," she said at last, as she leaned her head against the casement panes; "he has been thinking of the difference in our stations—he has dreaded, perhaps, that a recognition at some future time might lower him in the estimation of his great connections. Oh, Arthur, Arthur, could it be so? you of whom I judged so differently—can it be? And that portion of my own history which I that evening related, though it had not power to chill at once the warmth of his feelings, he has thought upon it—it has horrified his inborn pride."

She was pacing to and fro again, and her footsteps quickened as, shaking her head mournfully, she repeated—

"All alike—alas, alas! all alike! and I had thought him so different—so unfettered by all such worldly considerations, so—ah, so different!"

Again the pause before the casement, again the fevered brow was pressed to the cool leaded panes, while her eyes wandered wearily over the garden below, and the portion of the bridle-path just visible from where she stood, and on which seemed written the words "no more."

"I cannot blame him," she said softly to herself; "it is the creed of the class to which he belongs, and the trial was, perhaps, a severe one. This life, which pleases me so well, to him is doubtless meagre, poor, tasteless. I might have mingled with the world, too, with *his* world—have become one of it, shone in the same light, and pleased myself after their fashion, and in their manners, in the mockery of mockeries; but I could not—so hateful, so unreal. I pleased myself in the belief I had found one true soul that could feel and think with me, one true friend; but I have scared him with the truth. How thankful I am though that I spoke it; how glad that never, by word or act, I have been unfaithful to myself, even though it has brought me a bitter experience. Oh, father—dear, good, honest, noble

old teacher, and good friend, shall I never find another like you?"

Again an interval, when not the voice ceased, for she did not speak aloud—only we picture thus the thoughts that were in her mind—but those thoughts wandered away, as they will, even in the access of the keenest griefs, and she passively suffered the mind to play truant, while her senses took in the soft atmosphere of warmth and sweetness and hushed tranquillity of sound that filled the little Eden of her home.

But not for long.

"How weary life seems for the while! how heavy these disappointments fall!" she was thinking again; "and each seems worse than the last—one does not grow inured to them. I suppose that, with the failing faith in human perfection, the chance grows more desperate, and the failure leaves us still less to hope, and so is worse. If I could blame myself—if my judgment had been hasty, if it had been one of those fops that my foolish fancy—but no, no, no; I believed so much, I had read so deeply—he, the dear father, too, judged him so highly! Well, well, it is over, as he says, forever—forever; and better so, before I had perhaps learned to care too well."

With half-closed eyes and bowed head, she sat a few moments, perhaps calling to mind the last time she had seen him come up that path, or heard his cheery voice break the stillness.

Suddenly she started and looked around her; was she dreaming? had fancy served too faithfully? or could memory so delude the senses?

No! there *was* a footstep on the path below the window! Rapidly it approached the house and entered. Could she mistake it? was there another whom the Newfoundland would welcome with so joyous a bark? or had that voice its duplicate, lustily calling for "Marthon!"

It was he!

She was alone, for, tempted by the beauty of the day, she had allowed Marthon to lead the old grandmother out to the little wood behind the house.

The call for Marthon was repeated; then Josephine heard him enter the little sitting-room. She never stopped to ask herself how she ought to receive him; whatever might have been her judgment a minute ago, she had but one thought now—he had come again, she should hear from his own lips how far he was unworthy. She darted from the room—incredible as I know it will appear to my lady readers—without even a glance at the mirror. The next minute she was in the room below, where Arthur had flung aside his hat, and with all the signs of hot haste in his appearance, was pacing to and fro.

As she entered he darted to meet her, and she—still with the letter in her hand—with her old gesture of welcome, holding out both her hands, made a poor feint of smiling. He caught them both in his, he led her to a chair, breathless, and without speaking. She sank into the welcome seat, then, borne down by feelings which she would in vain have sought to explain, she burst into tears, and hid her face in her hands.

The impetuous young man fell on his knees before her.

"Forgive me, oh, Josephine! dearest girl, sweet friend—oh, what have I done? Forgive me, for I cannot forgive myself,"—he snatched from her the letter, and flung it in fragments from him. "I have hated myself," he cried, "ever since I wrote it; vile, false, hateful as its words must sound to you. Josephine—Josephine, I felt that I should go mad if I did not come to you; yet it is madness to say that which I come to tell you. Near you only it has been that I have felt myself to be worth anything; you alone have understood me, you only have seen through all the veil of frivolity, the misanthropy, the affectation of careless indifference to all good things; that is not in my real nature. You only have known me for what I am, have taught me what I might be; and you have shown me that there are things in this world to win and to prize

beyond the paltry aims we set our selves."

He paused, for she had ceased to weep, and with one hand upon his shoulder, the other clasped in his, she listened anxiously to his words, and looked into his face.

Alas! no gleam of hope broke through the darkness that was gathering upon his.

"You must hear me on—hear me, and you will hate me, and despise me, and forget me—"

"Arthur, dear Arthur, never," she said softly, but he stopped her fiercely.

"No, no, do not—do not say it; you shall not; you shall hear me to the end, then curse me, and it is done. Josephine, I love you—I *love* you! better than my life, better than all in this world. I have loved you, though I knew it not, oh, Josephine, till I knew that which in the same breath now I tell you—that I am pledged for life to another—that I am to be married before many days are past."

He fell forward to his face upon her feet, and groaned. There was a minute, not more, in which her eyelids dropped, her hand was pressed to her breast, then the cloud passed. She stooped and raised the head of her stricken lover in her hands, but he turned his face from her.

"Arthur, good friend, the good old father's pupil, Arthur!" She spoke at first with an effort, but each word came easier, and the last was sweetly soothing. "Be yourself, Arthur, be your own brave self. Is that all, dear friend, that you have to tell?"

"*All!* is it not enough? Josephine, you do not hate or despise me?"

"Ah! if you knew how much worse I had dared think of you, it is you who would have to forgive." She spoke almost cheerfully, and he, still holding her hand, had risen to his feet, and stood with pallid face, and eyes that sleepless nights had hollowed, looking down upon her.

"I dared to think that the pride of rank, and the knowledge of my inferiority, had determined you on

breaking with your old friend," she said, "but it was not so, and for that I am thankful."

"Rank—inferiority!" he repeated; "Josephine, by all that is sacred—by the memory of the dear old man whom we both loved, believe me I would glory more in you as my wife, my own, my all; ay, and among the proudest of them hold you peerless, more, far more, than I can ever do in her whom the will of another, and my own weak folly—but I must tell you all."

And he told her of the hopes and wishes of his proud mother; of the way in which she had urged Lady Geraldine as a suitable wife for him; of the extent to which he had committed himself, ere he yet had learned the use of his own heart, or, indeed, that he was possessed of one at all. He was too manly to speak of the deficiencies or bad qualities he already had detected in the bride elect, but by his dwelling on the delights peculiar to their friendship, Josephine but too readily learned what he suffered elsewhere.

"I came again and again," he said in conclusion, gloomily, "to tell you this, but each time made it more impossible, for each time I saw you, oh, Josephine, I dreaded yet more to speak the words which should make you hate me."

"I hate! nay, Arthur, this is surely only a fresh form of what you condemn yourself for. In very earnest, how have you wronged or hurt me? As friends, as fellow-pupils of the same dear good teacher, and who loved us both so well, have we not been happy, so very—very happy? Believe me—believe me, as you know I should be believed, when I say that what you have told me even is a relief to that which I had feared, for I can thank Heaven that the man is still unchanged from all I believed him, and that even when I lose my friend he has proved himself most worthy to be so."

Her voice dropped. There are limits to all fortitude.

He looked at her as if he would have given much to know—to gain an

answer to that question which might never now be asked.

Did she not love him? His own heart answered to the full extent of that, which increased both the agony and remorse of parting. Yet was this like love?

No more tears, no sighs, no regret, nay, not a blush, nor tremor of the hand, even though it was clasped in his, as of old, many times while he stayed, and she called him "Arthur," as she had never done till then.

She made him tea, too, with her own hands, though Marthon and the grandmother had now come in. She served him as of old; but only once she ventured an allusion to the "last time."

"Why should it be?" the young man said impetuously; "why the last, Josephine? We may be friends, we shall be—say so, we *shall* be friends. God knows how much I need it."

He looked into her face, hungering, as it were, for her reply.

They were standing under the porch where we have once before seen them stand; the sun was setting, and its last rays streamed through the clematis and honey-suckle upon her face, as she raised it to his—pale, but calm, and in the liquid eyes that rare lustre which seemed to enthrall the very soul of her lover.

Slowly she shook her head, and would have spoken, but no words came.

He gazed on—he had no power to resist.

"Josephine," he whispered, as he bent his head till he felt the warm breath upon his face, and the touch of her soft hair upon his beard thrilled every nerve. The question was upon his lips, but—as if she anticipated it—

"Do not ask me!" she said, in a broken voice; then added, "Be yourself, oh, be yourself, Arthur, and let me be proud that you have loved me. Farewell!"

He looked back when he reached the turning in the road which led to the railway station.

The sun was set now—the porch

was empty. Well for him that he could not see through the little casement to the room above, where, broken by sobs, came the words truly the most bitter—the heart echoes to memory of past happiness,—

"Never more—never more!"

CHAPTER XIII.

FATHER AND SON.

NEVER were the morning papers in greater demand—never, surely, was the gallantry of lords, and masters, and heads of the family more severely taxed. The advertisement sheet no longer satisfied the softer portion of the domestic community; "Awful Sacrifices" and "Tremendous Bargains" had lost their charm; births, deaths, and marriages might have been omitted from their appointed place, for all it signified—so intense was the interest attaching to the one all-absorbing topic, the preparations for the approaching nuptials of the Lady Geraldine Lineage with Arthur, younger son of Lord Honiton.

The trousseau, the gifts, the family antecedents of the respective houses, &c. &c. &c., formed the topic of the day—on one side of the house. It was, in fact, a perfect war of wits in many households which should first obtain possession of the treasured sheets, the library or boudoir; for though, as may well be supposed, the sterner sex by no means concerned itself with the interesting detail of Brussels and orange-blossoms, it did so happen that a question of scarcely less vital importance was at that moment agitating through the length and breadth of the country, and of which the pros and cons were daily being aired through the medium of matutinal columns with increasing earnestness and heat.

To the interests of our story it matters little now what was the purport of this question; whether that the poor man should have cheap sugar to his tea, or a cheap spoon to stir it; whether for the lighter taxing of good books, or the untaxing of his window-

light to read them, matters little. The question and its difficulties have long since passed away to the limbo where many such have gone, to be followed by many, many more, each in its turn found out and exploded.

Enough, then, for our purpose, that the subject was considered just then of vital import—"an absurd, nay, dangerous concession; a preposterous demand!" on the one side; on the other—"a simple right, a necessity of the people," "a thing to be required with all the persistent dignity of a self-respecting and intelligent nation, knowing how to preserve its privileges, and to demand, if need be, to the full that which was its due."

Nobody who reads this is so young but they will remember some such matter for discussion, and how—for the time—it eclipsed all other subjects of interest (at least in that quarter where Brussels and orange-blossoms came not), and how, settle it as they might, it was speedily followed by another which, perhaps disposed of more quietly, went far to annul the effect of the preceding, and so—with a few grand conceptions—keep up pretty evenly the game of equivalents. He may remember, too, how thoroughly plausible and hearty were the convictions of each party, how utterly unselfish, how free from baser motive than his dear country's good, every vociferating advocate of either side, from the sweating and begrimed orator of the pothouse, mouthing his flowery periods, well emphasized with poundings of fist and pewter pots, to "my lord," so suavely temporizing, so blandly smiling away the absurdity which really it would be cruel—so he seems to say—to crush with the stern force of eloquence and reason; only he will show you the pitiable mistake they make, these poor benighted souls, and how even they do not know what they are asking for themselves, but they shall not be let run into hurt—no, no—so mildly sets a veto on the request, quite out of pure loving-kindness, much as you put that moth out of your window last night, that it

might not burn its wings in your candle, you remember.

We are not about to enter on the merits or demerits of the matter in hand here. It is enough to say that while it did involve a very important item of public comfort and advantage, there was also a large party of the more influential in both houses who saw in the measure much which would be very probable ultimately to involve certain vested interests, and therefore, on grounds of principle, opposed it strenuously. Twice, in fact, had its battle been fought, twice to suffer a defeat; and, so great is the prestige of success—so fatal the effect of failure, that of its supporters many had languished into faintness of heart, and if they still owned allegiance to the true banner, proved it rather by passive homage at the shrine than by assertion. A few only, and those of the stanchest, still harassed the enemy with tantalizing onslaughts, ineffectual, save to remind the well-entrenched force that the foe still hovered round, and lacked not the will, if the power, to dare the field with them in full.

But suddenly the cry is sounded, to arms, the warning note of preparation is heard; a leader has arisen—a host in himself; literally *power* is given them, for it is no other than the young Liberal member—the free-speaking, “ultra” son of that stanch old Tory lord—who has declared himself the champion for the right.

Now, of course, we all are perfectly aware that any man, of any time, who ever declared himself for any side or subject, did so for the *right*, and he did, no doubt, in a vast proportion of cases, succeed in persuading other people of the fact of his own belief in that same declaration. But there is, and ever will be, a noteworthy difference between the champion who succeeds in persuading other people only, and he who has not the shadow of a doubt about it himself. Two totally different things, let me observe, to persuade other people, and to be convinced yourself.

Most of us do look through some

kind of spectacles, and all things are thereby tinged with this or the other hue, and though we may know the real natural tint, there are few of us but are ready enough to forget it, and grow accustomed all too soon to the spectacles. Yet there are a few, and Aden Power was one of these. He saw but the unadulterated primary colors, right and wrong; he did not, perhaps, sufficiently make himself acquainted with the half-tints, expediency, vested interests, considerations of self and family, and the like. He saw a great want existing, the means of remedying it plain and ample, the inconveniences or objections in a mere minority, both of numbers and importance, in his eyes, and he set to work to make this clear to others just as earnestly as if he imagined they did not see it, or could have thanked him for the improvement of their vision. And, moreover, he would do this as only the champion can do who comes with clean hands to the affray, who is stripped to the contest, unencumbered with any little matters of private interest which it would concern him to lose hold of. You will thank me, I know, for sparing you all the detail and technicalities of this episode.

Great was the anger and indignation of my Lord, when, early in the session, this sore question was mooted—not to be disposed of, though, as it had been; for, to the name of such a leader, quickly roused up those who had but dozed, not slumbered. Hope shook out her starry pinions as she winged swift messages from point to point, and once more rallied the despondent echoes to the old watchword of success. The leading journals of the day took up the cudgels, each for his self-appointed side. The ponderous denounced in stilted grandiloquence, the wordy foamed rabidly, the prudent temporized, the peaceable deplored, the sarcastic found food for fun in every aspect of the subject, and lashed or patted each combatant in turn. Meanwhile the windy fight waxed furious, and men battled on, some from one motive, some another,

more or less meritorious; and if it would not have been hard to count those who acted purely from unselfish motives, we may well suppose that he stood alone who risked all to gain nothing for his own share, and who never asked himself but the question—Is this thing right or wrong? Is it for me to support it with all my might, and with all my strength?

Pretty Harriette d'Etain—pale re-cluse among the shades of Ventnor—gliding along in her noiseless-wheeled pony-chaise, the envy of half who look upon her, she wonders, as tearfully she scans the morning columns for those long, long speeches, of which she can make so little, and which set people all talking of the honorable gentleman who makes them—she wonders how Aden can, if he loves her, make up his mind to lose her for just a lot of people who care nothing for him—how can he, if he loves her? And she is half persuaded he does not love her at all.

How shall we pretend to judge of one another's actions, till all motives bear their special fruit as every tree its berry, till all heat and cold, all shade of light, or weight, or space of time, or association of ideas, be to every man the same?

“He does it to oppose me! nothing else,” says the incensed Viscount, pacing to and fro, “it is unnatural, vile!”

“Who can account for the course a man's ambition will take?” yawns a haughty noble to his confrère; “Power relishes the mouthing of his name by this unsavory rabble, as if they could confer immortality upon him. Pah!”

“He scents the turn of affairs from afar,” replies another, and is preparing betimes a heavy claim upon the loaves and fishes.”

“I will not pretend to read his game,” remarks a third, “but certain I am it is a deep one, and the stake he aims at need be high, since he gambles in such unattractive company.”

Ignorant of most that was said or written against him, unmindful of what he did hear—equally of praise

or blame, Aden Power went steadfastly on, simply that to him there was nothing else to be done, and to be done well.

How he toiled through that season—wrote, spoke, travelled, answered letters, inquired into statements, proved results, queried of statistics, weighed evidence, compared, and sifted, and filtered, and refined; trusted no rumor, favored no judgment, garbled no precedent, permitted himself no luxury of admitted fact untested by himself, nor would accept on credit the most tempting of statements.

The result was such as might have been anticipated. No one who had the good fortune to be present on that memorable night will be likely to forget the splendid force of that marvellous combination of eloquence and truth—of well-digested and organized fact and deduction—of undeniable assertion, so elaborately set forth, so calmly and clearly given—the torrent of moving and soul-stirring words which bore conviction in upon the mind of all who heard, and even silenced the voice of opposition.

It was long since those walls had echoed to such words, which set hearts beating with the glow of an enthusiasm they had well-nigh forgotten to feel. The spirits of reality and truth were there for the time visible—men, as they listened, acknowledged it, and borne along by the inspired fervor of the younger orator, forgot their cue had been to sneer and cavil, and even held their peace watchfully lest they might be betrayed to involuntary expression of their genuine admiration.

It was done: the speaker sat down flushed, but not breathless. For a minute there was a pause, then the roof echoed to the burst of rapturous triumph—for a triumph it was felt to be; and any unfavorable expressions, if such there were, were drowned in the cheers.

Prepared, as he had been who rose to reply, it was but a poor and ineffectual effort. Never had cause seemed so rotten, never so futile the arguments, so puerile the objections,

which had even been anticipated and disposed of in advance by the astute and far-seeing champion. Again from his party the shout was of triumph, for the strength of the other side was shown and was but weakness, and they saw it.

That night was decisive. It was felt that opposition was no longer to be dared. Deferred the immediate settlement of the important question might be; but that it must come, and that shortly, was made clear even to the most potential—the public voice had spoken by an undeniable exponent, and it could no longer even be affected to misunderstand it. The most that could be done was to delay; meanwhile some well-draped equivalent might be devised. But the game was so far won, and the clamorous, shouting, eager throng saw in Aden Power their sworn supporter, and glorified accordingly.

But he had escaped their personal deification at least.

Weary and pale, now that the excitement had passed away—at heart a heaviness not soon to be dispersed—and thinking, now that his best was done, of nothing less than applause for that, Aden Power had quitted the House, and was at home ere even the waiting crowds without were aware of his departure.

He knew that by this night's work he had set a wider separation between himself and the woman he loved, yet it was not to be helped, and keen as was the smart of that conviction, it was not just now the thought uppermost in his mind.

It was to the house of his father he repaired that night, where he might indeed have well supposed he could hardly expect a welcome; but he had a duty to perform, which his conscience reproached him for having suffered the overwhelming claims of business to divert him from, and now the time was short.

He found Arthur but just returned from some gay festivity, and in an easy *deshabille* lounging in a luxuri-

ously fitted smoking-room at the top of the house, where it was his wont to compose his nerves, as he said, and prepare himself for sleep.

Aden's entrance was rather abrupt; the younger received him with a hearty welcome, though without rising, and with his foot lazily displaced a heap of books and papers which filled a chair near him, which he invited the other to take.

"So you have come off victorious again," said Arthur, as he offered his brother a well-selected cigar, and motioned to him where he could light it without discommoding himself. "I congratulate you, though you can hardly expect my father to do so. Egad, brother, you bid fair to revive the ancient glories of the family name; how fortunate the distinction has fallen to you instead of to a lazy dog like myself, who could not have been bored to trouble his head to do more than he was obliged—positively obliged."

"Arthur," the elder man said, in a voice of much earnestness, and without appearing to even hear what he had said, "have you thought about what we spoke of the other day? I have been anxious—most anxious to see you, but these affairs have pressed upon me. I depart to-morrow morning early. I came here to take leave of our mother, and to see you."

"Depart? Leave London, Aden? How I envy you—"

"That is no answer, Arthur, tell me."

"There is my answer," replied the other, as he picked up a paper which lay at his feet, and with the end of his cigar pointed out a paragraph. "Those people know more about the matter than I do myself, it seems. 'Thursday week,' you see; short notice," he yawned. "I was not aware—any more than I was of having requested the sending of these, of which it seems my choice is desired." He threw back the lid of a small box upon the table, whence poured a dazzling stream of light from the jewels within.

"There, *mon frere*, you are an-

swered doubly," and he drew long and steadily at his cigar.

"Yet, Arthur, I can never think you love Lady Geraldine."

The younger shrugged his shoulders, and as he sent out a column of smoke, and watched its graceful curling through the air,—

"I think I can to the full requite any bestowal of her Ladyship that way," he said.

"Arthur," exclaimed Aden, bending forward in his earnestness till he touched his brother's arm, "why should this be? You are so young, you surely have no cause for sacrificing your inclinations. You do not love this woman, nor can I believe she loves you. Perhaps I have not made the passion much the subject of my thought, but at least I have known enough of it to have seen of late that not only do you not love her, but that you even regard her with indifference."

Arthur raised his hand as if he would have deprecated further talk upon the subject, and as he laughed a light laugh, and knocked the ashes from his cigar against the arm of his chair,—

"Indifference!" he repeated; "the word is not the most polite in the world; but suppose so—it is surely a good foundation to start on, and, after all, it is what most people seem to come to—you can't deny that, Power—so we shall have stolen a march upon the rest of our friends who start with us in the race."

"Arthur," the elder said, with a grave sternness which might well have offended a less amiable disposition than that of the man he addressed, "we have always been good friends, I would hope you might never find a better than I trust always to be, and the difference in our aims and characters need never make our friendship less—why will you not be frank with me, when you must know my earnest desire for your happiness? why should it be—why?"

"I tell you it is done," the other said, and flinging away his cigar impatiently; "it is too late."

"It is never too late for the right," Aden returned, "*never!* Your breaking with Lady Geraldine may cause unpleasantness, but no unhappiness, of that you must be certain; and if I were not convinced, believe me, I would never have proposed it. It is not difficult to imagine the inducements she may have to the match, but you, Arthur, young and free, and in possession of everything you can desire—you, who I know are so free from the base motives which could induce you to sell yourself for a fortune—"

He stopped short, for at the moment of his uttering those last words a sudden change had come upon Arthur. The sneer passed from his lip, the affected indifference from his tone; he pressed his hand to his head, started from his chair, and hurriedly paced the room, then approaching his brother, grasped one of his hands in both his, as he said, in a voice such as few knew to be his—

"God bless you, Power, for saying that; you do believe that much—thank you for saying so. You're right, too, you're right, but it is useless. Is there nothing in the world but fortune that can make a man forswear himself? Have you done just as your feelings would have led you? Ah well! you may not see quite all. It may be right—may be wrong; we do not all think alike. I don't know how you might see it either. But it's no use, old chap—no use; my mind's made up, and let us say no more about it. We'll come to you in Italy, eh? and you shall see how jolly we'll be. Now, no more, please—it's a bargain; good-night. I shan't say good-bye, for I'll see you off if you will go, though you'll have to come back for the wedding."

He wrung his brother's hand, and Aden, finding he must indeed say no more on what was in his mind, quitted the room, and ere he reached the foot of the stairs Arthur was humming the new air of the opera he had heard that night; but he did not finish it—his voice dropped, with his hand upon his

eyes he sank moodily into his chair, and into brooding thoughts. Then suddenly turning upon the little casket as though the rays which streamed from it had a voice to sting him, he flung down the lid, and tossed it from him into a drawer.

"Diamonds!" he said bitterly; "how would *she* look at me if I sought her with diamonds in my hand?"

As Aden reached the foot of the staircase the sound of a double arrival reached his ears; and he had barely entered the smaller saloon where he knew, if returned, the Viscountess would be visible, than it was entered by an opposite door by his father; whose gloomy brow at once told the son what he might expect as the results of that night's performance. At another time Aden would have scarcely listened without retort, even from his parent, to the mixture of scornful rebuke and cutting sarcasm with which the old Lord alluded to his son's share in the night's proceedings, which he stigmatized as "a degenerate and morbid desire to acquire a vulgar popularity, at the expense of what was due to himself and the station which he dishonored." The old nobleman was too proud to hint at the shock his own feelings had sustained, or the right he might have exercised to claim obedience to his principles. Doubtless he could have made much of these; but he chose merely to speak to Aden as a stranger, and one with whom he totally differed, and whose course of action he not only disapproved but condemned.

The hot blood mounted to Aden's brow; the swift words came, fraught with bitter truths, to his tongue; but the head was grey which frowned upon him; it had won his gratitude and admiration long ago: he was to take a long farewell of it that night, he believed; and, with a great effort, he said quietly:—

"I am grieved, my Lord, that the truth has offended you. I wish from my heart that other lips than mine had spoken the words; but it fell to

me; and I did my duty. Forgive me, sir, but I should do it again. I sought for no popularity. I hope, my Lord, I think you will give me credit for that. I came here now to bid you and my mother good-bye, for I set out in the morning for Devonshire, and thence for Italy."

The son was proud as the sire, in his way. He would say no words of his failing health, nor the wearing of broken hopes upon his heart, which made the change welcome.

If he had perhaps it would have made no difference; the angry noble might only have seen in that an attempt to gain his favor; as he now chose to see in the announcement a significant hint, that having established himself with his party, he might repose securely on his laurels without fear of loss, or need of the good will of his own family.

He bowed distantly, wished his son a fair journey in lofty style, and passed out. At the door he encountered the Viscountess, who, entering from the other room, had heard the tenor of the brief conversation between father and son. Aden little knew the motive which prompted the kind greeting he received from his haughty mother, so unusual with her that it moved his heart, the more for the cold treatment he had just undergone.

She said nothing of his public affairs; but when he announced his departure regretted it, though she could not wonder, she said, and almost kindly alluded to his disappointment. But he must not leave Devonshire, she said, till after the marriage. He could rest just as well there, and the change would be as complete almost—it was so long since he had been there. The season was just over too; they should all be at Deansholme soon. Finally, she insisted upon his not quitting Honiton House that night: he was weary: must write letters, must he? then write them there, and coffee should be brought; and so she bade him a bland good-night, and, oh clever actress! just brushed his own

with her lips, and left him with a yearning heart, poor gentleman; for it seemed to be his fate that, like the cup of Tantalus, happiness should but incline to him its full brim in promise, never to be amply realized.

"It seems to me," he sighed, "that duty should be made so hard to me; but who knows that it is less so to others."

He composed himself to letter-writing; the promised coffee was beside him, the domestics retired, the house was all hushed. Three o'clock had struck unheard by him, when a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a low voice said,—

"Aden, my son."

He started—looked up. His father stood before him, wrapped in a loose robe, as he had stepped from a sleepless bed; his disturbed features and altered voice told how restless the hours had passed. Aden started to his feet, and clasped both his father's hands in his.

"You must forgive me, my boy," he said kindly. "Forgive me, Aden, I spoke angrily. I said what I never meant—my words did not come from my heart; far from it. You are right, you are right; and, God bless your honest heart, you spoke as you felt, and I should have given you praise, not blame. Forgive me, I could not sleep till I had come to you."

Aden knelt at the feet of the old man, and the grey head was bowed upon his, as the haughty man blessed him with a choking utterance.

"Bless you, Aden. I wish it could have been different, son; but it cannot be as we will. I thank God for an honest man, though it is my son who opposes me."

"Oh, father," said Aden, humbly, "I will not, I will withdraw—"

"It cannot be, my boy." The old old nobleman shook his head. "You must even go on as you have begun, but let it be as it will before the world, in private, Aden, remember we are father and son. God bless you, you must not leave us."

With a heart lighter by a lifetime's burdens than it had been, Aden returned from the chamber whither he accompanied his father. Let us hope the old lord slept the sounder. But, assuredly, there was one for whose perfect repose that interview had better have been unheard.

Roused, though not from sleep, by the uneasy movements of her lord, the Viscountess had arisen, and hearing him leave his chamber, and make for the room where Aden would have slept, she had quitted hers, wondering what could be the object of his seeking the man he had so indignantly scorned but now.

She heard enough, and returned to her luxurious apartment to rage and fume, and toss through the remainder of the unblessed night.

"It shall be done," she cried beneath her breath, as she beat the floor with her bare foot, and writhed and twisted her delicate fingers, as if she would have broken them. "He shall be known for what he is. I will cast him down and crush him, even if I fall myself. He caressed, he blessed, he forgiven all! My God, I shall go mad! Why is it? why is it?" she almost shrieked. "Why am I only to be punished? Just as I thought too that he was to be made to feel; just as I hoped he might cast him aside, and remember he had another son. I will not bear it. I will make them feel; they shall know all, and he shall be crushed, utterly crushed. I will spare no one, not even myself, all shall be told! Yet not now; the marriage," she muttered, and again started to pace the floor. "His marriage, and he my own child; what will he say? Despise me, hate me? Oh, my God, my God, is this what I have worked for? This the cost of my scheme?" Half-fainting, wholly exhausted, she sank upon her costly bed. Morning broke, but no sleep came. Less happy than her lord, for he slept soundly.

ADEN POWER; OR, THE COST OF A SCHEME.

BY FARLEIGH OWEN.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUT OF TOWN.

"AND are we not to meet again at all, Olivia? Am I never to see Aden?"

"I cannot say *never*, dear Harriette; of course you will see him often, and must meet many times doubtless in time to come; but for the present, dear, papa thinks it best that you should not, and as when they are at Deansholme it would be impossible to avoid doing so, he made the arrangement for you to accompany us to Florence. You know, love, you were wishing to visit Italy last year so much."

"Yes, but that was before—oh Livy dear, it is very hard—*very!*" and poor little Harriette, gentle and unresisting as she was, burst into tears, and sobbed out upon her sister's breast her sorrow and chagrin at this summary disposal of her person and her inclinations.

Olivia, her elder sister, who had long since become reconciled to the sacrifice which expediency demands in most cases of sentiment, or even the affections—where those rare commodities still survive—and who had made what was esteemed on all hands a most unexceptionable match, now did her best, as the staunch ally of her father, and the wife of an accounted Tory into the bargain, to prove to her weeping sister the error of even allowing herself to testify regret for the loss of so unworthy a lover.

"Can you suppose now, my dear, that if Aden had really cared for you

he would have allowed such ideas to stand in the way for one moment?—when it was a question, too, of offending papa. Why, dear, do you imagine if it had been Vincent, that to gain my hand he would not have made *any* sacrifice? Has he ever contradicted or opposed papa in the smallest matter? and are they not the best friends, and on the most affectionate terms? Only think, dear, what a terrible thing it would be to bring dissension into the family."

"I do not see that the family need to disagree," sobbed poor Harriette; "gentlemen do not all quarrel in private who talk against one another constantly in the House. Oh! it is too bad!"—tears drowned the remainder of the sentence.

"What comfort or happiness could you ever expect," her sister went on, "as the wife of a man so stubbornly attached to his opinions that he even opposes his own father, and makes no scruple of openly avowing his ultra notions to an extent which is really disgraceful to a name which has so long been among the most distinguished—"

"He has as much right to say what he thinks, I suppose, as others," sobbed the weeping girl, "and if he cannot see the same, you would not have him tell lies. Papa hates lies himself, and now he is angry with Aden because he will not say what he does not think."

"I am ashamed of you, Harriette," the young matron retorted; "I believed you had more pride than to thus distress yourself, and stand upon the

Aden Power; Or, The Cost of a Scheme.

defence for a man who has shown that he really esteems a union with yourself as of less value than the paltry distinction of being himself called the 'man of the people.' I told papa that I would answer for your being tractable in this matter—I am sorry indeed to find that I was mistaken. I can only hope, however, that you will have too much self-respect and obedience for papa's wishes to allow Mr. Power to occupy your mind any longer."

Harriette, who had accepted the gilded arm of a couch as a substitute for her sister's shoulder—a support perhaps not less sympathetic—made no answer, and as Olivia rose to quit the room she added,—

"We leave Rushbroke to-morrow, and I have requested your maid to have all in readiness; Mr. Lambton will not brook delay."

It was an open question, to say the least, whether Mr. Lambton really owned any particular like or dislike as his own special belonging. Certainly he had never been heard to assert such a claim, and in fact it was of small importance, seeing that his lady so well supplied the deficiency by apprizing all the world—himself included—of what were her husband's inclinations and desires upon every individual subject.

Mr. Lambton's "orders"—Mr. Lambton's "displeasure"—Mr. Lambton's "commands" rang through his ample establishment, and, by courtesy, were accepted as emanating from its head, who, in point of fact, took much the place of the cipher, which in conjunction with certain other figures may mean much, but apart can scarcely be said to have an existence. Certainly who did not serve Vincent Lambton for love would not do it from fear.

We are all so much the creatures of circumstance, or at least circumstance has so much to do with bringing out our individual qualities, that it would be hard to say whether, had the lady found a less yielding and acquiescent lord, she might have kept

more strictly within her sex's appointed sphere—or if the gentleman, being united to a more gentle partner, might have abated less of his lawful sway; sufficient for our story that Sir James D'Etain had, in the husband of his eldest daughter, found a never-failing and compliant adherent, who, as she had truly said, had never by word or deed given cause of offence to the parent who, in her eyes, was the model of all that a loyal subject, and a noble, to the manner born, should be.

Worthy of such a parent was the lady, only in this case she had certainly missed somewhat of her usual farsightedness. It was not the way to weaken the image of the absent lover to abuse him to her who, though feebly, still did cling to his memory with a tenacity supplied by a mixture of affection and offended pride.

"We leave here to-morrow, Vincent," said the lady later in the day to Mr. Lambton, who would not "brook delay."

"Indeed, my dear! that takes me somewhat by surprise. I had calculated on Wednesday at the earliest."

"But it can make no difference two days sooner, my love," replies the lady, "and you know how anxious we are that this silly child should be taken out of the way, as soon as possible, of certain associations."

"Poor girl!" said the gentleman quietly, but with a tone which evidently contained an unpleasant reminiscence for his wife, who had omitted to mention to her sister that there was one topic on which her husband certainly did not agree with their respected father.

"Poor! Really, Vincent, you are exceedingly absurd and aggravating."

"I am sure I beg your pardon, my dear," he said, soothingly.

"Nonsense! you know what I mean; how can you take the part of a man whom you know so well to have forfeited all claim to our friendship?"

"My dear, I did not take his part—forgive me for repeating your words."

I am sorry for Harriette, because I believe she really is attached to Aden Power—"

"Is!" impatiently interrupted his wife, "the idea is ridiculous! Whatever she may have been, it is all past and done with—is cannot be the word."

"No other occurs to me, my love, which will convey my meaning; but I was about to say, I cannot agree with you as to the means of obliterating any impression she may retain of his attentions, if it be desirable to do so—"

"If!" again the impetuous lady broke in; "really Vincent—"

"I do say *if*, Olivia," her husband resumed more gravely, "because I cannot see the exact grounds on which your father should have opposed so determinedly the marriage which was all but decided upon. However, he knows best, and so far it is settled; still I doubt, Livy, if it be the wisest course you could have taken to give Harriette a grievance to dwell upon."

"Why, Mr. Lambton—Vincent, you never can mean—you cannot suppose that Harriette would so far forget herself—"

"As to make an elopement of it," he said, laughingly. "No, no, there is no fear for her; neither is Power the man to dream of such a thing. I mean only, my dear, that the trouble might be shortened, I think, and if it must be—I still say *if*, Olivia—it might be done more effectually by making the caution less apparent. However, my dear, you know best, doubtless; and as you desire it I will endeavor to be prepared for to-morrow; if not, you must not delay on my account, I can follow."

It is not difficult to see that there is a dissentient voice in the domestic council on the matter in question, though poor Harriette had not even the consolation of knowing she possessed a friend, as Mr. Lambton, seeing no good result to be achieved, forbore even an expression of his opinion, with the rare exception of such occasions as we have just seen,

and as his wife had little fear of his ever exceeding them, she did not concern herself much with the knowledge that privately Vincent held the character of Aden Power in as much esteem as is usually felt by weak minds for those of superior calibre.

The season was ended. London had, in the space of the last four-and-twenty hours, become unbearable; parliament was over, and the race was how to escape from the precincts of the great hive.

If the plague had been suddenly proclaimed to have broken out, the scurry and hurry, the tear and roar, the scamper and the turmoil, could hardly have been greater.

Tours, excursions, trips—of months', weeks', days', or hours' duration—by steam, by rail, by wind or water, or afoot, nothing else was to be seen or heard of.

"Anywhere—anywhere, out of the world,"

the great world of work and toil—the thought-forging, brain-spinning, money-making world, was now the one universal cry. Out of her hundred mouths the great seething city disgorged her thousands into the still lanes, the green fields, the stern mountains, the glassy lakes; to breathe the uncontaminated air, and to refresh ears, and heart, and brain at the fount of the first-created life.

Not that its purity will by any means suffice for all. There are those who could no more exist without the grosser particles of their special state than they could draw breath in the upper regions of air.

Apropos—I remember a young couple once who had a boy, and they spoilt him. They were going one morning to a concert, and the brat must of course not be left behind. The dear child was starting from the nursery, arrayed in all the finery indispensable to the occasion, when he bethought him of the toy which he was accustomed to carry with him on

his morning strolls in the Park with nurse.

"I must take my *chlumpet*," quoth the interesting child. The nurse represented the impracticability of the thing—in vain; the darling shrieked, mamma rushed in, implored in vain also. At length "the pet" was permitted to carry the point, and the trumpet, on condition that he never once put it to his lips.

Promise given, darling eulogized on the journey for his goodness, the episode related to papa with sly glances and smiles, which do not escape the darling, be sure. The concert-room crowded, seats with difficulty reached—of course in close juxtaposition to the stage, for the young wife is still a credit to the husband, and he is rather proud of her. An entranced silence waits upon the silvery strains of the glorious prima donna, thrilling the very nerves of sense, when lo! a horrible "*shriek*" rings to the roof, and *enfant terrible* turns with a glorified smile to nurse, exulting in the achievement of "*my chlumpet*."

The birds and the flowers, the trickle and gush of fountain or rill, the douce lullaby of the leafy grove, or the solemn voices of the forest boughs, would all fail to charm a majority to even tolerance of Eve's Paradise, if they might not be allowed to bring with them the trumpet of discord—the routine in little of their town life—the ball, the fete, the scandal, the gossip, the dress, the *maiseries* of society.

Perhaps all have not so good an excuse even as my Lady of Deansholme Abbey, who has only three days tasted the tranquil delights of that delicious spot ere she announces her intention of a grand fete, to be but the prelude to one still more extensive, which is to celebrate the nuptials of her younger son.

As yet there are no visitors, but on the morrow are expected some score dear and particular friends, as home visitors, for my Lady cannot be alone with only the poor companionship of my Lord, somewhat jaded, and his

eldest son. The Viscount would have been glad of a little privacy, but a hint of my Lady's wish was sufficient to incline the courtly head in assent.

The Abbey was large enough, the score dear and particular friends might encamp each one in a sanctum of his own, and each enjoy his solitude, if it so pleased him, to perfection; not to mention the suite appropriated to the Lady Geraldine, when, with her little son, she favors my Lady with a visit, though, as her estate is contiguous, this is seldom a prolonged one.

And as the August sun bids fair to abate nothing of his traditional strength, we shall all be well-content, I think, to linger for the present among the cool shades of Deansholme Park and its ancient Abbey.

CHAPTER XV.

A CLUE FOLLOWED.

"WELL?"

"I beg your pardon, my Lady, I'm sure—I'm very sorry—I oughtn't to—I'm very sorry, my Lady—"

"Yes, Turner, you were saying—"

My Lady says these last words wholly oblivious of the deprecatory syllables hesitatingly uttered by my Lady's maid,—slightly, but decisively, turning her haughty head the while, and regardless entirely of the fact that in so doing she has irrevocably disarranged the marvellous fabric of plaits and braids which the clever waiting-woman has just completed.

It should be a rare occasion, too, which could move the proud lady to depart from the usually reticent, though not harsh or unkindly, habit, which marks her intercourse with the inferior humanity of her household—yet no action of hers would lead us to conjecture this was one.

The volume of Italian comedies on which her eyes had been fixed during the earlier stage of her toilette has fallen to her lap, but her finger still keeps its place between the leaves; the tone in which she spoke the inquiring monosyllable just now was

calm and quiet, as if it might be meant only to check the too familiar communication of her woman, for which the careless but effectual demolition of her labors would be but the natural punishment. Yet her delicate nostril dilates, and it is a whitened lip which questions so coolly, and which, as the tattling maid catches the reflection in the glass, warn her, better than any words, that it is no time for trifling—if, indeed, Heaven save us! any one ever dreamed of such a word in conjunction with her Ladyship.

"Put my hair in the other plaits—the Grecian—and you were saying, Turner—"

Turner was an object of pity just then, over and above that which her red nose and pock-marked visage might legitimately excite. She had received an order simultaneously to execute a very tedious and difficult feat in hairdressing, and to enter on an explanation of some remark she had carelessly dropped, which she was aware—in a vague sort of way—could lead but to mischief; but she no more dared shirk the one than the other. (It was a fact well known among the courtly circles below-stairs that no wages were higher than those paid by the Viscountess Honiton, to say nothing of punctuality—while for perquisites!—) With trembling fingers, and a foreboding at her heart, the waiting-woman complied.

"I couldn't know it for a fact, my Lady, as I wasn't here myself, of course, as your Ladyship knows, and it was a word just dropped by Mrs. Bowden when I met her this morning, and, indeed, have not exchanged a syllable with her before since we came down. She asked me ma'am, did I know how Mr. Arthur was, and whether his hurt was better? for she was very much afraid that it would get worse, as he would not give it time to heal, but was in such haste to be off to town."

"When was this? what was the hurt?" the lady asked abruptly.

"About a fortnight or three weeks

back, my Lady, I think. It was a fall from his horse, but Capri was worse hurt, my Lady, and it is only these two days past that Bant has been able to lead him out."

There was silence for a full minute—the woman could not see the face which the veil of hair screened from the reflection in the mirror, but the Italian Comedies had been loosed from the hold of the lady's hand, and fell with a softened noise upon the thick hem of the dressing-gown she wore.

"Finish my hair quickly—no, do not plait that, roll it loosely—any way for the present."

The toilette was finished more rapidly than was usual: then—

"Desire Mrs. Bowden to come to me," said her Ladyship.

"Here, my Lady?"

"Yes. See, too, that my horse is ordered—Vashti. In about an hour I shall ride."

The maid went. She was accustomed to her lady's mood, for, in that stately household, change was rare, and all were old habitués; yet even she felt some surprise at receiving no more questioning, no exclamation of surprise, or conjecture, at what she "could take her oath," as she said, "was news to my Lady."

But that was not the way of the proud, self-willed, self-containing woman. Whatever might be her own surmises, how much she might have guessed, or made herself mistress of; had she been of a more common stamp—had her haughty consciousness of superiority been less intense—she might have attempted some excuse, have hazarded some probable solution of her tale to the gossiping servant, which might, or might not have deceived her; but to the Viscountess Honiton it was of little moment what these breathing automatons who served her thought or conjectured. Beyond the humble duties they rendered her she ignored their existence as utterly as she might the rugs on which her feet rested in her luxurious carriage. The cringing homage which

they proffered was not by her sought, nor desired. To execute well their several parts was necessary—amply paid, amply fed and lodged, each his or her place appointed—let him well understand and fill it, neither more or less.

A frayed cushion or chipped ornament is at once removed and replaced, inquiry after the old one is never dreamed of; so a servant disabled, unfitted, or inapt, must go—he is useless, another must be found—his share of the contract is void, that the other becomes nought is the self-evident conclusion.

Good pay, good service; but as for praise, or benefit, or indulgence, or, indeed, recognition of their existence beyond, the Viscountess, or her lord, would as soon think of advice, or consolation, or sympathy, or confidences, being imparted to them by the inferior race which so very properly and methodically smoothed the rougher necessities of life, and made them approachable to the more refined existences enjoyed by the nobly born.

You will pardon the discursive paragraph—the staircases are steep, and Mrs. Bowden, the housekeeper, not so young as she was, nor so active as the quick-witted and malicious waiting-maid, who doubtless rather enjoys the puffings and pantings of the stout old lady, as she follows her to the Viscountess's boudoir.

"She'll guess it's me that has told, I expect; but I couldn't help it; my Lady asked," mutters the quondam cockney milliner, to whom ugliness has played the good genius, exalting her to the favor of the all powerful in Fashion's world—(how oddly Fortune chooses her agents!)

She closes softly the door upon her Ladyship and the housekeeper of Deansholme Abbey, and betakes herself to the solace of a substantial luncheon. For listening, "she'd scorn the fact;" and, oddly enough, it is a trick never practised in my Lord's household. Either the absence of pretence to secrecy offers no temp-

tation, or the presiding spirit of pride and haughty indifference has permeated the atmosphere. Undeniably the character of the masters does affect to a degree those employed.

"There is something going on, as Mr. Dixon says," soliloquized Turner; "but I shan't bother about it—it will come out sure enough at the last. They never make any secrets, and if Mr. Dixon don't know all about it no one will."

Meanwhile the housekeeper has seated herself, in obedience to a sign from her Ladyship, who enters upon some of the ordinary matters relating to Mrs. Bowden's especial department, inquires after the execution of certain orders which she had forwarded, graciously commends these arrangements, and directs those.

Suddenly she says, with well-assumed nonchalance,—

"Mr. Arthur took you by surprise in his visit to the Abbey."

The housekeeper gave a slight start, but at once fell into the snare.

"Well, my Lady," she began, "certainly we were quite—not aware, and I would like to have been prepared more certainly; but I hope and trust Mr. Arthur did not suffer any inconvenience, my Lady, and, indeed, I was sadly afraid he would have been laid up, for he would not hear of a surgeon, and was that restless he would not even rest himself next morning, but was off first thing. I hope, my Lady—"

"Thank you, my son has quite recovered; indeed, it was a trifle. I fear the poor animal suffered most."

"Indeed, my Lady, the sprain was bad," the old woman went on, "but she had the veterinary surgeon directly, and I believe he says it will be none the worse, and I am glad of it, for he's a beautiful creature certainly; and it's a mercy, indeed, it's no worse, I'm sure; for you see, my Lady, Mr. Arthur was alone, and in that out-of-the-way place, if he had been stunned or hurt ever so bad, not a soul would be likely to pass, and we never would

have thought but Mr. Arthur had gone back to London—he not being in the habit of staying the night, even when it was bad weather; and again and again I have prepared his room, my Lady,” the garrulous old woman ran on—it was seldom her tongue got such license in that presence—and it just happened that very day that I had not, which did grieve me, I assure you my Lady.

“My son made no complaint,” the Viscountess said, and there she spoke truth; “doubtless he was satisfied.”

Finding no further encouragement for her garrulity, the worthy housekeeper departed, much gratified by the interview, to which had been imparted more of a familiar intercourse than she had probably enjoyed in all her thirty years’ service, or, as she termed it, “residence” in the family.

“Well, now,” she soliloquized, as she sat panting in her private apartments, recovering from the staircases, “to think that I should have been keeping it so close, not to distress her Ladyship, and here she knows all about it. Well, it’s a mercy he had made no complaint, for he’s particular like my lady herself, though he is a sweet gentleman as ever was born.”

Far less pleasant self-communings occupied the inmate of the boudoir, left alone, as she rose and spurned impatiently with her foot the “*Comedie di Goldoni*”—those witty pages, superbly bound, lying neglected on the floor.

It was no comedy in which her part had been chosen, which she had undertaken to play out, whose plot was thickening around her.

With the old gesture she paced hurriedly a time or two up and down the room, a deep frown upon her high white brow, which it could scarce be said to disfigure, suiting so entirely the lofty style of her queenly beauty.

From the overflow of her troubled brain, thoughts now and again would break into words, from which any one but partially aware of the source would

scarce have gathered the direction her troubles had taken.

“It was not fancy—I did not deceive myself—there is some other woman! His deferring to come down here! his neglect of her! But I will know the truth!”

Her hand was on the bell ere the resolve was formed, of which the two last words of my written sentence only were uttered aloud. Ere the bell had ceased ringing, Turner was in the apartment, though since its first tingle echoed through her room she had actually removed from her fingers every trace of the lunch, quitted in haste.

“My habit,” said the lady quietly, and the maid at once proceeded to equip her for riding.

Not a few ladies in the state of mind in which the Viscountess then was would have angrily demanded why the maid was not at her post, knowing the order respecting the horses; but her Ladyship was reasonable, and even then remembered that the horses had been desired an hour hence. Nevertheless, she was dressed, even to her hat with its snowy plume, scarlet tipped, to the diamond-buttoned gloves, and to the jewel-handled whip.

“My Lady, the horses were to be ready at two; it wants a quarter—shall I tell them?”

“No, I shall walk round;” to the stables she meant.

Her Ladyship had always been great at horsemanship, and was, in fact, no stranger to the well-kept domain of her favorites. It excited no surprise that she should mount there now, but, in any case, she would have done the same. Let the inferior organization expend itself in wondering, if it would, that she elected to act in such and such a way was enough for her, enough, too, for those who would blindly follow her lead, right or wrong as might be, no matter.

There was a general doffing of caps among the members of the fraternity present as my Lady turned the corner of the shrubbery which screened the stables from more general view. Her

appearance created no surprise nor commotion; rather it was looked upon as an honor, and personally so accepted by Bant, now the head of the establishment, and who, at the moment of her appearance, was occupied with the convalescent Capri, about whom a little group of the brotherhood had assembled, exchanging valuable opinions. Her own horse was just being led out by her Ladyship’s groom, a diminutive object, who looked as though he might have been born on horseback, and bred in a curriculum.

On his mistress making her appearance, he at once led the horses to where he knew she would mount; the other men withdrew, and Bant, advancing to meet her, would have relinquished the bridle to another hand, but her Ladyship negatived it, by at once instituting inquiries respecting the animal.

“Poor fellow; poor Capri,” she said, stroking the horse—which certainly seemed to recognize and acknowledge the caress—with more evidence of feeling than she often testified to anything living, save her youngest son.

“Is he quite restored?” she asked of the head groom, who eagerly answered in the affirmative.

“Though it was near being a bad case, my Lady, I assure you,” he added, with the sagacity of a physician who gravely informs you that you have called him just in time, “only just in time.” “A deal of care and management, I give you my word, my Lady, it has taken to bring him round; though he is as right now, ay, as sound as ever.”

“We always thought Capri so sure footed,” says her Ladyship; meanwhile suffering the nose of the animal to nestle in her palm, or snift at her plume.

“And so he is,” returns the man. “Not a surer nor a better animal, my Lady, in my Lord’s stables, which is to say the whole country-side; but what would you expect, my Lady, if a gentleman will ride steeplechase

down places that are n’t decent footing for a Christian? Why, bless you, my Lady—” Bant was forgetting himself in his energy, and drew in in time.

“I beg your pardon, my Lady, but it was only the last time before, when Mr. Arthur was down here, that I saw him come the same way down from Sea View, that I said, ‘there’ll be an accident one of these days.’ Thank Heaven it was no worse, I say.”

“I did not know there was a path to the high ground any way but by the village,” said the lady, listening, seemingly with apathetic tolerance, to the man’s half-angry protest; for, be it remembered, Bant loved his horses, and did not love that younger son whom the lady, his mistress, to his thinking, so unjustly preferred. The head-groom was also an independent and a bold man, after his fashion, studying his employers’ welfare more than homage to them personally, and valued accordingly.

“No more there was, my Lady, till lately. It was but a rocky sort of pathway, that sloped off after a bit to the main road; but since the old foreign gentleman came to live at Sea View they made a path right down, going to and from the house; it comes out just a bit opposite the private entrance to the park. Hallo, Capri! I beg your pardon, my Lady; he’s as nervous as can be.”

The horse had reared in a moment, till its forefeet almost touched her plume; startled, may be, by the sudden movement of the lady’s hand as the man spoke. It must have been a sharp thought that could have stung her so for the moment; she who never stirred even at the visible danger, but laid her arm soothingly across the favorite’s mane, as he descended to quadrupedal level once more.

“Good Capri, your master must be more careful,” she said; then slightly acknowledging the man’s bow, she turned away to where her own horse awaited her, and anon was in her

saddle, and cantering away, followed by the abortion wearing her Lord's livery.

"She's a picture in the saddle, and no mistake," muttered the head groom, as he gazed after her retreating figure. "But, Lord, what a cold one she is. Why, there she stood, listening to the jeopardy he'd run, him that she seems so fond of too, and just says no more than to ask me about was there a road up yonder? Oh dear, it's a rum world."

Bant might be an infallible judge of horseflesh, he certainly was not of their riders.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONFESSION AND DEFIANCE.

I DOUBT if any one ever soliloquized on horseback. At least he would be a very determined practiser of the indulgence who attempted it, and then the accessories had needs be peculiar.

A noontide grove, moss carpeted, a purling brook beside, and in perspective such a welcome as even anticipation cannot exceed in delight. Pshaw! even then, who would not push on by shade and moss, and purly streams, through the hot road beyond, to realize the glorious promise of the journey's completion? Melancholy, perhaps, returning from an unsuccessful errand of love or mercy—those twin and supreme rulers of the world—might betake itself to moralizing or bewailing its hard fate, throwing the rein upon the neck of the steed, which would then be apt to take to browsing by the wayside; while melancholy—crop-eared, close-shaven, and puritan-caped—lifted up its voice and wept. What a spectacle to tempt the profane to laughter!

No, I cannot think horseback favorable to soliloquy, whatever it may be to thought, and certes to neither was the pace adaptable at which my lady the Viscountess chose to dash along the bridle-path intersecting her own fair park of Deansholme, bordered and overhung by glorious old trees

which might have been centuries old, and still in their youth, to look at them.

From what she had heard that morning; from the manner she had learned that which had evidently been withheld from her knowledge by her son, for a reason, her own quick brain had woven a clue to facts, which, though till now she had accepted as perhaps needing no other solution than caprice, now wore an aspect so different by the light of those freshly acquired; an aspect so real, tallying so aptly with the half-formed suspicion she had dared scarce acknowledge to herself—that she, determined and unflinching as she was, almost shrank from contemplating it.

Some of you may know what it is to have, laid aside in the storehouse of memory, a fact or incident which you have never by a chance recurred to, till suddenly by a circumstance, a mere accident, or a chain of events, trifling in themselves, it is all at once recalled to you, and you pounce upon it, crying Eureka! with a certainty which is never at fault. Such instances of "finding out" are much more frequent than those remarkable cases traceable to stray gloves, handkerchiefs, curtained recesses, &c., &c., which, I am inclined to think, chiefly belong to the world of romance.

However neatly she might previously have gathered up the various strands, however determined upon forming them to their destined use, it was not till the groom uttered the name of "Sea View," that there flashed full upon the mind of the lady that swift conviction, that sudden linking with another idea, which was to bind, and fix, and resolve those strands into the clue she sought; nay, from the stepping-stones of doubt and conjecture and surmise, set her foot upon the solid shore of truth.

She remembered on the occasion of the last sojourn at the Abbey, when out riding with her son, they had passed the cottage nestling in its bushy covert; her attention had been

momentarily arrested by the figures of an old man and a lady issuing from the garden, to whose sign of recognition Arthur had returned, as the haughty dame had then thought, rather a superlative demonstration of respect.

To her query of who his acquaintance might be, he had replied—and as she had now no difficulty in persuading herself, with some hesitation—that the old gentleman was a German professor and author, from whom he had received some instruction when staying at St. Liddard's.

Since that hour the circumstance had never occurred to her, but now, with all the information she had that morning gained, with the fact of her son's frequent absence, and too apparent disinclination to the match she had planned for him—Well, I can hardly tell you what was passing in the mind of the lady, as she rode hastily on; there are moments supervening on such a discovery as she believed she had made, when thought is for a while suspended, and in the inability of our own faculties to resolve upon any definite line of route, we throw the reins upon the neck of Fate, and abandon ourselves to be carried whithersoever she listeth.

Doubtless the Viscountess had herself not the remotest notion of that which she would do in the next hour, or of so far committing herself to a course, certainly as little marked by prudence as belonging to her usual mode of action; but she was angry, indignant, wrathful; her spirit in arms against the influences that seemed combining to oppose her in this; as in her earlier scheme they had, in cruel complaisance, combined to favor her success.

Turning aside, without pause or drawing bridle, she followed a horse track apparently but recently revived, which led, between more closely-growing trees, to a private entrance of the park.

The groom passing before opened it, and they rode out into the high road, over which, deserted, silent, little used,

and dusty—as a country road might be—the arms of the lordly elms within the Abbey demesne threw a protecting shade. The lady did not resume the speed to which she had hitherto impelled her steed, but at a gentle walk pursued the line of grateful shadow, till they arrived at where an irregular pathway broke through the fern and wild waving herbage which clothed the rocky ascent, bounding the road on that side. Here she drew rein, and intimated to her attendant her intention of dismounting.

The abortive performed his accustomed duties with a celerity, and even grace, hardly to be expected; and then my Lady desired that the horses should return. "I shall walk," she said, as with one hand she drew down the thick veil which was attached to her hat, with the other gathering up the folds of her habit, in anticipation of ascending the rugged path before her.

The well-trained manikin performed a mute obeisance, and throwing himself into his saddle prepared to return by easy stages, and in the shade, leading by her bridle the beautiful creature which his mistress had ridden.

For the first few yards the lady proceeded leisurely; then, as if she would allow no time for reflection, she increased her pace; gathered up more completely the embarrassing drapery which she wore, and hurried on faster, even, for the obstacles that often impeded her momentarily, now and again striking down the bushy fern or brambles with her supple riding-whip, which in her present mood, aimed by no weakly hand, seemed a weapon sufficiently formidable. She reached the top, slightly out of breath, but more with the anxious impulse hurrying her forward than with the toils of the ascent.

Letting fall the skirts of her habit, she threw back her veil, and drawing herself to her full height, she gazed with a flushed face and straining eyes around.

The tranquillity of that lovely scene

might well have calmed the worst passions. The small brown cottage well nigh covered by flowering honeysuckle, and rose, and clematis, whose half-trained sprays mounted carelessly in the air, crept in at the open casement, toying with the white curtains that swayed coquettishly to and fro to meet them. The high hedge here and there dotted by a snowy flake where some small article of apparel, by Martha's housewifery, lay to bleach, —the precious shade of those close bowery trees, with the old rustic seat beneath, —the scent of many flowers, alas running to luxuriance all too wildly now, —the sounds —the lazy tide dallying with the shore beneath; the humble, loving coo of some wood-pigeon, lost to the eye in their retreat. It might be the very abode of Peace; and she, proud, wilful-hearted woman, might well have taken a lesson from it; at least not to disturb its sanctity with her trumpet of discord, but to turn her steps where such notes better befitted, and might, perchance, have a meaning.

But we are creatures of habit. I fear in the eyes of the noble lady the surpassing beauty of the scene was eclipsed by its homeliness. The gull, which wounded pride and anger made to overflow, jaundiced all the sweetness.

Dropping her veil again, she hurried forward. A few steps brought her to the gate of the little garden, which now was presented in full to her view; more neglected than when first we looked in upon it. There was even a weed or two beginning to show in the gravel path leading to the house.

She passed on to the porch; the Newfoundland lay full length across the doorway, opened his eyes blindly to gaze upon the stranger, but was far too sensible of the strength of his position to attempt any more active demonstration. In the small entrance lay a trunk or two stoutly corded, with some lighter preparations for travel. The squirrel cracked his nuts defiantly, and the shells seemed

to fall noisily in the utter silence of the dwelling.

As she stood still, with no set purpose in her mind, ere she had even asked herself what she did there, a figure appeared from the interior of the house coming down the entrance towards her.

The Viscountess at once recognized the young girl she had seen on the occasion we have mentioned, and there rushed upon her mind that tide of mingled emotions which bore her forward, unreasoning, to do she knew not what, nor cared whither. Yet — mortals of contradiction that we are — at that moment the innermost thought of the Viscountess, as she looked on that pale face, with its high broad brow surrounded by its thick curling, but careless, masses of fair hair, its large serious eyes with, alas! ever so slight a darkened shadow round them; while, woman as she was, the lady took in the black dress, becoming in itself with its snowy frill of net screening the fair full neck and shoulders, its graceful folds unassisted by modern device, sweeping noiselessly the soft matting, as she moved slowly along. I say her innermost thought was — and it should have rejoiced her —

"Can such a one be rival to her?"

The queenly Geraldine, in all the pride of her full, young, womanly nature, in her practised gracefulness, in her luxury of charms, in her accomplished fascinations, was before her as she spoke. Why could she not be comforted?

Could it be, that artificial as is the atmosphere of such lives as hers, it fails wholly to stifle that germ of Nature sequestered in the soul of each of us, that kinship with creation which will, perforce, at times be acknowledged?

Else whence arose that vague feeling of irritation which impelled the words, assuredly, she had never meant to utter?

"It is the same! You are the German professor's daughter."

As Josephine approached, the Newfoundland had risen and leisurely met her, thrusting his huge nose into her hand, and taking his place at her side.

She had reached the door as the lady spoke, and they stood one just within, the other without, the door.

"I am Josephine Strauzlaine," was the calm reply. "That was my father's name."

"Was! is he dead? And you live alone here?"

We must excuse the abruptness of the question, remembering the course the lady's suspicions had taken; the turn they not improbably would have received at this intimation.

"Not quite alone; but why? have you any business with me?"

She turned as she was speaking, and the visitor followed her to an apartment.

It was little changed in appearance since we last looked in upon it, save that some of the more light and ornamental objects had been removed.

A picture of the deceased professor too was gone; the Schiller no longer lay upon the window-seat; the curtains were drawn back from the recess, and the chair which had filled it had been removed to the little chamber above. But at the round table in the corner the old woman sat knitting away with more fixed assiduity than ever; she looked up briskly as the two entered, and her gaze lingered on the stranger; but she resumed her work, and apparently became absorbed in her employment.

The lady glanced hastily round, and an expression of scorn flitted across her features as she said hastily, —

"And he can pass his time here!"

"Of whom are you speaking?"

Josephine said in a low tone, but calm and self-possessed.

"Of whom?" exclaimed the Viscountess, rising with anger, "who should I mean but the son of Lord Honiton yonder, Mr. Power, he has visited you here again and again; you know it, you cannot deny it!"

"Certainly not," was the reply; "why should I deny it?"

"And you think it wise, you think it prudent, you can acknowledge it unblushingly — that you, young, alone, in this sequestered spot, permit gentlemen —"

"Pardon me, madam," interrupted Josephine, with dignity more natural to her than assumed, "there is no question of gentlemen: Mr. Power was a pupil of my father's, a dear and valued friend of us both; as such he visited us freely, and since I lost the dear father his visits have been my only happiness."

"Friend!" the Viscountess cried, with a passion which was fast hurrying her beyond all self-control. "He has told you he loved you, girl! confess it, he has told you."

A faint tinge passed over the face of Josephine, but died away even as she replied: —

"That, madam, you should ask of him; I have no right to betray his confidence."

"You know it is so, it is vain to deny it," said the Viscountess, hurrying out her words. "Do you know," she added, scornfully, "do you know, girl, that he is about to be married, to one in every way his equal; by station, fortune, person adapted to be his wife? do you know this?" she ended with a sneer, as if anticipating the answer.

"I do know it," replied Josephine. "He himself told me."

"He told you!" echoed the lady, "yet you have been base enough to encourage this disgraceful intimacy to presume upon the folly and weakness —"

"Stay," cried Josephine; "say what you will of me, put your own constructions, madam, it will not harm me, but you must do Arthur justice."

"Arthur! girl! to my face; do you know who I am?"

"I do know. Do you suppose, Lady Honiton, that I would have

permitted myself to be questioned thus by any other than his mother?"

"You love him?"

"Love him!" echoed Josephine, her eyes kindling with that inner light peculiar to them; "love him!" she repeated, and the tone was answer sufficient.

"And you dare tell me this?" almost shrieked the wife of the great conservative lord; it was all she could at the moment gasp out.

"Dare!" exclaimed Josephine, in fervent tones, "have I not dared tell it to my God? In the still night, when my dear dead father seems ever near me, have I not dared tell it to his spirit? When I pray for him, ah! as none other ever can pray for him, have I not told it to Heaven, and should I shrink from telling it to you? I tell you, Lady Honiton, I love Arthur better than my life—better than my soul I love him, and shall love him till I die."

She had risen from her seat as she spoke, inspired by the intensity of her emotion; she stood, her head proudly raised, looking full into the still veiled face of the other, her words poured forth impetuously, her lips growing whiter as she uttered them with that slightly foreign accent which, in moments of excitement, was noticeable.

"Wretched girl! you have told him this; you knew of his marriage, yet permitted—"

A smile of scorn, more bitter than that which had wreathed the patrician lips, lighted up every feature in the younger woman's countenance.

"You know little of the noble nature of your own son, madam," she said with a forced coldness, "and may be excused for your judgment of myself. In the same breath that he told me of his love, he told me also of his engagement to another."

"And he comes no more?" the lady asked, while a ray of triumph gleamed in her eyes.

"He never knew I loved him," said the girl in a low tone, but full of meaning.

An expression of contempt escaped her Ladyship.

Josephine did not heed, but went on speaking.

"Yes, madam, your son chose rather to yield obedience to the mother who understands him so poorly, and can so little estimate the best qualities of his nature, and God knows from my soul I honor him for it, and would crush my own heart to help him do that which he believed his duty."

"Pshaw! child," said the lady, "the foolish admiration of my son has turned your head. The mere fancy of an hour, and you talk as if, forsooth, you had influence with him."

Again Josephine's eyes darted light, again her whole countenance shone with mingled scorn and conscious power.

"You condemn what you do not comprehend," she said. "You are a lady nobly born, I am the daughter of a servant; yes, madam, a poor English waiting-woman, think of that; yet I love your son, yet I avoid him, and for his sake—" She held up her hand deprecatingly as the Viscountess would have spoken. "You see those trunks; I am going, to-day I quit this place, and England. I bear my love for Arthur out with me into the world, I am proud of it, as he should have been, had all been different. I tell you,—you cannot help it, you shall hear it. You do not believe in what you never felt or knew, but I tell you, that as soul answers to soul, as love gives power and is mighty to overcome, that had I willed it—had I but told your son my love, I who knew him, I who understood him, to whose soul my own reached forth and recognized in all its sympathies,—I tell you, Lady Honiton, your scheme, with all its cunning and its selfishness, had failed, had my love been known to him, had we met upon that ground but once. I love your son, with all the strength of my being I love him, but I loved his honor better. I would to God I could believe he will be happy. If he were less loving, less

noble, less true-hearted, he would have better chance of being so in the lot you have portioned to him."

Struck even from the pinnacle of her supreme haughtiness, the Viscountess had remained mute, as if compelled by the intensity of passion which moved the speaker, standing like an inspired Pythoness of old, her grand eyes darting indignant fire, every feature irradiated with scorn, her whole expression changed and elevated by the feelings which for the time had lifted her out of herself.

As her voice ceased there was a pause; then the Viscountess, who, as if panting for air, had flung back her veil, was about to speak, when Josephine said, laying a hand lightly upon the arm of the other, which the lady hastily threw off,—

"Let us have no more of this. Lady Honiton, you can have nothing to do with me. What you wanted to know you have learned. I will not remind you how you have even insulted me, and perhaps still do so, with your suspicions. But no more, if you please. Here at least I am mistress, and can request it. Your Ladyship's own interest will keep you silent elsewhere."

The Viscountess turned upon her, with an indignant reply upon her lips, when a loud cry from the old woman in the corner arrested her, and Josephine hastened to her side.

She was mouthing and gesticulating vehemently, giving vent to some incoherent sentences, her eyes meanwhile fixed upon the Viscountess.

"I must beg your Ladyship to leave us," said Josephine stiffly, "the presence of strangers disturbs my grandmother at times."

Marthon ran in by another door, she seemed to possess most power of soothing the ancient invalid, who was led out, uttering mingled protests and detached fragments respecting the "three-quarter moon," a "deal box," and "Mrs. Smith," in all of which Marthon coincided, and abetted her

complaisantly, till the poor old soul gradually grew calmer.

Meanwhile the Viscountess Honiton had quitted the cottage and descended the hill. Let us leave her to the consolation of that late repentance which waits upon defeat.

* * * * *

"God help me to bear all this," wept Josephine, as, pale and weary, she knelt by the side of the little white bed, this last night before her departure. "God help me! I cannot forget, I cannot try, but if the spirits of the good have power near Goodness' self; oh! dear father, help me that I may be led to think of him without sin, that he at least may be happy, that he may—oh! it is best—that he may forget me."

CHAPTER XVII.

"TILL DEATH DO US PART."

"By the Very Reverend and Right Honorable the Bishop of Blanquette, assisted by the Revds. Lamprey Smooth and Finne E. Slime, on the 16th inst., at the private chapel of Deansholme Abbey, &c. &c., Arthur Power, son of Lord and Viscountess Honiton and Lofthorough, to Lady Geraldine Linage," &c. &c.

A neatly turned paragraph, and—though of the lengthiest—reflecting great honor on its concocter; indeed, the same might be said of every part of the ceremony to its smallest minutiae, on all sides acknowledged to be perfect, from the lofty dignitary and his duly qualified assistants who united in tying the nuptial knot, down to those visible and glistening symbols which were distributed broadcast throughout the village, and decorated the breast of every man, woman, and child therein on that conspicuous morning, which made one of two as dissimilar, uncongenial, and opposite natures as, perhaps, ever joined hands to the solemn words which head our chapter.

Yet what would you? If by a Right Rev. a Bishop and an Honorable, "assisted" by two most courtly and high church ministers of the Gospel—if the sacred bonds knotted by such saintly hands be not unobjectionable—fie on it! away with cavilling! A more satisfactory match was never seen; she surpassingly lovely, he excelling in manly beauty—in both the perfection of grace, and youth, and high-bred dignity—a trifle the advantage on her side as to the latter.

The glorious autumn sun shone resplendently in the deep blue skies over the broad acres of Deansholme, over harvest-fields ripe for the sickle, over russet woods, and orchards and gardens languid with summer's lusty blossoming; over all whereon, far as eye could reach, wrote itself in broad characters "mine," by the ancient right of the Lords of Deansholme, whose heir that day was passing from under the shadow of their roof-tree to stretch himself and grow great in the reflected glories of a rich alliance. Some such thoughts—for, woman as she was, deep reflection was familiar to her brain—might have visited the lady as she rose to the glory of that morning, and looked from her window upon the wide sun-lit, living landscape, out where the golden-tinted sea washed the shelving beach, out to the distant bay, where the fairy yacht, like a white-winged bird, sat upon the peaceful waters, out yet further, where, on the dimly-showing crag the lighthouse flashed back the sun-rays from its friendly-warning panes, a perpetual eulogy on the munificence of Deansholme's lords.

The day had come, big with fulfilment of her dearest hopes—fruition visited her desire; yet the tree on which they had been grafted, which long ago she had planted, which, alas! success had only too signally attended, that tree flourished and overshadowed all—the fruition was bitterness. Banishment and wrong sounded in the peal which chimed from the village

steeple so sweetly, and fell upon the mother's ear like a reproach.

"Oh, my God! why dost thou grant all our prayers?"

The words broke from her in a pitiful lament as she turned from the contemplation of the scene, the wealth and beauty and luxury with which she had endowed a beggar. How well she played her part that day, the proud woman, the fond mother, the beautiful matron,—how sublime her tenderness, how majestic her beauty! The county paper, the *Loftborough Crawler*, had three leading articles that week, founded upon the event of the day, of the rampaging, the whining, and the adulatory strain, and which all went to prove that womanly virtues, maternal tenderness, and hereditary beauty, had taken refuge in the ancient nobility of Britain. The *Crawler* had not had such an opportunity of distinguishing itself in its peculiar line, since the auspicious event of some twenty-eight years ago—"the birth of an heir to the illustrious house, &c. &c.,"—and it made the most of it.

But the bride.

"My dear, it was the most angelic—a perfect cloud of lace and satin,—and the flowers! It was a strange fancy, perhaps, the lotus flower with the orange blossoms; but the effect, I assure you, with her dark hair, it was heavenly! She was a perfect queen. He was so pale, and so grave, but so handsome; and as perfect, my dear, in the ceremony! you know what a muddle so many of them make of the words, and that our sex are always pat enough in it, and really the men always make us blush for them; but I assure you he went through with it like a perfect automaton—if he'd practised he could not have been more exact. They were a pair, I assure you, and the Viscountess was a picture—how the people did cheer! The Earl always looks himself, and it was very affecting when he kissed the bride's forehead. The eldest son, Mr. Aden Power, too, was there, with his black

curling hair and broad shoulders. You know how your mamma admired him; she calls him a truly aristocratic form and face; but to my mind he had been better left out. Handsome as he is, he seemed quite to throw a chill over all the rest, so stern and stately, and solemn he looks, with his large eyes and fixed look. But I must not forget the bridesmaids—"

I, ungallant, must decline to enter into the raptures of a young lady's further description of the wedding. The glories of the bishop's lawn, the freshness of the bridesmaids' bonnets, the list of the distinguished visitors who graced the exclusive breakfast, that breakfast's uncounted luxuries, the whispered gorgeousness of the bridal trousseau, the recherche fashion of the travelling carriage which bore away the happy couple to the devices of the honeymoon—all must remain unchronicled by me.

Vainly should I seek to emulate the unctuous style of the *Crawler*, which, in glowing type, set forth the doings of that day when, as he so expressed it, "Revelry reigned throughout the lordly precincts, and not a child but in after-ages shall recall with a thrill of delight the hallowed occasion of, &c., &c."—my humble pen fails in further attempt to follow in the flight.

The brilliant sun which had risen on the morning of the day continued on his course unclouded to its close. Night came softly down as if loth to put the finale to a scene of rejoicing, the waves sobbed out their complaint at the foot of the rocks, and the pitying stars listened, while their queen shed her peaceful promises on all.

The little cottage on the cliff is close shut, the jasmine blossoms strew the path, and the tendrils of the honeysuckle wander recklessly upon the air. Its mistress is far away, where the wedding bells will never reach her ears. Simple Marthon, believing the moonlight always disturbs her invalid charge, has shut it out, and the honest guardian in the porch utters now and then a deprecatory growl, and shakes

his long ears as he starts from his slumber.

Whatever memories or attachment in spirit-form may hover around, to all outward semblance Sea View is deserted, and at rest.

In the mansion below the inferior beings are yawning with fatigue, and aspiring to repose amid the remnants of festivity.

"Well, that job's done," says irreverently a sleepy-eyed Hercules in plush.

"She is a stunner, and no mistake, my lady in her own right, hey?"

"It was a rum start, though, insisting on the youngster's going with 'em on their tour."

"Ah!" says a fellow-servant, "our lady wanted to have kept him with her, but it was no go."

"He's a pretty sort, I reckon; think of his flying at Mr. Arthur in that way. 'You're a beast,' says the little angel, 'and I won't call you my pa, I hate you,' says he. And his ma, the bride, never to say a word, but draws him to her and kisses him as sweet as need be."

"Um! a chip of the old block, I fancy. She'll hold her own, take my word for it. Wish Mr. Arthur joy of his bargain."

"Hi! but the tin, think of that; why there is but two they say in all England that has a larger income than her."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WHITE HOUSE.

WITHIN a mile of a certain village on the banks of the Rhine,—which, since the date of our story, the fame of certain baths is rapidly bringing into fame and fashion,—in a sleepy little valley snugly ensconced between ever-green hills, stood an English-built house of ample dimensions, yet with so little pretence to style or taste as to disavow all claim to the title of mansion or villa.

It was white, showing conspicuously so among the noble trees and verdant

fields by which it was surrounded, and certainly no more distinctive name could have been found for the dwelling than that which had been bestowed upon it by the neighboring villagers and peasantry, who in their own language distinguished the servants, the owners, even the cattle and poultry belonging to the land on which it stood, as those of the White House.

Comfortable, roomy, and to hospitable purposes most especially adapted, was the dwelling within and without; while beauty was in every direction made subservient to use, nature had gained so far the ascendancy over art, that she triumphed even over the innovations of agriculture, and set matter-of-fact husbandry at defiance. Beautiful the spot had been at its creation, and beautiful it would remain. Nature, like a sweet-tempered woman whose smiles grow brighter in adversity, and whose loveliness acquires even a higher radiance under the hard hand of necessity, seemed never weary of showering her graces upon the favored spot; and the seasons, which marked with change, at least failed in anything to deteriorate from the attractions of the White House.

Built by an eccentric Englishman in a freak of seclusion, which had scarcely outlived the airing of the substantial walls he had reared, the house speedily became the possession of another, to whom seclusion was less a matter of choice than a painful alternative. Charles Meryt, in the prime of life, had suffered the wreck of all his domestic ties through the misconduct of a vain, frivolous, and beautiful wife, who, however, had not long outlived the sin of which she had been guilty.

He had come soon after to take possession of the White House, in that sequestered valley, amid total strangers, seeking the peace not of forgetfulness but of resignation; a task not the more easy from certain misgivings not to be avoided, which accused him too truthfully of being in some sort blamable for the terrible misfortune

which had sullied his children's name with dishonor, and blighted his own happiness forever.

That he had allied his fate with one who, beyond the attraction of surpassing beauty and grace of form and features, had not one quality to win either love or admiration, not one trait or feeling in sympathy with his own, was, to begin with, bad enough; but he had—and alas! too late he owned it—never made the smallest attempt to strengthen or improve her mind, to overcome her many failings—nay, had rather shrunk from even acknowledging them to himself.

Sunk in a blind idolatry of the creature's perfection, he had failed to extract its sting, and even suffered the sweet poison to accumulate and to suffuse the whole. Well; the story is none so rare. Idleness, that rich soil, lay fallow and well prepared by those twin tillers, vanity and selfishness, all ready to the tempter's hand; and when reason too late made herself heard, the voice sounded like that of a tyrant.

Without more words the tale may be read. A desolated home, a dishonored husband, a helpless little family dependent for love and care upon hirelings. He, the husband, never made one step, nor moved a finger to the pursuit or the rescue. Perhaps, his eyes once open, the flood of truth stunned with too ample elucidation; or that even then some faint remains of the old idolatry moved him towards her.

He left immediately the gay town where at the time the family had been staying, and became the purchaser of the residence we have indicated, where he took up his abode with his children—one a mere babe—the usual retinue of a well-to-do household, and a young English woman long attached to his family, and who, though herself married, had at his earnest request returned for a time to confer her loving cares upon the bereaved little ones.

Nearly eighteen years have passed since the saddened household first became objects of remark and wonder-

ment for the little German hamlet; and in that time, like the small wheel in the great machine, the quiet village has in its varying aspect imitated in miniature the movements of more important places. The virtues of those bubbling springs had become more widely spread, and found to be capable of effects more potent than the washerwomen of the village had yet attributed to them. Houses were growing up, beer and wine shops establishing. Beyond the confines of civilization, as the White House had once been supposed to stand, the link of rapidly-increasing commerce and vitality bade fair at no distant time to unite them.

Still Nature held her own bravely within the sequestered little glen, and at this time even gave no sign of ever degenerating into the slow place and stereotyped guide-book vignette it has since become.

Within also changes had passed as surely as without. Of the little ones left so abruptly motherless, two had been saved all worldly consequences of her fault, had gone where one might fain hope such intercessors would find favor near the Great Throne. Two remained to fulfil to the uttermost, as far as might be, the office of comforters to their father.

The young English nurse, too, had long since gone home, after an interval of quiet domestic happiness, all too brief for those who loved her. Her later lot in life had indeed been happier than the first, and soothed by a husband's protecting love, and affection of her baby girl, a few years had glided softly away, cheered by competency, and gilded by the happy consciousness that she had made peaceful the last days of the aged mother who was destined to outlive her. Poor, gentle, pretty, honest Mary; it is pleasant to think all her existence was not doomed to feel the chill winds of poverty, and that, appreciated for the wealth of simple love in her lowly nature, the woman found her destiny fulfilled in pleasantness; yet I doubt if Mary's

last thoughts upon that peaceful death-bed were all for the good husband and protector, of the helpless old mother, nay, even for the prattling golden-haired child. If the wistful spirit of the departing be permitted indeed to take tangible form even to these material eyes at times, there was a dreary garret far away not unvisited that night, and Brettle's Buildings might be hallowed by the expiring sigh of a mother who fondly hoped she should now rejoin her firstborn in his humble grave.

I know, dear reader, these last lines reveal no surprise to you, there has been no secret attempted. You will long since have known who Josephine is, and what tender interests have attended her intimacy with the family at the White House.

A more welcome addition to that little circle could not have been imagined; the visit so often promised had been delayed, many times, first on account of her father's increasing infirmities, then his death, and subsequently for no better reason than that it had been so pleasant to linger at Sea View, the more that the attraction was so intangible, the end so undefined. Did she reproach herself now? did she wish it had been otherwise?—Loving him so well, did she never question the wisdom of that self-imposed line of duty by which she had willed her own fate and suffered his to accomplish itself!

Perhaps we had better not inquire too closely; sufficient it is for us to know, that if such regrets or doubts did at times arise, they were as quickly chased away; or, at least, so firmly repressed, that none save herself could dream of their existence.

It was early morning, but at the White House all were astir. Habits of fashion had not yet so far invaded that secluded spot as to push the breakfast hour on to the meridian, and thus rob it of the balmy freshness of the new-born day, which is the special charm of that meal, and for which not all the devices of dainty meats and

luxurious appetizers can ever compensate.

The sun, just lifting himself above the mountain crests, looked down into the lake below, whose still waters joyously reflected his golden rays, and sparkling radiantly in the promise of the coming day, while every tree and shrub, the smooth lawn, the grass bank sloping to the water's edge, nay, those very waters themselves, seemed quick with new starting life, that trilled, and leapt, and basked, darted swift aloft, or trembling hung poised in mid-air,—animate with the rapture of existence.

Within the lofty spacious apartment ordinarily occupied by the family, opening upon the turf terrace, commanding from two sides views of the lake and the more distant mountains, breakfast was laid. An ample meal, and which, if not including quite all the more delicate concomitants to which dainty palates have been accustomed, offered a sufficiently ample selection both to German and English tastes.

Only the posts of honor appropriated to the tea-urn and coffee-pot were as yet vacant, awaiting the gathering of the household, at present represented only in the person of a shaggy dog of the St. Bernard breed, which, stretched beside the seat ordinarily occupied by the master, preserved a rigorous demeanor of the most aristocratic indifference to the tempting viands in his vicinity; though from time to time a watchful eye, partially opened, was turned in their direction with a glance that told of a consciousness which bided its time.

The room was plainly furnished, almost severely so, yet with no want of comfort, and its ample dimensions and the view from the lofty windows, framed by their sober drapery of grey stuff, gave an air of grandeur to the general aspect which no effect of costly upholstery could have equalled.

No contrast could have been more complete than that between the White House and lovely Merytvale, where first we made the acquaintance of the

sisters, with whom poor Mary's after-fate was linked. It was like an eagle's eyrie to a wren's nest hid in a rose bower. If the husband, designing to banish all recollections of his ill-starred wife, had chosen his abode accordingly, he had indeed made an apt selection.

The wide lake, which, though now sparkling like a bed of diamonds, could show black as midnight under the gathering storm,—the hills whose fruitful base and verdant ascent told little of the thorny brake and bramble which clothed their summits,—the more distant mountains girt with pine forest and snow-capped, and whose breath tempered the burning south wind in its kiss ere it reached the smiling valley,—these were the chief features of the scene, and which took captive the more ambitious eyes, which might forget perhaps to mark how, nearer home, the fruitful orchards bent beneath their varied load, how parterres, flower-crowded, filled the air with perfume, and bee-hives, poultry-yards, and stalled kine gave ample token that even in the dreamy grandeur of that sublime prospect the creature had not neglected its comforts nor its pleasures.

A hoarse-sounding horn had been blown apparently at the back of the house, and while its echoes were yet troubling the affronted hills beyond the lake, a figure appeared swiftly crossing the smooth turf in the direction of the house; and in another minute had entered at the opened window of the breakfast-room.

As she pauses to disengage from her skirt the clinging rose-bush which had caught it with a sudden embrace, I may briefly describe her. She was rather over the middle height of women, not robust, but lithe, not strongly built, but supple; her dark hair evidently rebelled against the art which had been employed to reduce it to decorum, and where it could escape defiantly asserted its natural tendency to curl and twine itself over ears, neck, or brows.

Dark by nature, her complexion was in keeping with her hair and eyes, as

nearly black as laughing sun-lit eyes can be,—yet exposure had done much to further bronze her skin, as might be seen when, lifting off the hat she wore, her forehead contrasted with cheeks, chin, and neck.

Hands of the most perfect symmetry, teeth which made a full apology for a mouth not over small, a chin and nose so pleasing one forgot to mark their exact shape, a figure which could afford to dispense with every device of art to improve or fashion it. So far goes my description; feeling as I write how lamentably lame and poor it is to picture to you the original; for how can words ever convey the impalpable and invisible which surrounds and is of the person, yet is no more a feature or a grace than is the perfume of the rose to be traced by the pencil which so aptly portrays its tinted petal.

If I said she was an embodied smile, if I wrote that when she entered the room she brought the sunshine with her, if I had set down that to look on her was to feel your heart lightened and your spirit drawn forth, you knew not why nor wherefore,—these are but words after all, hackneyed expressions which utterly fail to realize the truth to him who has not himself experienced it, while to one who in his acquaintance numbers such, I need draw no portrait. Health may give buoyancy, good spirits, and keenness furnish wit, but the health may be vulgar, the wit unkind; the union of the first, the exception of the last is perhaps rare; and it went to form the nameless attraction which hung about Sydney Meryt.

The summons to breakfast was some minutes late that morning; she knew it, and did not delay to go to her room again, but hastily laying aside her hat, proceeded to cast a scrutinizing eye over the breakfast table; rectifying some items of its arrangements according to her own taste, removing one dish, clearing a space for another.

A few choice flowers she had brought in with her she laid beside one of the covers, and facing it she sat, in lieu

of the ordinary carved seats belonging to the furniture of the room, a cushioned chair of more luxurious capacities. The old St. Bernard watched her movements with a dogged approbation, but made no sign of particular friendliness, even when Sydney paused to stroke his shaggy head.

A servant entering the room, in answer to her summons, the young lady desired that a certain dish should be brought.

"And take this away," she added, indicating one she had removed, "Miss Strauzlaine has been long enough in England to have a preference for some English dishes, no doubt,—place it just here, if you please."

The man obeyed, and Sydney withdrew for a few minutes to a small closet opening between two larger rooms, where were a looking-glass and the *et ceteras* of a hasty toilette. As she quitted the room, the outer door opened, and the master of the house entered, followed by his second daughter, who paused at the threshold to greet a lady at the moment approaching from the garden.

"And I promised to go with you," she exclaimed; "such resolutions as I made of rising betimes! but I will scold Sydney, for she has been of course—"

"Not with me," was the reply of the visitor, as they entered the room together, and received the greeting of Mr. Meryt, and the silent demonstrations of the St. Bernard together.

"Oh, but she has," said Ada, as she approached the breakfast table, "Sydney has been to the further garden; I know by these flowers, see, are n't they beautiful? but you shall have half:" she shared the flowers with their guest, and, as Sydney entered, fell to accusing her that she had not awakened her to share the morning walk.

"You know how I wished to show Josephine the view where the wood has been cut; why did you not wake me?"

"The dew was so thick, dear, and

indeed there was such a mist, the view would be nothing," was Sydney's response.

"I did not go there, Ada," interposed Josephine quietly; "I took my walk across the bridge down below, over to the hills."

"The old walk," said Sydney, "I know, I wish I had met you; but I was nearer home. The wood-pigeons have flown, Ada, and the brown hen and the guinea-fowl are sitting, and father Carl is very anxious about the ponies; he wants to see you, if you please, after breakfast; and do you know, Ada, the old white rose that we thought had quite done flowering, has buds, such a number!"

She was interrupted in her domestic bulletin by her father asking, somewhat impatiently, "Is your aunt Claudia coming to breakfast this morning?"

"Yes, papa, I heard her window open as I was coming down," replied Ada.

A longer interval elapsed, then a message was sent by a maid to acquaint the lady that breakfast was waiting.

"I am very sorry," Sydney said in a low voice to Josephine, "that my aunt should have chanced to be here just now. It is bad enough for us, but for a stranger, that is, I mean, one not accustomed to her peculiarities—"

"But in what—how?" asked Josephine.

"Oh you must see and judge for yourself; she is so altered, even from what I can remember: but here she comes. Ada dear, here is aunt."

This to her sister, who was toying with the flowers in a listless manner upon her plate. The wayward manners of the delicate girl were too often provocative of the aunt's indignant sallies, and these it was part of Sydney's kindly tactics to avert.

It seemed as if a warning were needed also in another quarter. The St. Bernard had risen to his feet, and uneasily his ears and tail were twitch-

ing in concert, as a footstep sounded on the stairs.

"Be quiet, Alp!" the young lady said in a low voice, and the dog, with evident self-constraint, subsided as the door opened, and a loud voice was heard, preceding its owner, who had paused outside.

"And, Jeanne, see that my boots are ready—yes, of course the thick ones, child—I shall walk to the town. Stuff and nonsense! the weather indeed! I suppose a little rain will not melt us."

The speaker entered, and Sydney rose to present their visitor to her aunt, for though Josephine was not a stranger to the lady, so many years had elapsed since their last meeting, they might well be excused from recognizing each other.

Preoccupied as her mind already was by tender recollections awakened in that morning ramble, which in past times she had so often shared with her father, Josephine could not look without curiosity upon the singular figure of the lady who entered, and to whom Sydney was now introducing her with a few kindly words of affection, that seemed, however, to have little effect upon the elder; she merely gave a nod of reception, and said, "Ah, yes, I remember; hope you are well;" then passed on to the seat, and with an off-hand greeting to her brother-in-law, at once commenced her breakfast.

Of her age I would not rashly venture a surmise, though, allowing conjecture a wide range, from perhaps thirty to forty-seven. Her hair, cut short, was parted on one side, and frizzed in a tormented style, not to be called curling, about her ears. She wore a dress of black stuff, of a fashion decidedly peculiar, and which did not to appearance compensate by ease or convenience for its originality. The sleeves were tight, and terminated at the wrist by a cuff of black velvet fastened with a large button; a collar of the same material surrounded the throat and crossed upon the breast, with more buttons, whose utility was

not precisely indicated. The garment resembled, in fact, a cross between a coat and some female vestment, and was wholly unrelieved by a particle of linen or lace, bow or jewel, or such small additions as we are accustomed to associate with feminine attire.

Her features were large, but coarse, her eyes full, but hard, almost defiant; her hands exceedingly well formed, as were the nails, though poor Goldsmith might have pointed triumphantly to them, as indicating a simile of his in natural history, over which wits and cleanly people have made merry.

The lady's figure inclined rather to the rotund than the angular, but whether it was the fault of her dress-maker or the consequence of her own contempt for all established modes, her skirts, devoid of all plait, fulness, or gather, whichever it may be, did so clip and compass her round form, that the effect was, to use a mild term, the reverse of "flowing."

Decidedly aunt Claudia had established claims to the title of strong-minded; but as the greatest have been known to possess their weakness, so had she hers, and it was on the score of teeth. She boasted a set of the whitest, the most even, and the largest that were perhaps ever seen, and on no occasion, whether of eating, talking, or laughing, did she miss the opportunity for display. Ill-natured people said she had reason to value them, reasons of £ s. d.; but that is not credible, seeing that aunt Claudia had furious good health, was of temperate habits, and, in spite of her hideous costume, only narrowly escaped being handsome.

You will quite understand, after even this slight sketch, that aunt Claudia would be great at "Woman's Mission," went in for "Rights," at high pressure rate; even to the franchise, the pulpit, the bench, and the right down, thorough paced, top to toe, body and soul, general "Emancipation of the Sex" movement.

Poor lady! it was the culmination of the error. The fast young amazon

of—how many years ago? what else had she to take refuge in, when the evening came, when the dews fell, and the night-winds whistled, and she had kindled no hearth, smoothed no couch, nor lighted the lamp of domestic love which should have welcomed her to the woman's fittest shrine—a home.

CHAPTER XIX.

BREAKFAST CHAT.

THE good lady held a bundle of newspapers in her hand, which she deposited beside her plate, and into which she dipped alternately with that; commenting on the contents of either, without interrupting the progress of the meal; something after this fashion:—

"'English news,' hum! 'Ill-treatment of wife by her husband'—can't call *that* news, however—staple article that among our items. Serve them right, too, the broken-spirited wretches: when will they learn to hold their own? This collared head is delicious; it really does you credit, child"—to Sidney—"but I don't suppose *you* had much to do with it either."

"Indeed but I think she had, Claudia," interrupted Mr. Meryt: "there is very little comes to the table but Sidney has had the supervision of it, if not an actual finger in it: eh, my dear?"

Sidney blushed a grateful acknowledgment of the compliment; from her father rare enough to make it valuable.

"Yes; well I know it is rather the fashion now-a-days to go in for making girls into pudding machines, mince-meat choppers, and that sort of thing. I haven't any very high opinion of your sex myself, brother; but I don't quite believe the nearest way to a man's heart is through his stomach."

Sidney looked at Josephine, who regarded the plainspoken lady with looks of astonishment. Adela with difficulty repressed a smile; Mr. Meryt laughed outright.

"Seeing that the only member of

the sex alluded to in this matter must be myself," he said, "I beg leave emphatically to deny such an implication. But surely, Claudia, your own admission that the dish is good is sufficient to absolve my girl from any exclusive design upon male affections in her proficiency."

The laugh went round. Certainly Aunt Claudia was an ample testimony that she by no means disdained such proficiency.

"Ah, well," she said, returning to her papers; "such things are well enough for those whose talent lies *that way*."

Sidney's dark cheek flushed momentarily at the emphasis; but it passed as quickly, and the next instant she was doing the duties of the meal most hospitably; indicating to Josephine some dish she remembered to be a favorite long ago: now prompting Adela's delicate appetite, now assiduously anticipating her father's desires, now pressing Aunt Claudia to try something she was sure she would like.

"Here is a speech, five columns long, of that Lord Rantipole to his constituents," again the maiden lady gave forth. "Has that man no one to stop his mouth? it would be a charity to himself—really it would: the rubbish he contrives to accumulate in that head of his, and then with a stir and a warm in the stewpan of his own noddle, serves it up with a little of his own sauce as an entirely original dish."

"Why, aunt," laughed Sidney, "you are borrowing your similes all out of my department, surely!"

"You are hard on Rantipole, Claude, I think," said the father. "If his opinions be not always consistent, and his manner of expressing himself not quite original, he has at least a good fund of information, and his heart is in the right place. We may forgive him for opening his mouth now and then—not always wisely or wittily—when we remember the many he has filled, from his own resources, and with so liberal a hand."

"Pshaw! what have feelings and

soft natures to do with legislation, brother? But you always did go in so for universal benevolence and charity and that—"

Mr. Meryt made no answer, and for a moment there was silence; perhaps it struck every one, in various ways, how much of that speech was true, and how such a kindly nature had been ill-requited and outraged in its tenderest part.

But the Amazonian maiden, clad as in armor of armadillo, never heeded these mere susceptibilities. She was still occupied alternately with the journals and mouthfuls of Strasbourg pie—quoting from the former as she read:—

"And he was sure, from the genial and hearty concurrence he beheld in those pleasant and inspiring countenances around him—'Pshaw! what a fool the man is. Brother, I do wonder how *you* can stand up for him! Why, you remember his speech upon the 'Mousetrap Bill,' and how he got scouted, and, in fact, regularly put down."

Her brother-in-law was listening, with an amused smile, waiting to the end; and wickedly allowing the lady to air her blunder and her white teeth to the full. As she finished her vigorous denunciation he burst into a laugh, and shook his head deprecatingly, as he said, "Oh! Claude, Claude!"—for such blunders were not uncommon with the lady politician, who was apt to get her facts slightly confused.

"You are speaking of Sir Harry Bantam, ma'am, I think, now," said Josephine, in that clear quiet voice which at once claims attention.

Claudia turned sharply towards her.

"Dear me," she said, "are *you* a politician?"

"Not in the least, I assure you," replied the young lady: "it was by a mere chance I was able to recall that fact; but it is so fixed on my mind that I am not likely to forget it. My father was alive at the time; and he, with a dear friend then visiting him, were often engaged in discussions on

the great topic of the day. The speeches and the names of those most actively engaged in the question, became quite familiar to me;—that is all, I assure you."

"And *your* opinion, Miss Strauzlaine?"

Josephine shook her head.

"I could not help, of course, siding to some extent with one or the other, when all were so animated and eager; but as to *my* opinion, I was not sufficiently versed in the question, from the beginning, to pretend to enter into its bearings; my inclination would only be that of those I was among,—I am sure not influenced so much by the merits of the question—"

"Of course!—of course!" exclaimed the lady. "Isn't that just what I say? The women of the present day really have no opinion, no mind, no notions of their own. They are entirely led and governed by those quite unworthy to govern. They believe what they are told, they don't really endeavor to have an idea, or to exercise their judgment. And you, Miss Strauzlaine now, you actually could hear the great, the stupendous questions of your country's legislature, canvassed day after day, and not arrive at any just and sound conclusion."

"I did not say so," replied Josephine, somewhat warmly. "I did indeed come to one conclusion; from all I heard and understood,—that the question itself was really unimportant, and the excitement arose chiefly through persons who were desirous of distinguishing themselves."

"No question is unimportant," interrupted the masculine tone of Miss Claudia. "No question; not the smallest, can be unimportant to any of us, forming part of a great people, under the same government. Do we not each fill our appointed part in the vast machine of the glorious British Constitution? Are we not bound to fulfil these duties to the uttermost?"

"Exactly so, my dear Claudia," said Mr. Meryt, who knew precisely all she would have said, having heard

it some hundreds of times already. "But we are not yet quite agreed that woman's part in the said machine is that you would assign to her."

"Have we not souls, sir? Are we not responsible creatures?"

"Sorrowfully be it said, yes," answered Mr. Meryt solemnly. "Responsible for more than ever they would like to own, I fear, most of them."

"Then why are we to be deprived of those rights?—why are we to be considered but as the reflection of man?—why denied the power of discriminating right from wrong?"

"Oh! not so," said Josephine warmly; "we did not speak of right or wrong—it was but *opinion*, judgment. Who is unbiassed after all in such things by some authority, even if it is unconsciously; and it seems to me a privilege, not a hardship, that a woman looks to hers near home, and may, if she will, reap the benefit of the judgment which has been tested by great results, to guide her even in her smaller sphere."

From her wide white brow to her throat, a deep blush spread as she finished speaking. It was not her habit to let her thoughts find words so readily, save on rare occasions, and with those chosen spirits who were as herself.

She involuntarily drew back and made a half inclination of apology: but at last seemed to think none needed.

For the girls they were amazed, though secretly rejoiced. They never dared to argue with their maiden aunt, much less contradict, though they did on occasion rebel, and in secret laugh at her peculiarities. But to stand up to her in the way they had just witnessed!—a girl, too, who had been brought up chiefly with themselves—but, indeed Josephine was always different; "so brave," as little delicate Adela was wont to say.

The elder lady did not continue the discussion. She contented herself with a glance, meant to be crushing,

at Josephine; repeating her last words, with a scornful emphasis —

"*Smaller sphere!*"

Breakfast continued for some minutes peacefully. The youngest daughter was repeating to her father some historiette she had been reading, having reference to a piece of music which he had bought her. Both were enthusiasts in music, and Meryt made a point of obtaining for her the choicest productions. He almost idolized his delicate and lovely child. It was curious, as people said, seeing she was the very image of the wife who had betrayed him. Was it not in consequence rather of the resemblance? It would seem so. Every day brought the girl nearer to the full completion of its mother's loveliness; each day seemed to twine her still closer round the father's heart. It is true the resemblance was little more than physical.

Here was the same profusion of golden hair, the same lustrous complexion, the same deep blue eyes. But the languor, which in the mother had been habit, was in the daughter the result of fragility; the sweetness and affection, which in one were feigned, were in the other genuine; the dependence natural, the disposition gentle, like the frame, almost to feebleness.

Adela was a creature to pet and love, without fear even of consequences; and Sidney, in her more robust and deeper, but not less affectionate nature, pardoned the apparent neglect, which passed her over, to fondle and cherish the younger sister.

It was a terrible blight that rested upon the girls—the father knew it; and while he made ample provision for both, so that, come what would, they need never feel the want of any home comfort they had enjoyed, he sedulously guarded them from more contact than was possible with the outer world, which is but too apt to judge rather by painful possibilities than by probable exceptions.

They lived very much secluded; still they did see visitors, and were sufficiently intimate with the outer

world to claim kindred with its interests.

"You have not got beyond your English news yet, Aunt," said Sidney; who never suffered a cloud to hover long in her atmosphere.

"Your coffee is cold, I am sure: let me give you another cup," she added.

"Thank you, child. There is rather a good thing here," she said, addressing Mr. Meryt, and looking up, as she handed her cup across to her niece. "An address on the Factory Bill. There is some good stuff in it too. It's a pity he raves so much on the dignity of MAN, and his prerogative, as he calls it, of protection to the weak. The weaker, as he says—meaning the women of course—could do something that way themselves, I've a notion, if they were not so trammelled and fettered."

"You will like to see this, Charles," the aunt went on: "if I'm not mistaken he thinks a good deal after your own style; only he is wrong, as I've said before, about the ten-pound householders; and his notions on the franchise are rotten, absolutely rotten. There it is—the Honorable Aden Power."

She handed the paper across as she spoke—unconscious how in the act she favored her late opponent.

Poor Josephine! That word coming all unawares upon her—how quickly it routed her self-command, how checked her blood, how set her nerves a-quivering.

Her fork had dropped from her fingers; she started, made an effort to recover herself, yet listening, all scared, to hear what was to come; heard, yet comprehended not, the question her hostess was putting to her; and passed her half-empty cup to Sidney; whose little exclamation first recalled her to herself. She passed it over with a smiling excuse.

"A little more in that, if you please," so she said; her thoughts were—"Aden! that is *his* brother—what then! what is he now to me?—then to her friend beside her:—

"Your roses are beautiful!—I have seen none such. Sweet enough?—oh yes, very nice; all is nice here, Sidney; but I was saying, your roses —"

Was Fate to be so cheated, think you? Should not her boasted stanchness have its test? If the name was nought to her, let her then not flinch—

"Adela with a paper!" cried the female politician, looking up, and seizing upon her victim; "well, now that is a marvel! I should have some hopes of you, child, if I saw your face oftener behind the *Times* sheet. But what is it you've got hold of? The fashions, I suppose, or a wedding. Just look, Sidney; but it's a wedding, I'll wager."

Sidney was peeping over her sister's shoulder, anxious to spare her annoyance; but Adela's blushing face appeared from behind the columns, as she said—

"It wasn't a wedding, aunt; and I looked at first because the name was the same as the gentleman's you told papa."

"What is it all about, darling?" asked the fond father, sure to be interested in whatever Adela took up.

He followed the indication of his daughter's finger.

"Dear me! shocking indeed." Then he read the paragraph:—

"We understand that Mr. Arthur Power, the son of Viscountess Honiton and Loftborough, who lately became the husband of the beautiful and accomplished Lady Geraldine Lineage, lies dangerously ill at the village of Roehenstein. The unfortunate gentleman had been travelling with his lady, their son and suite, up the Rhine, and unhappily passed through—, in ignorance, it should seem, of the fever raging there. The courier was the first victim to this fatal error. Mr. Power, in his too great anxiety for his servant, neglected due precaution, and was himself seized with the most alarming symptoms. On the first certainty of his illness, the Lady Geraldine and her

son were removed beyond the reach of contagion. Tidings have been despatched to the residence of the Earl and family in London. At the time of our parcel being despatched the unfortunate gentleman was delirious."

"A sad end to a wedding tour!" observed Mr. Meryt. "Poor fellow, he will fare badly in that wretched hole of a place!"

"If he has a good constitution, he may rally," was Aunt Claudia's comment, as she pushed her chair back from the table.

And she—to whom those words they had so lightly passed over bore such a sense—how did she receive them? Come reason, come dignity, come stanchness and propriety—come all that may bear her real aid and succor. She was so strong but now in that talisman—he was nothing to her.

See the white lips, see the set brow, the fixed muscles of the hands set in the extremest tension of despair. Ah! he is nothing to her, is he? Why she recalls the words momentarily, and they seem to hiss in her ear as if another had uttered them, and in the very innermost chamber of her soul she asks pardon for them.

Something has conquered in those few minutes, while the chairs are pushing back and all are rising from the table; she is calm again, she even answers in her ordinary tone the question Sidney puts to her; then she went outside the door, and away to her room, where she may be alone.

CHAPTER XX.

RESOLVED.

"DANGEROUSLY ill!—alone!—with strangers, and delirious!"

Josephine repeated the words over again, as if to gather their real meaning, as she sat with clasped hands upon her knees beside her bed motionless; her eyes fixed in an abstracted gaze upon the floor. Slowly she seemed to recall *who* it was in this strait—

the man who had loved her—she knew how well—the man, ay, the *only* man, who had ever gained her love. And he was alone: the wife who had sworn to be all the world to him was gone, with her child—afraid of contagion! This woman had taken him from her: nay, she had resigned him to her, knowing how she loved him—conscious how that knowledge might have moved him.

"Oh my God! what was in my heart to do it?" the girl moaned, as she bowed her head upon her clasped hands, and the despair and remorse seemed stifling her. "What can I do—what *can* I do to help him? I have *no* right—he is dying, and I have *no* right to save him!"

She thought of the old times of meeting, she recalled the hundred, the thousand signs, so minute, yet so unmistakable, of his love—she recalled the thrill of exquisite amazement with which she recognized that sympathy, that fulness of affection, which she had believed could never be realized among the men of the world, such as she found it. She brought back the sense, which she remembered to have owned to within herself, of the power which lay only in the admission of her love for him; but, at that crisis she had held the fate of both within her hands. How proudly strong to resign it she had been!

"Fool! False, false fool that I was!" so ran her thoughts and broken words. "Oh! vain and worse than vain. Oh! bitter untruth, and pride of strength only pretended to! False to him, false to myself—false to Nature!"

She thought of the ease with which she had seemed to part from him—of that last good-bye, spoken as lightly as if they were to meet upon the morrow. Had she indeed realized the truth that it was forever?—that he was henceforth dead to her? *Dead!* Good God! if he should die—alone!—tended only by strangers! It was come to this, then? that kind, loving, courteous, tender heart—she had re-

signed it, and its love, for *this*—that he should be left alone to suffer, perhaps to die, in a foreign country.

"God help me and forgive me! I willed it so; I chose it," she thought; "I denied the love that sprang into my heart like a golden sunshine, denied the very breath of my existence. I dared to believe I could put it away, for us both, and, so doing, hope to see him happy. I am punished!"

She had bent down till her head rested on the pillow of the couch beside which she sat. Her lips were moving, in prayer or communion with herself—a few murmured syllables escaped her.

"I see it now—I see it," she said, as if in answer to some spoken suggestion. "Dear old father, if you had been alive! How plain your wisdom made all to me—how clear the right seemed with you—

"The pride of our own hearts misleads us like a meteor," he used to say, 'and makes the foul seem fair, and that strength which is but stubbornness.' Surely none ever erred in that so deeply as I have done!"

She sat for some moments in meditation; then rose, and bathed her face, but could not dispel the terrible paleness which, with her, took much the place of tears in any great emotion. Then she joined Adela, who was feeding her birds on the terrace below.

Sidney was engaged in household matters; Aunt Claudia in her library, inditing an indignant epistle to an unfortunate editor, who had dared to breathe a gentle hint that ladies might as a rule find a more genial sphere for the development of their virtues at home, rather than upon the hustings.

Adela would have Josephine accompany her in the new music she was about to try. "Aunt wanted me to go with her up the mountain; but indeed papa would not like it: the big rock is shrouded in mist; there will be a storm. But there will be one in-doors if I refuse," said Adela, "and Aunt calls such hard names. Pray let us get to the music, and I

know she will not encounter you, Josephine."

The kind girl at once complied, but her usually fine contralto voice broke down.

"Sing, Adela; I will accompany you, but *I* cannot, dear."

Presently the dread aunt was gone: she went to find Sidney. The gay-hearted girl lured them both to a walk. But Josephine had no voice to talk, no spirits to smile—she could settle to nothing, join in nothing.

"You are not well," persisted Sidney; and she instantly had a device for giving her friend relief. Josephine denied illness—was weary only; she would rest in her room.

But no—there was no rest. Books, work, sketching, music, talk—all the same; no rest, no repose anywhere. A presence seemed to pursue and warn or admonish her. It grew upon her, it assumed almost, to her sense of hearing, a reality—yet there were no words.

And ever, again and again, she found herself straying from all outward things, trying to picture to herself the inn room, with its scanty accommodation; the village doctor—or would they have obtained efficient medical aid—surely yes! Who were with him?—faithful servants of course; yet if Lady Geraldine had required their escort!—how *could* she leave him—she, his wife!

"Why, Josephine! whatever are you doing, dear; look where you have put the vase"—Sidney's merry voice broke the reverie. "Oh dear, you must be dreaming; see, you've sealed the empty envelope, and left the letter open. I was just going to put it in the bag."

The sisters rallied their friend; it was quite unusual to see Josephine absent, or averse to interest herself in social converse. But they saw, as the day wore on, that she was suffering, though she nobly bore up against it, and refused to be made an invalid.

Night came. She had longed for yet dreaded it. The solitude and quiet

she coveted; but then she feared the thoughts which during the day she had fought hard against. She kept saying to herself, all was over, she could do nothing now. It was the last idea that visited her as her head touched the pillow, and almost immediately she fell asleep.

* * * * *

She was sitting upright in bed—broad awake; startled from her deep slumber as by a loud voice, close at her ear—the tone seemed even now ringing through the air—she looked round, not amazed, not trembling, but as if naturally expecting to see what had spoken.

The broad full moon was sinking over the hills, and shone into the room, veiled only partially by the autumn mists.

Josephine stepped at once from the bed; there was no hesitation now, nor pondering, nor question of what she was to do, nor lamentation.

She dressed herself quickly but completely; going to her wardrobe and drawers to make some trifling alterations from her ordinary attire.

All this time she had not lighted a lamp. The moon had thrown sufficient light for her into the chamber, but now had began to pale, before the mists and the faint shuddering twilight, which precedes the dawn.

She lighted her lamp, and closed the curtains: then set herself to put together a few necessary articles in a small travelling bag.

All this time she had not paused, neither sat down, nor lost one minute in reflection or doubt.

All lay ready prepared as for a journey. A thick strong pair of walking boots stood by the bag—she still wore her slippers; but hat, and cloak, and gloves, were laid ready.

Now she went softly to the window, and drew aside the blind. The mists were sullenly rolling up the hill-tops; streaks of crimson and blue showed faintly along the grey sky with just a promise of the golden day below.

The lady opened the door which

communicated with a small chamber within her own, and a sound issued thence which told of a sleep heavier than musical. But the sleeper was soon awake in answer to her mistress.

"Gertrude,"—Josephine spoke to her maid in her native tongue, bidding her not be alarmed—"I am not ill, only going a short journey. You will come—I want you to get us some breakfast; quickly; then put the horse to the light chaise. We must start as soon as it is day."

The girl was half-dressed as her mistress finished her directions; and—though she was no sylph—slipped, shoeless and noiselessly, from the room, to fulfil her errand.

The lamp might be extinguished in the chamber, so fast the twilight grew over the hills, dawn hurrying closely at its heels, eager to kiss the fair country-side.

Josephine took the lamp in her hand, to guide her footsteps, least she might trip on the many stairs, or in the dim corridors, as she sought Sidney's room.

She had scarcely entered when her friend started up.

"Josephine! are you ill? I knew you were. I was dreaming—"

"Hush, dear Sidney; do not wake Adela. Nothing is the matter."

And Josephine set her lamp in the chimney and briefly detailed her plan.

"Not without breakfast, Josephine; no, no!"

Josephine restrained her friend, as she would have risen.

"Gertrude has breakfast ready by now. I take the light chaise: your father will not object?"

"No, no, of course: but Carl will be ready in a few—"

"You shall not rise," persisted Josephine. "I can drive, as you know; so can Gertrude. I would rather not take Carl; we shall go quicker; and the chaise shall be left at the inn where the coach passes."

"But Josephine, this Englishman—he will have his servants, his friends will have come."

"I do not know—we cannot be certain. He was my father's dear friend, Sidney. Do not try to persuade me, I am resolved."

Sidney knew how futile such an attempt must be. Her friend wished her good-bye, and promised to return immediately if she found her services uncalled for.

She had barely left the room ere Sidney had sprang from her bed and was rapidly dressing.

Soon, to Josephine's surprise, she joined her below, where she was making a hasty breakfast, prepared by Gertrude's busy hands without disturbing any of the house.

The light chaise was at the door, with the horse harnessed, and the travelling bag deposited inside. In a few minutes all was in readiness, and as the sun flared redly over the eastern hills, magnified by the mists through which he shone, the travellers mounted to their vehicle and set out.

Sidney waved an affectionate farewell as long as she could see them in the valley. A few farm-men and laborers were astir; they rubbed their eyes and looked sleepily after the chaise, bobbing their heads, or gravely lifting their caps, as they recognized an equipage from the White House.

The young lady was far too absorbed to observe them: but Gertrude nodded and smiled good-humoredly.

It elicited some little surprise to see the females so early abroad; but the English family were privileged to do singular things, and the event was not one to make any great impression. The chaise drove steadily on out of the valley upon the high road. Meanwhile the mists dispersed, the sun rose high in the heavens, and the White House was astir, none the less briskly for the absence of the two who had gone out from it with the dawn.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN EXTREMIS.

NOVEMBER had come in cheerfully; the year was descending into a kindly

old age; sere and crisp and tanned. Not with rimy fogs and wheezing unwholesome vapors, but with cheery and pleasant frostiness of aspect. In the woods the leaves fell thick and brown, crackling under the solitary footfall, or showering merrily over the active squirrel busied in his prudent anticipations of winter.

Every day the blue sky showed wider athwart the naked branches, as they parted company reluctantly with their leafy burden: and the cottage at Sea View seemed making out its title to the name more fully, as evening by evening the glorious panorama of sunset became more and more visible from its windows across the ocean.

Still the hand of autumn touched all so lightly, the roses lingered on their stems, and around the porch clematis and honeysuckle might yet be scented. It was like the death which sometimes spares the bloom even on the cheek of age. So soft and pleasant an autumn might well cause one to forget that winter was at hand.

It touched with a beauty of its own, too, the stately abbey. The sombre woods, standing out, more and more skeleton-like, against the blue sky, gave to view the grand architecture of the massive pile, adding singularly to the extent and majesty of the domain. Standing somewhat apart, back from the chief building, its delicate tracery cutting the deep blue sky, in which a faint moon showed like a ghost of the past, stood the chapel of the abbey, to which tradition gave even an earlier date; whose perfect outline and beauty of detail had been the attraction of artist, poet, architect, and tourist for many an age.

The soft tones of its silvery-tongued bell were melting on the air as it faintly rang for vespers: a mere custom, be it understood, handed down from a period when the hour was really devoted to worship. The rooks with busy protest (perhaps against the season which so mercilessly laid bare their domestic economy) were flying homeward in troops: the brown leaves

were beginning to accumulate again in the avenue, that morning so cleanly swept; they dropped regretfully to the ground, and lay as they fell: not dancing in the gay merry-go-round as rejoicing, neither rushing off in a boisterous whirlwind, like some mad heir just come of age, and wild to sever from the parent trunk, and to see the world. A fanciful mind might have imagined that the old elms grieved over putting off their leafy garment, as if another spring-time should never clothe them in one as spotless; but that the mellow autumn, now passing away from Deapsholme woods, must leave them henceforth to wintry storms and the mockery of nakedness.

These are but fancies, however; the reality of a tranquil balmy evening was there. The smoke from many a peaceful farm-house or cottage rose high and steadily into the clear blue; the young fawns gambolled, or the stately deer stalked slowly to his covert; the solemn caw of the rooks and the soft-tongued vesper bell were the sounds that suited completely the harmony of the scene.

So peaceful, so full of repose; who could dream that the shadow of a great wrong, a heavy grief, lay close upon it?

My lady sat in her favorite room: a small apartment with cheerful oriel windows, looking out upon the park with its deer, the long avenue with its statues, and the dim chapel, sheltered by an evergreen thicket.

The golden autumn sunset bathed the draperies about her, and warned her to enjoyment. She had been nourishing pleasant thoughts too, and the volume of poems which lay open on her knee was of no sombre or regretful cast.

The smaller fates had been propitious to my lady of late.

Aden was away, travelling, speech-making; scaring the memory of his disappointment, as best he might, in fast locomotion, lionizing, earning abuse and laudation in any quantity:

in short, fulfilling the duties and exhausting the career of a public man of spirit. He had soon sickened of his proposed tour of pleasure, which had been originally planned in concert with the family of the young lady to whom he was attached; and under the altered relations in which they now stood, it may be supposed he had not the liveliest of companionship in his own thoughts.

He acceded then, with a new zest, to the desire of his friends and admirers that he would lend his influence to certain agitations, and add the persuasion of his eloquence to the claims of certain popular questions.

My lady was not slow to hear of this, nor was she ignorant how sorely Aden tried the temper and forbearance of his lordly father, again and again ruthlessly trampling on his prejudices, riding rough-shod over pet fallacies, and by the full light of his clear sense showing mere conventionality for what it was.

It was a sad thorn in the flesh of the old peer, these rebel tendencies in his eldest-born; and it rankled even the more that it was forever coming between him and the expression of his real feelings; which warmed stronger towards Aden. Indeed the old gentleman, worried by the infirmities of his state more than his age, was doubtless wearying somewhat of political strife; and, like the lion of the fable, would gladly have lain him down to pass in peace the remainder of his days. Since his reconciliation with his son, his animadversions on Aden's proceedings had been wonderfully modified; he no longer denounced in such vigorous language what he could not approve, and gave unqualified praise where, without dereliction from his own tenets of faith, he dared. He was beginning to feel, this high and haughty lord, that want which the proudest must one day acknowledge—the need of something to lean on, and to care for, beyond mere pride of birth, or rank, or power. His eldest son, even though he thwarted him in

many of his dearest hopes, was all in all to him, was daily and hourly becoming even more the staple of his existence.

Her ladyship could hardly be aware of the extent of this fact. Aden was at least away, that was a source of gratification; she could not endure his presence. It was a relief to know him absent, that he was not at least enjoying in anticipation the delights of the lordly inheritance which was to be one day his. Then her silence had succeeded, and so well!—Arthur married to the wealthy beauty, so suited as they were—such congratulations reached her from all sides—such felicity in the match! Happy, they must be, of course, it admitted not of a doubt. The very fact of their prolonged stay abroad testified to that. The few letters she had received from her son did not, certainly, make any very decided assertion on that score, but that was hardly to be expected. Her ladyship, not tired of scheming, was, even now, in her satisfaction, laying out more than one pleasant picture and ambitious plan.

Aden would scarcely be in any haste to marry; even should he do so, it was more than probable he might disgrace himself by some plebeian alliance, and so cut himself off forever from all hope of paternal grace.

On the other hand the Viscountess saw with pride and hope the future lovely budding of the younger branch, her darling, whose fortunes she had cared for. What so probable as, at such a crisis, in a revulsion of disgust, her lord should turn for consolation to the nobly-born scions of his house, whose pure blood at least flowed uncontaminated from his own. True the title and estates were beyond his power to dispose of: but the possessions which, in an ordinary course of things, would pass with them, yet which depended upon the will of the present Earl, were by no means insignificant, and might even atone, so far as atonement was possible, for the diversion of the former. So the visions

of the lady were pleasant, as she sat in the golden sunset, and took credit to herself for having done what she could to repair her terrible mistake; which, indeed, she had come to look upon less as her own than the work of an unkind fatality.

A horse came flying down the avenue, his white and reeking flanks occasionally seen gliding past the big elms; even so near the house his rider spares neither spur nor whip, though the animal is so fleet of foot he seems to skim the ground like the shadow of a passing cloud.

He has drawn rein at the great entrance, and the big bell clangs a hasty summons, such as is seldom given at that door.

The chapel bell has ceased, the rooks are subsiding into a sleepy lull; but a sudden hush, a murmur, a confused yet suppressed sound, as if each man hushed his neighbor, makes itself heard—a sound that tells, ere one learns its meaning, that some terrible misfortune is afloat, and will be upon us in a breath.

The Viscountess started to her feet, yet remained fixed to the spot; she could not have made one step forward, though her life had depended on flight. Tidings had arrived with that fleet rider, she felt sure of that—evil tidings.

To her there was but one evil—the tidings of but one discovery which had haunted her for years. The time she believed had arrived. She was discovered! Not that she ever paused to ask herself how or where, or by whom; not that for a minute she allowed herself the question even—“By what possibility?” She felt discovery was at hand; she stood prepared; yet her heart turned cold within her as she heard footsteps (her husband's among them) approaching.

“Oh! my Lady—my dear Lady!—pray be prepared, pray do not be alarmed!” It was her maid, all out of breath, yet struggling with the itching of her tongue to speak, and the commands of the Earl not to alarm her mistress. “It's an express, my Lady, to my Lord—from abroad,

my Lady—not dangerous, my Lady.” Her Ladyship had drawn a deep breath, had sat down, had changed cheeks and lips and neck to the color of living flesh.

If that foolish waiting-maid could but have known the relief her ill-considered words had given, how she would have plumed herself.

His Lordship entered. He was agitated; but there was not the wrath, the death in his eye, which it had sickened her only in that last minute to imagine.

“Our son is ill, very ill, so it runs, at a miserable town upon the Rhine. Indeed, Juliet, do not be distressed, my love—dangerously.”

“Aden!”—she started to her feet, her eyes intensifying the earnestness of the question.

“Arthur,—I said so, I think,” the Earl replied; and that gracious lady could have cursed her lord for the calmness of his tone. “No time must be lost—Geraldine is returning with the child.

“Returning!” the mother echoed.

“They feared contagion, it seems. My dear Juliet, do not distress yourself. I have already given orders. Sir James—”

“‘Sir James!’ I will go this minute; your Lordship must—”

“Stay, Juliet—stay,” the Earl interposed, as the imperious woman caught at the bell to summon her maid. “I shall travel quicker,” he said, “with Sir James. Think, my love, the poor girl yonder, Geraldine, will need support—”

“To leave him alone, my child. I will go! Your Lordship cannot enter into my feelings. Arthur! my son! Oh, my God, if I should lose him!”

Her bell in sonorous tones answered to the hasty pull of her impatient hand. The maid entered swift upon it; and in hurried accents her mistress issued her commands. Ten minutes for all to be in readiness—she would wait for nothing.

In vain the Earl urged that she must see her daughter-in-law; in vain he represented that efficient medical

aid was indispensable, and to be conveyed with the utmost speed;—that she might follow. She was deaf to all; and the Earl left her to pursue his own brief preparations for departure within the hour.

Meanwhile, up the long straight avenue the shadows are broken by another form coming towards the house; he is on foot, though he moves swiftly, and his eyes are fixed upon the abbey as if asking of himself what manner of reception he may meet, or how what he bears may affect those who dwell in the great darkening pile, from which all the sunshine has faded. His outward appearance has nothing of the portentous omen which might well attach to the last messenger, all in a whirlwind of foam and steam and heat. He is dressed in black, the habit of a clergyman, worse for the wear than ever clergymen's should be; or than his ever would be if he had only his deservings: for he is the parish minister, and a good and conscientious fulfiller of all his duties, as much as it lies in the power of any one man to fulfil them. As he comes nearer to the mansion, his face wears a sad and pained—nay, even agonized look: yet there is not an atom of indecision, or weakness, or reluctance, in any one of the placid, hopeful features. But there is no one to note any of this from the oriel windows now. Everybody is busied within, more or less, with the sad message which has just reached them; and the clergyman's ring at the bell is suffered to remain a few minutes unanswered.

The minister is a privileged visitor at the Abbey, perhaps because he never asks for himself, though the boons which he obtains for others are not few; and my Lord and my Lady do really treat him as if he were akin somewhat to their own humanity, probably because he never loses sight himself of the fact. He passes in, then, as a matter of course, and desires to see the Earl.

The portly butler, who came hurrying forward, announced, in a properly pitched key, the terrible news which

had just thrown the house into commotion.

The clergyman listened, expressed earnestly his concern; but his business admits of no delay, even on that plea.

"I must see his Lordship," he said, going forward to a small study where he is invariably received by the Earl.

"Tell his Lordship, if you please, I will explain."

It is no pleasant undertaking to carry such a message to my Lord at such a time; and the servants know it. On the other hand, they are well enough aware that, should they refuse, the clergyman is quite prepared to seek the Earl himself; and such evidence of insubordination would insure the loss of their places.

"My Lord, Mr. Chepstow will take no refusal. Yes my Lord, Mr. Pomfret acquainted the gentleman that your Lordship was about leaving immediately. He still said he could not go without seeing you."

One thought darted into the mind of the nobleman. The clergyman had received later news of his son's state. He instantly turned towards the apartment where the minister awaited him. The door was open; Mr. Chepstow stood at the threshold. Impatience and haste were written on his countenance; yet for a moment every other emotion gave place to one, as his eyes fell on the frank, handsome, though haughty face, of the old nobleman, and deep pity made itself apparent in every feature.

The Earl was equipped for a journey; he held his hat in his hand; in fact the horses were at the door. He was beginning to say as much to his visitor, and to urge him, in a deprecatory tone, to pass at once to the subject of his business, for his journey could not be delayed.

"My Lord, you must pardon me," said the clergyman, speaking rapidly. "My errand is from a death-bed. We must lose no time; it is a matter of life and death, nay more, to you. I must beg of you not to delay."

"They have told you?—"

"I know all. Your son is ill; but

my Lord, you know me; I say that still you must come; defer that journey to investigate a terrible and mysterious story affecting you. My Lord, you can trust me, I hope; and what I say, believe me, is true."

"Where?—what am I to do?" inquired the Earl, aghast. "My horses are at the door."

"The carriage could not ascend the rock; we must go the quickest way. My Lord, I entreat you, for the sake of all you value on earth, come with me, and lose no time."

"I will come; but, Chepstow, what does it mean?"

"As we go, sir; as we go," said the minister, his eagerness rising to entreaty—"I know nothing, absolutely, I tell you. I come from a dying woman, who implores your ear for a secret of shame and wrong! God grant we may not be too late!"

My Lord, now thoroughly moved, assented with almost equal haste, and the clergyman at once led the way. Passing a servant in the hall, his lordship gave orders hurriedly concerning the horses. The carriage was to be "kept in readiness," he said.

Then they passed out from the ancient porch, with its unstained escutcheon of the gallant Powers, and sped up the long avenue, fast darkening now, and where their feet rustled in the thickly-fallen leaves.

CHAPTER XXII.

FACE TO FACE.

THE little brown cottage looked peaceful enough in the evening light, as the gentlemen hurried up the rocky ascent to its approach. From the casement, partly open, the rays of a lamp streamed upon the weedy path and yet green hedge, on to the road by which they came. It was in that chamber the woman lay, whose minutes were numbered; for whom it needed not to shade the lamp—for whom the Earl's journey had been delayed. Propped with snow-white pillows, half reclining in the smoothed bed: her own shrunk face as white

as the linen surrounding her; one attenuated hand beating impatiently at the coverlet; the other hid beneath, clutching tightly at some object it concealed. Her eyes, far sunk in her head, beamed with the light of an intelligence newly gained. She had not lain long ill; her ailment resembled more a conflict of the spirit with the reluctant flesh to part company; and from the first the victory had been decided. As if in recompense for the eclipse reason had so long suffered, from the moment she took to her bed the old woman's faculties of comprehension and memory strengthened. The interval of sense had not supervened like a flash, but had gradually grown as to one awaking from a deep sleep, who at first finds it difficult to recall who or what he is; the day of the week or occupation to which he is to return; but who, from the instant of regaining the first link, rapidly lays hold on the chain of fact and reality.

Martha sat near the bed; the medical aid at first called in had been discontinued; nature would answer no longer to the appeals of science; she had it all her own way now, and a long life was about to close amidst surroundings more peaceful and brighter than its earlier course had known.

At the sound of footsteps below, the girl went to open the room door; the two were already ascending. The old woman barely moved, but she bent her keen eyes with eager scrutiny upon those who entered.

"This is Lord Honiton," said the clergyman, tempering his haste and speaking in a measured tone. "I have brought him at your desire, Mrs. Lucas, and will leave you together."

The old woman turned a searching gaze upon his Lordship, then again towards the door.

"And where's she?—where's the lady?" she asked, in a thin monotonous voice, yet perfectly rational and collected. "I will say nothing without her—it's the lady I want."

"Mrs. Lucas, you named his Lordship, you—"

"Yes," she interrupted, in the same

even shrill tone. "My Lord to hear—my Lord to forgive; but her to confess—her to bear her share. I'll tell nothing, I'll say nothing, till she's here"—

"What is all this?" questioned Lord Honiton, impatiently. "Mr. Chepstow, this wanton trifling with my time, precious, as you know—"

The dying woman caught at his words and repeated—

"Precious! and my time isn't precious? eh, my Lord, eh?"

"Woman!" the Earl began, but the minister motioned him back.

"My Lord, she is dying," he said, deprecatingly; then, with more reverence in his demeanor to the feeble creature, flickering on life's exit, than he had used to the peer—

"Mrs. Lucas," he urged, "his Lordship was on the point of setting out to the sick-bed—perhaps the death-bed of his son."

"His son,"—she caught with eagerness at the word—"Ah! her son?—but there's two—His son!"

"Good God! what is this raving?—speak at once woman! Chepstow, I can bear this no longer."

"Fetch her, then," cried the old woman, her voice rising shrilly. "Fetch her: let her stand there, then I'll speak. I'll keep nothing from ye; no, no! ye shall hear all, and let her curse me if she will."

"Of whom does she speak?—what does she mean?" cried the bewildered nobleman.

"Who? who should I mean, but your Lady?" cried the old woman, whose senses seemed sharpening with the coming change.

"Don't it concern her, as well as you? Isn't her son ill? Eh? my Lord, eh?"

"What is to be done?" exclaimed his lordship. "Is there meaning in this? For mercy's sake," he added addressing the clergyman, "is she in her senses?—what should be done?"

The old woman had averted her face, but she turned it slowly round and directed her bright clear gaze upon the Earl.

"I am in my senses, my Lord; don't fear; though you may curse the night I ever spoke—you and my Lady, yonder; but I am dying, and the things one can bear a lifetime, and keep hid, won't let one rest in the grave, they say."

"Why will you not speak, and set your mind at ease?" soothingly entreated the good clergyman.

"Not till she comes," was the only answer vouchsafed, as she turned doggedly away, and Martha held to her withered lips a refreshing draught.

The nobleman, whose impatience had given way to perplexed and terrible doubts, addressed his companion:—

"Have you no clue?" he said: "Is this reality?—this woman, does she possess any knowledge? You must force her to confess—the law——"

"My Lord!" returned the other, sadly, "before morning dawns that poor creature will be beyond the power of the law: *force!* my Lord—she volunteers confession. It must be as she says—"

"But her Ladyship!—to mix my wife up in her wanderings."

"It seems to me, my Lord," said the minister, "that you have to learn of some foul treachery or base plot against the honor of your house, or some connected with it. This poor woman perhaps fears the effect of her revelation upon the innocent, or desires some confirmation of her words. She evidently will tell us nothing without the presence of yourself and the Viscountess."

"You think, then, her Ladyship should be fetched?"

"My Lord, I do. My horse is in the stable. If you will entrust me, I will go myself."

His Lordship turned, with prompt decision, from the room, followed by Chepstow.

The eyes of the old woman pursued them, but she made no sign.

Upon the docile steed of the good clergyman, little used to such random flights, the nobleman betook himself to the bridle-road up which young Arthur had so often ridden with the

speed of such diligent students, keen in the pursuit of German scholastics.

Arrived at the Abbey, he found the Viscountess chafing like an entrapped goddess (if such a simile will pass) at his delay. She had prepared to depart with him, or follow close. Her amazement at the fresh hindrance knew no bounds.

"What!—return with him?—where?"

As she heard whither, something arrested her indignation. The cottage—where she had confronted that daring girl—was it she? Ah! news of Arthur? She jumped at the conclusion—heard no more that was said; but, swift as thought, was ready to accompany her Lord.

They would walk, he said—the short cut. It would save time, and spare the remarks of their people.

By the steps from her dressing-room they went down to the terrace, out by the chapel walk, across the park.

There were stars in the sky, but no moon; yet it was not wholly dark.

A strange sensation was gaining upon the Earl when he quitted the bedside of the dying woman. He seemed to have almost lost sight of that other couch to which he had been summoned. He spoke little on the road. His answers were wide of the subject on which she now and again questioned him; but, to say the truth, the mind of the lady was so fixed upon one conclusion, her thoughts were too pre-occupied to find vent in words.

There was little change in the aspect of the cottage since last she set foot within its entrance. The squirrel's stand was gone, the lattice something more bare; the old Newfoundland lay on his mat within, and just rose and uttered one deep bass note as my Lady swept by; his deep red eyes followed her to the staircase, but he turned round and lay down again, with a dignified indifference to her movements.

Their feet passed noiselessly over the matted floor. At the stair-foot they were met by the clergyman.

"She grows more feeble," he said, in a whisper; "but her intellect is unshaken, and her senses even keener than ours. She heard you before either I or the maid were aware of your approach."

The lady started—she looked questioningly from one to the other. It was the first intimation she had received that it was a death-bed visit.

But there was no time for queries. The minister led the way in silence. His Lordship motioned for her to follow.

They entered the room.

The old woman's quickened hearing had caught the silken rustle of the lady's garments.

Half raising herself upon her trembling arm, she leaned forward with eager gaze fixed upon the door. It opened gently, and the gentle tread of the minister came first.

All amazement and curiosity, the Viscountess quickly followed; but paused as she beheld the spectral face so eagerly bending forward, the gaze fixed upon her.

"What is it?" she said in an awed voice—"what is this?"

Her husband took her hand and gently urged her forward.

"The Viscountess is here," he said; "now what have you to say?"

The old woman lifted her hand with a movement of impatience, as though to put him aside; then in her eagerness she sat upright, independent of her supporting cushions; and with her hollow eyes gleaming upon the lady, she said—

"Mrs. Smith, have you forgotten me?"

With a brief ejaculation of dismay the Viscountess fell back as if a sudden blow had been struck. Her eyes dilated, her lips apart, she stared at the haggard face fixed in its unflinching gaze upon her own, blanched to as dead a pallor. But she rallied instantly.

"My Lord, what is all this?" she cried. "Am I brought to listen to the ravings of a mad woman?"

"I am not mad," said the sick wo-

man, in a voice that she with determined purpose strove to render calm. "You are the Lady Countess of Honiton and Loftborough; and this is my Lord the Earl. And yonder's Mr. Chepstow, the good minister that has prayed with me, miserable old sinner that I am; and this is Martha, poor girl—don't cry, Martha—and I am Betsy Lucas. You know me now, my lady, you know. You remember Brettle's Buildings, and that night. Oh! my God, give me strength. Ah!—"

She fell back, her voice died in her throat, her own eagerness had exhausted her. Martha sprang to her side, and held to her lips the reviving draught. The clergyman approached and took her hand.

"Madness!—madness!" murmured the Viscountess. "Why do we stay?"

She turned from the bedside, though her trembling limbs would scarcely support her. But the Earl grasped her arm.

"I will not stay," she exclaimed haughtily; "what have I to do with the drivellings of a wretched—"

"Hush!" said the voice of the clergyman, "She revives."

Slowly the poor creature's eyes unclosed, and their first glance rested on the pale features of the Viscountess.

"I am not mad," she said, with returning strength, though in feeble and trembling accents.

The minister soothed her; urged her to be calm, then administered the stimulating medicine.

"My Lord," he said in a firm and meaning tone, "I can certify to you that this poor woman is in the full possession of her faculties; I have also the written testimony of a medical man who quitted her but this morning, that such is the case; I know not what she may have to confide to you. That the memory of some terrible error has oppressed her mind, and contributed to the temporary disturbance of her intellect, I felt certain; and I considered it my duty to encourage her in her desire to make a full

confession. God alone knows to what that is to tend. I will leave you with her; this is perhaps the last interval of strength which may be permitted her."

He beckoned to Martha to follow him, but the dying woman would not allow her to depart.

"No, no!" she cried, and held the maid fast, addressing to her some few broken words of German; to which the girl instantly responded with assurances of her devotion.

"She does not understand English," said the minister shortly, then he added an admonition to the sick woman.

"Don't fear," she said in her clear feeble tones, "I shall be spared to tell—I shall be spared to tell."

The clergyman then quitted the room. So they stood by the bedside of the dying woman. Her husband's grasp upon the arm of his wife—not a word passed his lips—not a sign—not a look turned upon her. All his senses seeming merged in the one of listening, while the tale was told of the scene enacted in Brettle's Buildings years ago.

The proud man learned how his hopes had been betrayed, his honor stained, his lofty dignity insulted, the trust of husband and man foully deceived, the purity of his name irretrievably slurred and sullied.

One by one, facts asserted and confirmed; one by one every possible doubt, or chance of escape, or disillusion destroyed.

Yet what were his sufferings to the agony of her who stood beside him? The devil entered into her soul; she could have strangled that miserable dying wretch with her own white hands. From her innermost heart she breathed a blasphemous prayer for that accusing breath to stop. Oh for a bolt to strike her dead at her Lord's feet! Oh for strength to rush away out into the night, to cast herself down the cliff into that sea she heard moaning out upon the beach—anything, anything, not to meet his

eye when it should turn upon her! But in vain. Breaking the dread silence, that frail voice went on, recording word by word the doings of that sinful night; she heard as in a dream; and despite herself she marked the solemn rush of the distant waves that seemed adding their testimony to that of the dying woman.

"Oh, I never forgot that face, never!"—the poor wretch went on. "Though her hair was smoothed back under a cap then, and upon her chin she wore a little black patch of sticking-plaster, and she was all in black. Ay, but I don't want you to take my word—look here—look here!"

She brought forward the hand which had been hidden away beneath the coverlet, and held before the sight of the unhappy nobleman a handkerchief of delicate cambrie, with the family arms embroidered on its centre.

"I didn't rest till I found out whose that was; and ever since I've kept it."

"Wretched woman, why did you not divulge this horrible tale ere this?" asked Lord Honiton in a broken voice.

"I was true to my word, true to my word," she said; "I tried hard, I tried hard to be true—but the grave wouldn't let me; we must rest in the grave, and I couldn't. I never should have done it, but she tempted me. I was poor, very poor, and my poor Mary; oh! Mary Mary, if I had but known he'd have lived—my poor Mary."

She shed some tears; the ghastly emotion of so haggard and deathly an object was horrible to behold. But the Earl looked on unmoved. She rallied again; she would leave no chance for her accomplice in guilt.

"Ye'll find the coffin; let them find the coffin," she said with horrible eagerness, economizing the last remnant of her breath for denunciation. "There's nothing but bricks and rags and a big stone in the little deal coffin, and the date——" she faltered; then added, "the date's scratched with a pin inside the cupboard at Brettle's Buildings, No. 7."

"Is that all?"—the Earl's voice sounded like that of a stranger; his wretched wife started to hear it.

"All. But look there." She stretched her lean and bony finger towards the lady.

"Look at her; she will not deny it. She knows. Take back your handkerchief, ma'am! I wish to God I could give ye back the gold ye paid me to curse myself, when I sold my poor girl's baby off her breast." She gasped, sank back, and her eyes closed; but she opened them again, and they gleamed upon the livid countenance of the Earl.

"Yes, that's all—all—and Aden Power's the son of my Mary—and poor Jack, the soldier. God forgive me!—Don't leave me, Martha—where's your hand?—Mary, Mary; it's very cold; ah, the guineas, poor lamb, poor babe, don't fret Mary—Mary—" They were the last words she spoke.

The soothing voice of the good clergyman fell upon her deaf ears. She lingered in a convulsive struggle for a brief interval, and so passed away.

Averting his face from his wife, my Lord had quitted the bedside, and the room. Her step was firmer than his, as she followed him. Though he had loosened his grasp upon her arm, the miserable woman seemed dragged, despite herself, by the side of the stricken man: his blanched face, his rigid features; the livid lips that opened and closed again, as if the nerves of speech refused to obey volition; his whole aspect, so altered from his usual proud mien, terrified her.

She would have had him speak, even though it were to condemn her. No threat he could have used, no denunciation his wrath might have uttered, would have filled her soul with more dismay than this awful silence. As they reached the lower room her anguish burst forth; the miserable palliatives of her guilt, with which she had sought in secret to cheat herself, a hundred times, now found words.

"Who was to blame for it?" she

cried—"who drove me almost mad with taunts, and made me desperate with repining? I was happy in my love. Poor fool that I was! I could have awaited Heaven's pleasure patiently; I did not embitter my existence and yours with repining at God's decrees. I loved you, my Lord—*loved* you! when you took me, to be—what? a mother to your heir!—too soon I found that was all! Your ambition, Sir,—your pride,—your house and name, were all *you* thought of. I was nothing. And when your hopes were disappointed, God help me! your displeasure fell on *me*. Do you remember?—*do* you remember! your wearying regrets, your cold neglect, your unjust repinings?—God forgive you, *do* you *remember*, and do you blame me? And when at last your prayers seemed about to be answered, your own anxiety was the ruin of your wishes. I tell you now, I cannot bear all—suffering as I have done, why should I endure all?"

She was pacing up and down the small room (where those sweet hours had been passed with Schiller and music and the sea's whisperings) like a possessed fury. Demoniacally beautiful she was, with her flashing eyes, her hair all tossed and streaming; her bonnet flung off—her cloak unclasped and thrown back—her pale face, and the burning accents of scorn that seemed to parch the lips they crossed. Lost—conquered—but grand even in her downfall.

"You would have me come home, that your child should draw its first breath of ancestral air. You could not see how I longed to be near you. The mother was nothing—I was nothing; it was the child—the son. But I hid my wishes—I kept down the grief; I would be only your automaton, I thought. So, Sir! half-way home, at a roadside inn, your son was born: the air, contaminated as it was, did not choke him—he was *dead*! Do you think I grieved for the child? bah! my terror of the father's dis-

pleasure left me no room for a mother's grief. You should have your desire, I thought, if I forfeited my soul to gain it you. Why should I tell you more? you know now *how* it was done. God help me, you don't know the anguish I endured, the risk of life I ran, the daring of the undertaking I entered into. But I *would* succeed. I said not, 'please God,' as I had prayed before to give me my desire. I said '*I will*,' and I did. You had your son, my Lord; you have him now; you cherished and prized him, as you have neglected and severed the other—your own son, your living image."

She ceased; not arrested by a sound that broke from her lord; she had done; but as she crossed the room again a low groan broke upon her ear. The next moment the hapless lord dropped to the ground. Her cry for help brought Mr. Chepstow, and by his aid the unhappy gentleman was raised to a couch, and a messenger at once despatched for the carriage, which he had himself desired to "wait."

Doctors arrived swiftly upon the scene: the dawn broke upon an anxious consultation at the abbey, while a swift telegram ran along the wires summoning a great London physician to Deansholme.

Great men's vassals are upon occasions dumb, if not deaf: yet the next morning's papers had each its paragraph, more or less worded to the same effect:—

"*It is our painful duty to record that the noble lord the Earl of Honilton and Loftborough was stricken with paralysis the night before last, just as he had been summoned to visit his youngest son, who lies dangerously ill at a small village on the banks of the Rhine.*"

Dear me! why we saw that in the papers. Everybody attributed the Earl's attack to the suddenness of the news.

Ah! my dear madam. Is news always truth? and are we all admitted behind the scenes?

ADEN POWER; OR, THE COST OF A SCHEME.

BY FARLEIGH OWEN.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT CONFESSION.

It was evening when the coach stopped at the cross-road where Josephine had signified her wish to be set down; and she and her maid descended from it. The coach drove on; its ultimate goal was a town a league or so distant, at the chief inn of which it put up. The late passengers struck into the other road leading to the village we have already named as that where Arthur Power lay ill.

Gertrude carried the travelling bag, but it was scarcely that trifling burthen which caused her pace to be so much behind that of her mistress. Josephine pressed forward with quick and eager footsteps, which were wholly beyond the powers of her phlegmatic and stout handmaiden. Yet her face bore no signs of that feverish haste which marked her movements; she was very pale, and her parched lips were parted, while her eyes strained anxiously along the road for signs of the place she sought, or tidings of some kind, she scarce knew what, by which she might gain some information.

"I did not think it had been so far," she said in German to the girl, who was making a desperate effort, by a jog-trot run, to come up with her mistress.

Gertrude proffered some information as to the distance of the inn from the cross-road; for the place was known to her. "We are just there," she said—"and see, there is the smoke," she added.

Josephine uttered an ejaculation of satisfaction, half-suppressed; then hur-

riedly she gave a few directions to her servant, still walking at a rapid rate.

"You understand," she said, in conclusion.

Gertrude answered earnestly in the affirmative; she was proud of being to such an extent the confidant of her mistress, and Josephine knew she could trust the girl not to chatter, even of the very little she knew.

While Gertrude disappeared down a side-path in the rear of the building, carrying the slender stock of luggage, Josephine, somewhat abating her pace, approached the inn.

An English-built carriage was drawn up at the front entrance; an English footman, with an ineffable expression of disdain upon his features, was assisting the clumsy factotum of the place in hastily covering the horses, which were still panting with the effects of their late speed.

For one moment Josephine paused, her eyes fixed upon the equipage. Was it that of the Earl, or of some member of the family? She had no clue even to conjecture. She hesitated, great as was her anxiety, from intruding. It might even be *her*—his wife, returned; and she—what had she to do there? Her gaze wandered to the house; some sign of bustle and commotion made itself apparent; a servant or two passed the open door; one carrying a lamp, the other a mass of white linen and some vessel. The upper windows were all closed, the curtains drawn; but, while she looked, a hand was hastily thrust behind them, the casement-window flung open, and the heavy drapery thrown back. At the same moment, the servant bearing

the lamp entered the room, and its light was thrown upon the figure of an elderly man, whose grey head she next distinguished emerging from what appeared to be the drapery of a bed; then it crossed the chamber.

"It is *his* room," was the thought that half formed itself into words upon her lips as she approached the door. Ere she reached it, the gentleman stood upon the threshold, calling to his servant. The latter quickly brought from the carriage a small case, and went with it to his master, who stepped briskly out to take it from his hand, giving him meanwhile some directions in a low voice.

The man turned away towards the stables; the gentleman was about to re-enter the house; he had not observed Josephine, till she came close up to him, and in a voice she vainly tried to render calm, asked —

"How is he, Sir? Pray tell me — Is he in danger?"

The gentleman turned briskly.

"Thank God for that sound!" he said, with a touch of real gratitude in his tone.

"Thank God, whoever or whatever you may be; at least you are not a barbarian. Come in."

He had stepped within the entrance, and stood in the dim light of the smoky oil-lamp that hung overhead. He hastily scanned her pale face, her plain dress, which indeed she had studiously made almost humble; the close cap and bonnet which shaded her face and eyes.

"An Englishwoman!" he said, and his eyes actually gleamed with satisfaction. "I shall not ask you how or whence you came; Heaven sent you to help me in my need. This poor young fellow, our countryman — you are aware it seems; in truth there is little hope — what chance indeed among these blundering people; they had half-stifled him when I came in; not a soul that comprehends either the language or the remedies — you will help me!"

It was hardly put as a question,

and she had no voice to answer; but she bowed her head, and, pressing her clenched hand to her side, where the hard slow throb seemed threatening to cease each moment, she followed mechanically and with noiseless footsteps up the stairs over which the physician had already made but two strides to the top.

The room was large, but low-ceiled; the windows small and without chimney or open fire-place. The air was stifling, even now the casement stood partially open; and the faint poisonous vapor, inseparable from the chamber of a fever-patient, hung heavily upon it.

At the door, ere she had fully entered, the doctor turned, and, laying one hand upon her shoulder, put her back.

"I should warn you, ma'am, for I conclude you are not a professional nurse, this may be contagious."

"I know it," she said, faintly, but still pressing on. "I am used to sickness; let me come in."

Eagerly she glanced around the room. It bore signs of having been for days thus tenanted. An array of empty bottles, boxes, &c., were on the great deal wardrobe that filled one corner of the chamber; upon a table hard by were dirty teacups, basins, a knife and plates, which had been suffered to accumulate; some soiled linen, with boots, hastily thrown aside out of the way, were heaped beneath.

In a corner, between the fireplace and the window, couched a gaunt black hound, whose red eyes gleamed out from the shadow, — a strange accompaniment to the sick-room.

By the bedside stood a mass of fat which might have taken, rather than been moulded to, somewhat of the outward semblance of a woman. Its eyes seemed to have receded, and twinkled feebly in the cavernous recesses of those fleshy walls which threatened speedily to close in upon them. The huge capless head, with its frowzy, frizzled mass of dark hair, was partially covered by a yellow hand-

kerchief, and with every sonorous guttural of that capacious mouth issued an odoriferous volume, resembling the smell of a very stale mousetrap with a sprinkle of bad whisky — this was the nurse.

She began as the doctor approached, to give, in her own unharmonious dialect, some account of her patient; but the physician impatiently signed to her to desist. Josephine spoke to her more gently in her native tongue.

"Ah! you understand these barbarians?" said the doctor. "I always imagined myself to be a tolerable German scholar; but their horrible jargon is as unintelligible to me as I appear to be to them. Would you be so good as to desire her to keep out of the way at least till I want her?"

Josephine signified to the aged Gorgon that for the present her services were dispensed with; then, at the request of the physician, she approached the bed, and thus again she beheld her lover; he whom she had, to the breaking of her own heart, put from her, that he might be happy. He lay with his head low back upon the pillow. His hair had been closely shaved, and blisters thickly applied; his face, blanched to a deadly pallor, save where two scarlet patches burned, was yet scarcely whiter than the lips which moved incessantly in a continuous, restless, meaningless muttering. His eyes, sunk and rayless, were fixed upon the opposite wall. It was difficult to believe that reason could ever revisit those lacklustre orbs, which she had last beheld bright with intelligence and love.

The thin, almost transparent hands, lay upon the coverlid, at which they plucked incessantly; now and again, with a sudden motion, the sick man made as if he would have raised them, but they as frequently fell back, as if restrained by some imposed force; and as the physician turned back the bed-clothes, Josephine saw, with painful amazement, that the arms of the invalid were bound to his side, a broad

and clumsily-contrived bandage confining him to the bed.

She uttered an involuntary exclamation. The doctor understood her surprise, and, as he proceeded to release the patient, he said —

"Of a piece with the rest of their treatment! Yes, yes, we will alter this; we will try something a little different."

The deposed nurse, who understood something of their tone or gestures, here began profusely to exclaim, in vindication of what was doubtless her own work.

"The gentleman had been very violent," she said; "they had been afraid he would do himself a mischief — nay, he might even have killed her; for her own safety she had adopted it."

"That mountain of flesh in fear of a poor wasted shadow like this!" the physician muttered: then he at once, with the aid of Josephine, set about applying such remedies as were attainable for the relief of the sufferer, and to counteract the effect of such ill-judged applications as, by the ignorance of those hitherto in attendance upon him, had been resorted to.

The obese German stood aloof, regarding them with stolid sullenness, occasionally, by some guttural ejaculation, resembling nothing so much as a grunt, signifying her disapprobation. The servants had quitted the room, and did not again appear. Once the landlady came to the door, which she opened to the extent of some two inches, and, standing without, fearfully inquired if the gentleman wanted anything: to which the doctor, in the purest German of the schools — which it was very questionable if the woman understood — returned an emphatic "No:" adding, that he had got an English nurse, and would not trouble any of them further.

Occupied with professional cares, the physician had not given a second thought to the person whose services he had so readily adopted, and which

he found so valuable at the moment of real need.

Once only he glanced up hastily across the bed, when some slight tremor of the hands betrayed an emotion not strictly professional. The poor fever patient had been bled. In making some arrangement for his comfort, the bandage, badly put on, gave way, and the blood gushed forth. Was it to be wondered if even she, brave girl, nerving herself as she was to that terrible scene, turned sick and trembled at that sight? The quick eye of the doctor for one moment was bent upon her; but her face was hidden from him; no word escaped her, as with quick hand she lent her aid, and, with that light and gentle touch, so precious in the sight of a medical attendant, assisted him to bind up the limb, and further seconded all his aims and desires; more, as it seemed, by intuition than at his request. The poor sufferer, soothed and comforted, grew calmer, and his muttering took a lower tone; though his eyes remained fixed and vacant.

The physician, withdrawing a step or two, stood looking at his patient with that interest that men of his profession, who have their work at heart, can alone feel in such a case. Presently, as if by a chain of thought, his eyes were directed to the figure of his able assistant, who was moving noiselessly about the room, as if the office she had assumed within the hour had been hers of right for months past. She had laid aside the rough cloak and large bonnet, beneath which appeared a dress of the dark stuff commonly worn by the lower class or domestic servants of the country; a close-fitting cap of snowy whiteness covering her hair, and tying beneath her chin.

Making a bundle of the dirty linen which filled the recess beneath the table, she placed it in the arms of the old woman, who, with open mouth, stared, half inclined to protest, yet mechanically obeyed her, and carried it from the room. Josephine then col-

lected all the dirty crockery and empty bottles, placing them upon a wooden tray she found leaning against the wall, together with all the useless ceteras which had accumulated on the shelves and table of the sick-room, depositing it outside the door, and all without jingle, or creak, or sound of foot or hand; her soft skirts sweeping the floor noiselessly; her tread upon the carpetless boards passing light as a bird's.

The good doctor uttered a mental thanksgiving: "She must have been sent direct from heaven," was his thought—"Though I did not deserve it, for the curses I bestowed upon these leaden-footed dunder-headed clowns. She must have passed her life in a sick-room. How old is she?—I have only seen her hands; *they* have not the look of a nurse's by any means—too young for that. And she has actually pressed that old fat frau into the service! Clearing the room of all that accumulated filth, too,—*she* understands—thank God for her, whoever she be!"

A movement in the bed here interrupted the current of the physician's meditation; the next ten minutes saw him conscious of nothing but his patient. Meanwhile, Josephine continued her self-imposed duty, and having made a considerable clearance in the surplus contents of the chamber, she approached the corner, where on a ragged mat lay the gaunt black hound, which lifted up its head and stared at her with its bloodshot inquiring eyes.

The doctor, just then resuming his observations of her movements, was about hastily to warn her of interference with the animal, when, to his astonishment, he saw the creature rise slowly, and submitting to her caressing touch, suffer itself to be coaxed from the room; she carrying the mat and certain *debris* of a former repast, which the brute doubtless set store by.

An expression of amazement passed across the face of the medical man. "And that brute growled at me when I only spoke to it," was his comment

on the scene. "What is this woman?—a superstitious person, now, might think she was something uncanny. But her services are too valuable to be declined, even on that score; I only hope she may not vanish before we have done with her." Here his whole attention became fixed upon his patient, whose uneasy muttering, and increased flush of cheek and glistening eye, told where the cruel fever was now making fiercest havoc.

The night fell, the stars one by one shone out in the darkened sky: the dim lamp was placed so that its light fell not on the eyes of the patient,—those eyes, that, alas! seemed filling with a wild unquenchable light of their own.

The obese German had disappeared—to and fro the young stranger had moved, dusting, arranging all noiselessly; now and then pausing to gaze upon the sick man, always with face averted from the eyes of the physician; who, indeed, seemed almost to have forgotten her presence in his fixed observation of the fevered and delirious patient.

By an effort such as it is given to few the power to make—which those happily ignorant of its necessity may well deem impossible—the brave girl had sternly repressed every outward sign of the terror, the love, the anguish, which filled her heart, and schooled herself to that calm passionless demeanor of grave gentleness which is, perhaps, less difficult after all to those of the deepest sensibility, than to such whose passions, lying near the surface, are easier to excite, more visible in their demonstration, and less enduring. Besides, the certainty of to-day, terrible though she found it, was far more endurable than the torturing suspense of yesterday. She could not have undergone another twenty-four hours of such uncertainty. Now at least she was near him, she knew the worst; she might do all that could be done by woman's aid; even did he never speak again the voice of reason, nor his eyes turn on her their well-re-

membered gaze—even was the worst doomed to be—she should be near him, God help her!—she should be near him; yes, it was a painful and bitter satisfaction, but she felt it was that. She blessed the impulse that had caused her to obey that urgent bidding, to hasten to his side, which she would quit no more till he was out of danger, or till his wife assumed her place; to her only would she resign her office.

As one fire extinguishes another, as the greater anguish absorbs the lesser, so fear for the life of him who had been her lover seemed to have swallowed up all dread of misinterpretation, all thought of result, nay, even love itself, or the jealousy which is inseparable from it. Once the peril passed, once his life assured, she could resign him ungrudgingly to the ties that bound him to another, and return to the oblivion of that life to which—oh! incomprehensible human nature—to which even the present sorrow seemed in a measure to be a relief.

Still busying herself in cares for the invalid, she descended the stairs, penetrated to the kitchens, nay, even to the sanctum of the landlady herself, in quest of such materials for cooling drinks as might be obtained, with the purpose also of sending a message to her maid. It did not escape Josephine, that those of the household whom she accosted, the landlady not excepted, maintained a most respectful distance; keeping, if possible, the barrier of door, window, or screen between her and themselves; holding an apron or handkerchief furtively to their mouth or nostrils. She quickly understood that infection was dreaded, and that, even at the exorbitant charges which were accumulating in their favor, it was with sore reluctance they had harbored the Englishman in his need.

Yet all their fears could not conquer the inclination, strong in feminine Saxon as in Celt, to gossip. She learned how the English valet had died,—he from whom the poor gen-

fleman had himself caught the infection, in his humane cares for his servant—how the German hired in his place had fled at the first delirious attack of the sick man—how the village doctor had done all he could, and had finally given him over, declaring it was the worst case of all the seventy-two he had on his hands, the patient holding out against an attack that would have killed ninety-nine out of a hundred—how, finally, the English doctor had come—but of course she knew more about that than they did.

Josephine acquiesced by silence, leaving them to the belief that the physician had brought her with him: it was well she should be armed with all the authority available. She forbore, too, to inform them of what her own observation had assured her, and the doctor's opinion confirmed—that the fever had less its rise in the prevailing malady than with a disturbed organization and disquieted brain, on which it had now seized with the fiercest clutch of delirium. She could dispense with any help, save that of Gertrude, and for the patient's sake the rooms were best kept free of these.

The language was to her almost native, none of its dialects were foreign to her comprehension, and with this she was so much at home, that with her costume, and something in the mould of her features not wholly English, these simple people warmed towards her, barbarians if they were; and were ready to do her bidding to any extent, save that of entering the sick-room. She needed to put but a question, for a volley of information to be tendered in reply.

"Have no other servants been left with the gentleman, save this German valet?" she asked.

"No:" the groom would stay, told my lady so—oh, but my lady was beautiful and haughty, she ordered all before her like a queen! And at the last the groom was bid to follow too; the little gentleman would have him—he cried and stamped, did the little gentleman, and altogether com-

ported himself like "an imp of the devil"—so ran the complimentary phraseology of the relater. And the groom went; almost in tears he was, though, and he swore big oaths at my lady and the little gentleman—behind their backs of course—but he went.

"The dog?"—Oh, the hound? Well that followed the carriage, the night it stopped at the door, and would not be driven away. The groom told them that the master had fed it at the last stopping-place, where the poor brute came up to the door, half-starved. Then it followed the carriage all day. My Lady would have him beat it, and indeed bade him drown or shoot it; but the groom said (with a shrug and a covert grin this was told) "if he had his choice he would sooner drown—" well, not the dog.

They missed the animal in the bustle, while my lady was taking her departure, and the next time it was seen was in the gentleman's room; it would not be turned out, so Franz threw an old rug into the corner for it to lie on. Had Madame got it out on to the landing? it would not leave that. Ah! (and there was much head-shaking) that boded ill for the poor Englishman that black hound—where did it come from?—that was the question.

With all she wanted, at least that was attainable in the house, Josephine returned to the room. The moon had risen, and her light penetrated the white drapery, now drawn across the open casement, and flooded the room, even to the eclipse of the feeble lamp-light.

At the bed-head sat the physician, his whole attention fixed upon the patient, whose troubled muttering was rapidly increasing in strength and clearness; the more painful that in its incoherence there was a meaning, though by one only of those who watched the sufferer was its meaning understood.

"Not to me, not to me in my own house, not obedience, not duty, nothing, nothing—no, not master! Wealth,

—yes, oh yes, wealth; yes, if your Ladyship will—what mother, mother, will you have it so? Well, well, so be it; yes, yes, for your wish—"

His voice sank in a murmur; presently it broke out violently: "*She* does not love me!—do you think I don't know what love is? She will learn—*who* learns? who learns, I say? He shall have lessons, yes, yes, a tutor—Schiller—he shall learn Schiller—the good old man, Strauzleine! Ah, Josephine, Josephine, why did she not come? She might have loved me, she *might*—she could not—she could not, poor fool, poor fool, poor fool!"

The high tones died away in a piteous wail; but ere a minute passed he had sprung from the sitting posture and was wildly gesticulating:—

"Unsay those words, unsay them, Lady Geraldine! Marry you for your money!—Who says it? I will be obeyed; if not for your love, because I am master in my own house. Madam, you may insult me, but I am your husband. Bennet, I say; Bennet, bring the boy to me!" (He made as if he would have sprung from the bed, fiercely beckoning with his hands.) "Bring him to me, Lady Geraldine, I will not be held." He fiercely strove with the physician, whose powerful hands were upon him; it was marvellous to witness the strength which delirium lent to the attenuated frame. In another moment he would have sprung from the bed, when Josephine, whose woman's grasp was as nothing upon his arm, involuntarily uttered a word. The effect was electric.

"Arthur!" the flushed invalid repeated, in a fearful whisper; and subsiding into a calmer mood, "Who said Arthur? Brother, is it you? Aden, you warned me of it; you said she would not make me happy. Disgrace!—not disgrace Aden, surely, if—if she loved me—the boy, Aden, she teaches even her son to despise me. But it is Josephine, Josephine,"—he moaned the words out feebly,— "she cares nothing for me;

she will not come. She left me here alone ill, and it is cold, Aden, very cold. No, she smiles, and is gay with others; dresses even for them; she will not sing my songs, the songs I used to hear as I rode up that path—you remember, Lady Geraldine—why did she leave me alone then, and so cold? Now it changes, it is burning—some water, Aden; no, no, no—wine, brother—wine that makes me forget—you know, Aden, you know—yes, yes! She went away—Josephine, José—"

The doctor had released his hold, and stood silently watching, while she laid him back like a child upon the pillow, and passed her soft hands again and again over his dry feverish brow, till the poor sufferer was soothed into silence. The parched lips grew still, the thin hands ceased to gesticulate, finally, the strained eyes grew less fixed, the lids closed mechanically, as if that touch had been irresistible, and they yielded to its power.

With less wonder than satisfaction, the physician turned his gaze from the face of his patient to that of the nurse; and amazement in its turn possessed him.

The formal cap had fallen back, a quantity of fair shiny hair escaped to the cheek and shoulders of the woman, upon whose face the moon shone brightly. Her eyes, half closed, were bent upon the sick man; the tears falling thick and fast down cheeks scarcely less pale than the brow over which she still mechanically passed the tips of her soft fingers.

For a minute the doctor looked and marvelled; then he turned away, muttering to himself that he would go now and see what these barbarians could give him to eat.

On the landing without he encountered a neat-looking damsel, whose dress was the duplicate of hers he had left standing beside his patient.

With a low curtsey she apologized, in purer German than the physician had yet heard within those walls, and begged the gentleman to tell her which

was the room where the nurse was with the sick Englishman?

"Are you the young woman that she sent for?" asked in his turn the doctor.

"I am her maid," answered simple Gretchen; "that is, I am to help her to nurse the gentleman."

The doctor pointed out the room, and gallantly escorted Gretchen past the black hound, of which she had evidently stood in dread.

"Go gently," he said; "the patient is likely to sleep now. But if you are like your mistress," he added to himself, "I need not tell you that."

"Her maid, eh!" he soliloquized as he descended the stairs; "the nurse's maid—ha!—Sisters of Charity perhaps. If I am not mistaken it was something deeper than charity caused those tears. Well, it is no affair of mine. If we save him she will have the largest share in it, and beyond that I need not trouble myself." He reached the small but uncomfortable room, where supper was laid, and his own English servant awaited his orders.

These were soon given: the carriage had been put up, the physician would remain through the night.

He sat down to his solitary meal; pausing now and then when the slightest sound overhead reached his ear. He appeared still turning over in his mind the incidents of the evening.

"Ah!" he finally broke out aloud, "Perhaps all that rhodomontade the poor young fellow uttered had more sense to her than I thought. My Lady Geraldine, it had been better for you, perhaps, to have risked contagion; but it is certainly no affair of mine!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

ADDING UP.

THE Earl lay upon his luxurious couch, from which he was never more to rise without the help of some stronger hand; the blow had been a cruel one, more cruel from its sudden-

ness, more fatal that it struck at the root of that pride, no less of birth and station than of honor, which had been the vital principle, as it were, of his very existence. The old nobleman could no more outlive dishonor than he could have done the sudden deprivation of estate, name, wealth, and the traditional high position of his family. He felt it more keenly, the actual disgrace, the blur cast upon the fame of his escutcheon, than even she did, the perpetrator of the deed. It might be that in the long contemplation and fear of discovery it had grown familiar; and the actuality failed in some of its terrors to the Countess; or that the sight of this dread and new affliction diverted her thoughts somewhat from the consequences of her crime. Pale, hollow-eyed, haggard, she moved to and fro, through her costly rooms, among her awe-struck wondering servants; changed terribly by those last few days, yet self-possessed, silent, yet watchful, almost as if defiant of what might yet be to come; like the wild animal that while owning itself trapped is yet prepared at any moment, should occasion be found, to break free from its bonds, and rend its captor. But the aged peer, who had all his life through kept that lofty attitude, conscious of possessing all by which pride is vindicated to the world; lay now utterly broken, cast down, crushed. There was with him no question of palliation, of provocation, or excuse. The thing stood before him in all its undisguised and hideous blackness; it was done. There had been in his house foul wrong, treachery, sin, infamy:—it mattered not how it had come, the thing was there; could never be eradicated, cleansed, ignored. All was over. We most of us know how it will fare with mind or body, with even life itself, once let it come to that.

So Lord Honiton had lain, since he recovered from the first terrible grasp of the dire malady which had seized upon him. As a child, or still more

like one very aged and infirm, from whom the principle, nay the very desire of existence, has departed, and in the frail body only languishes, as it were, the last rays of the soul's intelligence. The only sign of consciousness he gave was when the door of the room opened, or the curtains of his bed were stirred; then his eyes unclosed and fixed themselves upon whoever approached, as if seeking one individual. It was not his Countess whose presence was desired; for on her appearance once or twice he closed his eyes and made a feeble attempt to turn away his head. Whether or not the movement was apparent to her, she did not urge her attentions, or in any way attempt to overcome the too evident repugnance of her lord: though she came to and fro, and, like an uneasy ghost, hovered near the still couch of her victim.

Late on the evening of the second day Aden Power stood by the bedside of the Earl. All travel-stained, and flushed with anxious haste, the young man entered the chamber, with something less of caution than might have been displayed by one less filled with affectionate alarm.

"Father!"—he had caught the hand of the old nobleman as it was feebly put forth to meet his own, and the faint gleam of satisfaction that passed over the once fine features, now so sadly warped and changed, told who the poor gentleman had so eagerly awaited.—"Dear father, why did they not tell me?—why was I not sent for sooner?" He looked round with displeasure upon the attendants present, then his eyes quickly reverted to the form stretched upon the bed.

"The attack was so sudden, Mr. Power,"—"Indeed all possible haste was used, Sir; it was indeed." So they spoke, blandly and deprecating his anger, whom their facile lips were already attuned to dub "My Lord"—it could not be long first now.

"Oh! that I should have been away of all times—my dear father—do you suffer still?—let me raise him; so, is

it, father?" And the young man tenderly lifted the sufferer to the cushions piled beneath his shoulders. "When will Sir James return?" he asked, turning to the nurse.

"Sir James is below, Sir. Mr. Aytoun has been with him." She added in a lower voice—"Mr. Aytoun did not see my Lord, for my Lord was asleep; but he is to return."

Aden had taken up a kneeling posture by the bedside; his face was thus brought to a level with that of the Earl, whose hand he still retained within his own. The sick man's eyes were fixed upon the countenance of the younger; he seemed insensible to all else that passed about him; and his tottering reason appeared wrestling with some idea which strove whether or not it should escape unmastered. Suddenly his lips began to work, forming but two words, which he repeated in quick succession.

"My son—my son—"

Aden caught the sound, and bent his ear to the cheek of the invalid.

"What is it, dear father? My mother, do you ask for?—where is the Countess?" he asked, looking round, and for the first time noting her absence.

"My Lady had been here but now," the attendant began; but an exclamation from the Earl, and the quick grasp upon his arm, drew the attention of the young man, and he was not slow to comprehend that the sick man desired to be alone with him.

The attendants were at once dismissed; then, with renewed expressions of filial tenderness, Aden begged that his father's pleasure should be made known to him.

The Earl for a few moments was silent, still gazing, with a sad heart-broken expression, upon the face beside him.

"I came," continued Aden, "dear father, I came fast as I could travel, the moment the tidings of your illness reached me. Thank God I found you no worse!" Then he added, cheerfully, "You know Arthur is better,

father; he is out of danger; you will be quite restored, I trust, by the time he returns, and both your sons will sit beside you —”

The pained, horrified expression, shot across the face of the Earl, which it had assumed by the death-bed at the cottage; his lips trembled, and the words broke harshly from them:—

“Not my son—O God! *not* my son—”

Aden Power looked aghast. The first and most natural impression was that his unhappy parent's mind was utterly gone. A second glance at his face, and the words which followed, removed at once that belief. Controlling the passionate emotions which shook his frame, intent upon giving to his words their full meaning, with a view to that which was to follow; conscious too, within himself, how fast that power of control was ebbing from him; the miserable nobleman, bending forward slightly from his pillows, brought his face closer to that of his companion's, as he whispered—

“You are not my son—God help you! you are nothing to me!”

“My Lord!” cried Aden, springing to his feet, yet still retaining the hand he clasped—“Father! Sir! what do you say?—what can you mean?”

“I am not your father! Hush! for God's sake do not leave me.”

The old peer with less difficulty got out the words, the voice was more his own, as he bade the other “listen.”

Then Aden Power, kneeling by the bedside of the proud man whom he had known only as a father, heard from his lips the tale which set between them a distance no time could annul, nor art, nor will, nor purpose ever span. He, the son of a spotless ancestry, heir to princely estates and wealth to match, was in fact but the nameless pauper brat, whose best inheritance was sweating toil, and all the noisome train of hungry want. Let his brain whirl as it might, let reason and memory war as they would against belief; it was there, and swift-

ly despite himself came the realization of the horrid truth. Lower and lower sank the young man's head, till his face was buried in the bedclothes; his hands, relinquishing the grasp they had kept till now, were clasped above his head, and he groaned in the utter anguish of a grief which admits of no remedy, which no words have power to deplore.

Presently he rose, and, turning from the bed, momentarily staggered, like one blinded by a sudden stream of light.

“Where are you going? Aden! Aden!” feebly called the old Earl. “You will not leave me; you must not go. Come, come—you must not leave me, I say.”

“My Lord, I am going—” the young man began in a broken utterance; but the poor invalid, leaning from the bed, had caught him by the sleeve, and the feeble violence sufficed that Aden should turn.

“You shall not leave me—you are my son,” said the Earl again, in the feeble wailing tone; “I knew nothing of this—I loved you as my son—I was—you know, Aden, you know—”

“My Lord—father—” the unhappy man cried, again prostrating himself at the bedside, and once more clasping the thin long fingers held out to him, “you have been all, all, that the best of fathers—oh! can it be true, my Lord? Is it indeed true? Oh! why was I ever born! my noble father! my dear generous Lord!—”

There was a pause, and the couch shook under the suppressed sobs of the young man. Suddenly he started up—“And it was that—that horrible tale which brought you to this state. Suffer me, my Lord, do not hold me—suffer me to seek her—the Countess—”

“She is here,” said a voice, as my Lady stepped from the other side of the bed, where the closed drapery had concealed her presence all the weary while she had stood there. Even at such a time the altered appearance, the pale, distracted countenance of her he had learned to account his mother,

struck some pity into the breast of the miserable man; and he checked the words that were formed upon his lips. But she—the light of the hatred which had long burned within her was growing into her deep eyes, as she looked upon him; and if in her defeat there remained one fragment of consolation, it was in the thought that he was hopelessly wrecked who had now learned her crime and its cost.

“Now! Aden Power,” she said; and the tone!—God help her!—it made him pity her even more; “you know all, and may go, with what speed you will, to blazon abroad the shameful secret—how long you have held a place that was not your own.”

“God knows, not of my own will, or knowledge,” he said bitterly; then restraining himself, “At least, my Lady, spare him!” pointing with the free hand to the Earl, who still held the other, and who, bending forward, looked from one to the other, vainly trying to catch the words uttered under breath. “He has not incurred your dislike as, Heaven knows how! I have. He needs and deserves all your care! Heaven help me! I must not offer mine. I am going, my Lady.”

He would have gone, but the old man held him fast. My Lady, still upright, pale, motionless, at the bed-foot, with a hasty gesture motioned off his last words.

“My care! How long is it since he wished or needed that?—You have heard my Lord's story sir, but have you learned mine?—Bah! But you know enough; and that you owe your past good fortune not to love, but to the want of it.—You are going Sir—well!—be sure I can bear the scandal which proclaims at least that you are not my son—”

She spoke the last words in a high key; they caught the ear of the Earl. At the same moment Aden by an effort had freed himself, and would have quitted the room; but with a loud cry the peer arrested his steps; and the young man, painfully agitated, returned.

“My Lord, what would you have?” he said. “I *must* go, my presence here can only be painful, nay, is a positive wrong. There is another whose place is here; suffer me to make my peace with him, by being the first to acquaint him with the wrong that I unconsciously have done him.”

“You shall not leave me,” said the sick man, feebly; “you *are* my son, *you* are my heir, none but you, *none* but you, Aden Power, my son; bid her come here, Aden; bid my lady, your mother, come here, close to my side; so Juliet—so Aden. You shall not leave me, *you* are my son. Juliet, this is our son.”

Trembling, the lady approached yet nearer; while the young man listened with burning-brow to the words of the Earl.

“You will not shame us, Aden; you will not disgrace the name; how many centuries it has been unblemished! My son, have I loved you as one? You will not shame us—I know you will not. No creature knows the secret but that poor miserable woman, who was my wife. She will not set the shame upon her own name. The girl—she was a foreigner; and Chepstow—he but half understood. Aden you will spare me; you will spare that unworthy mistaken woman!”

God help that proud, lost, wretched lady!—Even now the old memories were stirring at her heart, as her dying lord pleaded for, yet with such bitter words of, her. She would even now have crept to his feet, have washed out the memory of her fault with tears, if possible, upon his breast; but he put her from him, and averted his head as she only stirred.

“Aden, my son,” the old man repeated, seeing the other made no sign. “You loved us, you loved your father, as you thought him.”

“God knows I did—I do!” groaned the young man; “all, all of you, as my own flesh and blood! Arthur too, my brother, shall he be wronged still further by me?—”

"You will provide for him, you will make him rich; you have plenty, Aden, Aden," urged the humbled nobleman—"have pity on us, have pity on your own name, on Arthur's. What would wealth and rank be to him with a dishonored name—with a felon for his mother? Save me, save him, save her, from the shame, my son! Oh! be my son still, Aden, Aden, be my son!—Have pity on him who has been all to you—Do not let them scorn him in his grave!"

The tears burst from the eyes of the paralyzed Earl, as with the voice of childish eagerness he pleaded as for the life on which his hold was fast slipping away. Shocked beyond expression, the young man hastened to soothe the affliction of that enfeebled, broken man, who had been the benefactor of his life. But in vain he gently urged all that honor, reason, right, nay even natural affection, could suggest. The ruling passion was dominant, Pride holding her own to the last; his escutcheon should stand unblemished to the world,—he was dead to all besides. In the intensity of his desire the peer adjoined his wife with solemn sternness. She had tampered with their family honor, let her make what atonement was in her power, by treating Aden as the rightful heir he had always been supposed. It was a fearful trial to the haughty woman, the idolizing mother, thus a second time urged to forswear the rights of that child of her body whom she had, ere his being, so cruelly wronged; but she must yield; forcible even in his insane demand, her Lord left her not a chance of denial; so terrible was the picture he held up to her view.

"Your son? his rights, madam," he said, in answer to something she feebly urged,— "That he may despise the mother who plotted, and the father that was deceived—that he may leave the old estates to ruin, and fly from the country which rings with our shame!—rights! my lady—your second son has no rights; here is Aden, our son, my heir."

The old habit of passionate command which had given temporary strength was spent, the doubly enfeebled man sank back fainting, exhausted, like a lamp of which, for a purpose, the wick has been raised to a fiercer flame, then sinks dimly and falls into darkness.

The terrified Countess, weeping, aghast, shrank from the room, as Aden summoned the nurses, and the physicians, who anxiously waited for consultation, followed. In the partial stupor which ensued he took the opportunity of quitting the sick chamber; desiring those present to summon him, should his father signify a desire for his presence. There was no lack of ready assents from those who stood ready to do his bidding. A few days, a week at most, and such as had stood well with the Honorable Aden Power would find favor in the sight of my Lord Honiton and Loftborough. How blind are the wisest of us sometimes in our calculations! How the spirit of mischief must chuckle over our most confident anticipations!

Confused, shocked, nay appalled, by what he had heard; wearied in body, and sick at heart; Aden was turning into the first room he came to of the old familiar suite at the staircase-foot, where in early days he and Arthur had been accustomed to join their parents in the hours of domestic intercourse. The one least glaring with light suited best his present mood, and as he entered, and was about to throw himself upon a couch, awaiting the summons which he dreaded, yet would not shrink from—the Countess entered by another door. Hastily retreating, he would have quitted the apartment; but she stood still, and to pass without a rudeness was not possible.

"Why do you shrink from me?" she said, in a tone half defiant, half expostulating. "At least I have done you no harm. You, at least, have nothing to reproach me with."

Aden stood before her, fixing upon her eyes that were heavy with

what in a woman would have been tears.

"My Lady," he said, coldly, and in the measured tone of one who will not be roused; "I had it in my mind to say some harsh things when I met you; but I see, I know you are suffering; I would be merciful; I ask you for your own sake to be satisfied with what you have done, and leave me to myself, lest I forget that I once called you 'mother,' and upbraided you with my wrongs."

"Wrongs!" At the word her fierce passion blazed up. "You, whom I have loaded with benefits; you, taken from the dregs of the populace—from starvation—snatched from death, to enjoy every luxury, all the ease, the refinement of the highest station—wealth, education, civilization itself—you, who owe all to me, advantages of which nothing can deprive you; you talk of wrongs!"

For a moment there was an inward struggle; his eyes flashed, his breath came hard.

"My Lady!" he burst out, yet in a tone that would go no further than her ear, which it seemed to pierce, "I had a mother—where shall I seek her?—a father's name, who will tell it me? You took these from me, you cannot replace them! I was poor, you say, but I had never known wealth, and it would not grieve me. I had a station, a place, a home, of some kind; where am I now? I have, you say, refinement, habits of luxury, ease, command, and I am—a beggar! My Lady, you have wronged your husband, that poor dying man above; you have wronged your son, deeply—but most of all you have wronged me, past all amends, past all reparation. 'Starvation,' Madam!—'death.' I would to God it had been death you left me to, sooner than I had seen this day, sooner than stand as I do now, with the curse of a false position for my birthright."

He strode from the room, but he had not need to pass her. She shrank aside from his path, as never in her

life had she shrank from mortal. The burning accents of Truth sank into her soul, misjudging as it was, and coated with the sophistries of her station. But, more than this, his words bore a fresh terror. Was he, then, about to reject the expressed wishes of the Earl, which offered for him a perpetuation of the life whose advantages he had never missed? Had he, madman, the intention to expose her? to restore to Arthur his own, and himself accept the position of—as he had truly said—a beggar? As the idea only flashed upon her, she recalled all the horrors of which the Earl had warned her—the contempt of her beloved son; the reproach she might expect for the ill-assorted marriage into which he had needlessly been hurried; the indignation which in his upright and honorable nature would be excited by the knowledge of her machinations. She saw herself despised, alike by both, whom in different ways she had wronged; she pictured in fancy her latter days, alone, unloved, and avoided; and, like too many of us, she called unto the God she had never invoked to her assistance, with the upbraiding, "*Thou hast forsaken me.*"

CHAPTER XXV.

A CRISIS AND A REMEDY.

THE autumn sun shone aslant into the sick-chamber we have elsewhere sketched, though it now scarcely answers to that name; convalescent would be nearer the truth as applied to the young man who reclines in a large old-fashioned chair, made easier than ever the original conception of its maker could have deemed possible, by the cunning arrangement of soft pillows, downy cushions, and even certain wadded shawls, and such like feminine appurtenances, than which, though only serving here in lieu of less attainable articles, nothing could have been better devised for the purpose. There needed not the presence of these, however, to assure any ob-

server that a woman's hand had been busy and a woman's taste exercised in the ordering of the sick-chamber — which, at least till very lately, it had been. The soft mattings which covered the old worm-eaten boards, the snowy quilt upon the bed, (the curtains had been all removed by the doctor's order,) the little vase of homely autumn flowers upon the window-seat; nay, the very arrangement of every article about the room, even to the phials of medicine upon the table, spoke of careful thought and order, which are most frequently a woman's attributes; while the many little soothers or ameliorations of sickness, the simple delicacies, jellies, fruit, and light cake, or pudding — the chess-board with its men, the books, the musical box, lying here and there, gave evidence of something more than mere skillful tending of the well-trained nurse, or the exercise of that application of a natural talent which does duty at times for experience.

Upon the clean wide hearth glowed a cheerful wood-fire, like a well-to-do citizen who, past the heyday crackle, sparkle, and fume of hilarious youth, has settled down into the calm, equable, dependable glow of middle age. Ample window curtains of scarlet cloth shaded that side of the room from the rays of the setting sun, which lighted up the opposite wall, the bureau with its books, the table with its prettily-arranged dishes; and, just catching a corner of the old oak chest, gilded it with a touch of its own radiance; and, perhaps — who knows? — might have awakened in that transformed monarch of the woods some reminiscence of a time when nature and he were on terms of intimacy — when the winds were his playfellows, and the sunbeams nestled lovingly in his leafy embrace.

The convalescent sat in the cosy arm-chair beside the wood-fire; near him sat the English doctor; and between them, upon a small spider-legged table, was the chess-board, with the red and white combatants drawn up

in battle array. On the table beside them was a plate with some prepared fruit, which the invalid had apparently just touched and put aside. At his feet lay a book, likewise discarded. The game had evidently stopped short in the midst; and his late antagonist, the good doctor, was leaning across the board, unmindful of overturned pawns and queens dethroned, while he felt his patient's pulse, and looked at his half-averted face, with a stealthy glance of professional inquiry.

Another pair of eyes were turned up to the young man on the other side; they were those of the faithful black hound, which had been permitted to enter the chamber, and which had at once taken up a position which it seemed to have no intention of quitting. Arthur's other hand rested upon its head, but his eyes gloomily sought the fire; and, as he turned wearily in his chair, a sigh escaped him, half smothered in an expression of impatience.

"I'll tell you what, my dear Sir, this will not do," broke out the doctor — "It will *not*! a few hours more of this groaning and sighing, and despondency, and we shall have you back upon that bed again; I won't say as bad as ever, but worse, *infinitely worse*!"

"Shall I, Doctor?" the young man said, listlessly, his eyes still fixed upon the fire.

"Shall you? There it is — nothing in the world but the mind! It seems to me you do not care to get well — positively do not care to get well!"

"Well, perhaps there is something in that, Doctor," Arthur replied, releasing an ear of the hound, and lifting his hand to the arm of the chair, where he let it drop heavily — "Perhaps I do not."

The doctor uttered a half-suppressed exclamation of impatience.

"Really now, my dear Sir, this is wrong, absolutely wrong; I could almost say ungrateful. You have been preserved as it were by a miracle. I may tell you, now it is past,

that at one time I would not have given sixpence for your chance of recovery. As, by a miracle, Sir, you have been restored to life and comparative health; and now you actually repine at the mercy."

"Forgive me, Doctor," said the young man, languidly; "I know how much I owe you; your skill and kindness I am sure are beyond —"

"I did not mean that, Sir; you know I did not. My skill would have availed little; though these barbarians were doing their best to hasten a catastrophe. As to kindness, Sir, I disclaim all title; I have done nothing but my duty, and my share has been small in your recovery."

Arthur looked slowly round the room, taking in one by one the comforts by which he was surrounded; then his eyes fell with a look of affectionate gratitude upon the doctor.

"I can remember something of what this place was when they brought me to it," he said. "I think the last thought that crossed my brain with anything like intelligence was, what a horrid hole it would be to die in, and how my body would lie upon that dreary bed, surrounded with dirt and wretchedness. It is a different place now that I open my eyes upon — yet you have done *nothing*! Ah! Doctor, I am not ungrateful."

The doctor swallowed down the words with which he was just about to disown his share in the good work. It was a hard gulp, but he dared not do that he longed.

"Then prove it," he said, in reply to the other, "by showing you appreciate your restored health, and not by such gloomy looks and weariness of everything, give those about you to understand that they have done you an injury by not letting you die like a dog, on yonder pallet. Come, come, I can make all allowance for the weakness of recovery, and yours has been no ordinary attack; but I can distinguish between the languor of mind and body; and I know in your case which it is."

"I do not deny it, Doctor," returned Arthur, laying back his head and closing his eyes. "At the risk of being thought thankless and repining, I must confess that in my restoration to life so heavy is the prospect, so bitter the memories, I could fain wish that I had indeed been left to pass away; not, as you say, like a dog, but in the painless pleasant dreams that visited me upon that couch."

The good doctor was gazing anxiously at the pale, thin, handsome face of his patient: the closed eyes, the high shrunken brow, shorn of its fine clustering locks, wore a startling resemblance to a corpse in the first moments of death's repose, —

"Ere decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty
lingers."

He hastened to dissipate the idea, and as he thought to himself, "anything to interest and rouse him," he said, —

"Pleasant dreams indeed! — of school-days, forfeits and fines, I imagine. They over-bored you with Schiller and Goethe, that is plain. So much for cramming lads with more than they can manage, or indeed appreciate at the time!"

He was not looking direct at his companion while he spoke, but he marked the start and flush with which he unclosed his eyes and turned towards him.

"Did I speak? — *did* I quote Schiller in my delirium? — tell me, Doctor."

"Nay, I did not mark much of what it was," the doctor replied: "only as Schiller happened to have been a favorite of my own once upon a time, long ago, I recognised the lines, and very pat you had them, Mr. Power."

"But what else did I speak of? Who heard me? Pray tell me, Doctor."

"I do not remember what you said, I was too much occupied with other matters. As to Gretchen yonder, you

know English is Hebrew to her, and Schiller too, for the matter of that."

"Ah! and there was no one else, then; no one else with me?"

"Graceless again, Sir; were not we sufficient? Oh, by the bye, there was some one else though—I found you in the custody of a she Ursa Major." And the doctor proceeded to give an account of the stupendous flesh-mount who had stood guard over the patient when he entered upon the field. But the description, droll as it was, failed to produce even the ghost of a smile upon the features of his charge, or to affect him farther than the remark, feebly uttered, —

"You are very good; I do not know how to thank you, Doctor." Presently he muttered to himself, as he sat with closed eyes and head laid back, — "It was the German, I suppose, the German spoken about me, but so strange."

He seemed to doze, and the doctor, driven again from the charge, betook himself to walking up and down the room with his hands behind him, now and then pausing to look from the window at the wondrous panorama beyond, which the sun sinking behind the distant mountains painted with a splendor, though so often repeated, never old in detail.

"It is painful," (so ran his thoughts,) "to see one so young, by nature blessed with health and vigor, so careless of life, so indifferent to a world full of beauty and happiness. What a sunset! — it makes one's very heart glow! At such a time, too, when I have seen the poorest and most miserable rejoice at their restoration to life, which for them consisted perhaps of eleven brats with a drunken husband — the wash-tub and hospital, with an interlude of black eyes. That poor wretch the miner, now, who never saw the blessed light of day above twice in the year, — why he was half beside himself when I told him he would be up in a week. 'I am out of danger!' — he said to his wife; 'I shall live!' Good God! and for what a life — she

was bearing her ninth child I remember; and when that came into the world, such work as there was to get the breath of life into its lungs — such a lamentation as was made, and such a rejoicing when the little mortal showed signs of life; though I told the poor wench it would need all her care. She was fain to fall at my feet afterwards — 'You saved my child, Doctor.' 'Saved' him, and for what? — broken bones and lacerated flesh to a probability; a certainty of perpetual labor from the time he could handle a pick, in semi-darkness, flat on his back, or waist high in water — I had saved her child for that and she blessed me! Life for its own bare sake must indeed be sweet!" He paused, and as in his marching up and down he approached the chair where Arthur reclined, he looked over the upturned face, "Yet here is this young sprig, with fortune, connection, luxury and ease, at his command, a beauty for a wife, an Earl for a brother — that will be — and he groans and moans forsooth that we did not let him finish off his career betimes. Well, well; it is a strange state of things!"

So ran the doctor's ruminations. As he continued his self-imposed exercise, the train of thought slightly wandered to another who had taken part with himself in late occurrences.

"She has never dropped a word, not a hint, as to all this: and yet I have the story as plain before me as if I had heard it from her own lips. Of course, such things will happen, do happen every day — a fellow loves one woman and marries another. The chances then are, that he forgets all about the first, unless the latter happen to prove very much the reverse of what he looked for, should he be singular enough to expect a companion in a wife. Something of this it seems here: her Ladyship has rather outrun her share of the matrimonial tether, I fancy, from all I gather; played her cards badly; and the silly fellow has let his thoughts revert to

number one in consequence; and, if I am not much mistaken, number one is not far off. That feature in the case is not, I imagine, so common; though why — since the two were so much of a mind — they should not have come to a better understanding, is more than I can make out. Well, well; it is a sad piece of work altogether! The girl seems right enough, though she ought not, strictly speaking, to be here I suppose; but it's no business of mine. She has done much towards saving the young fellow's life, and I suspect he would put a higher value on it if he did but know it, and that the lady herself is but a room or two off. But she has forbidden it, and I have no option; the nurse rules the doctor; she has won my heart by her talent in that line. I never saw a woman with so light a hand, and a step no heavier than a bird's."

He had again reached the chair where Arthur still sat silent and motionless. For a few minutes the doctor stood in watchful contemplation. He had become singularly interested in his young patient; and I am afraid his meditations were anything but flattering to the fair cause of those domestic differences, much of which had become known to him through the rambling talk of the sick man, and his apostrophes regarding matrimonial contracts in general were anything but flattering. The worthy doctor had himself reached the age of fifty-four, without having yielded to the gentle influence of the humanizing sex; and we know that a bad habit, through the sanction of long custom, is apt to be cherished as a virtue.

"A bad business this apathy of his, this total indifference to everything. If we could but hit upon anything now to rouse him," he muttered.

The noise of some one entering hastily caused the doctor to turn round sharply, with his finger on his lip.

It was Gretchen, in tears, and much too full of grief to preserve her usual quiet demeanor.

"Oh, sir! doctor!" she cried, in

her own language, "do pray come! She wouldn't let me call you, but it is so bad I cannot bind it: do come, dear Mr. Doctor!" Then, for the first time noticing the doctor's gesture of silence, as he in fact touched her shoulder, she lowered her voice, still sobbing in explanation: —

"She has cut her arm! — my dear mistress! Oh, Sir! she is so bad; she did not mind the blood, though it makes me sick! She tried to laugh, but she is faint. Oh, Sir! you must please go to my mistress —"

"I will go — I am going," the doctor said, hurrying to the door, at which he turned. "You need not stay, Gretchen. He is asleep. Your mistress will need you."

Gretchen, with the instinct of a good servant, had only stopped to put together the embers of the wood-fire, add another log, and set the table with the fruit nearer to the elbow of the apparently sleeping man. She was stooping to pick up the book which lay in too close proximity to the muzzle of the hound, no favorite of Gretchen's, when her arm was grasped suddenly in the clutch of bony fingers; and, with a cry of alarm, the girl started up, to find herself face to face with the pale sick gentleman, now broad awake, and with eyes full of anxious inquiry fixed upon her.

"Tell me," he said rapidly and in a whisper, speaking her own tongue, "Where is your mistress? Has she been here? Has she nursed me in my illness?"

Gretchen for sole answer struggled to get free, but in vain.

"It is no use," Arthur said determinedly, and for an invalid his grip was firm: "If you do not answer me, I will call for the landlady, I will have the truth, it will perhaps vex your mistress more. Tell me now, if I am right — your mistress's name: is it Strauzleine? Josephine Strauzleine?"

The girl started, then ceased to struggle, burst into tears, and began to disclaim all complicity. "She had

not told anything, that she could swear — she had kept Madame's secret, it was not she — oh! what would Madame say: she would never forgive her."

An expression of ineffable joy spread itself over the pale face of young Power. "It is she!" he said softly to himself, "Thank God! it was not a dream, — she is near me!"

"Your mistress will not blame you," he said, reassuring the maiden, whom he still held fast, though in a grip less painful: "Don't you fear, I will explain to her. Now you see I know her name, you will tell me how long you and she have been here; tell me how you came to be in this part of the country. Come, speak, be a good girl."

Sobbing and trembling, yet not wholly reluctant to impart the secret, Gretchen told how she had been hastily summoned to attend her mistress when she quitted the White House, how disguised the lady had come to the sick-room, and with the assistance of herself had tended him night and day under the doctor's orders: not forgetting, faithful handmaiden, any iota of the untiring devotion, the unwearying care, with which her young mistress had watched through restless nights and anxious days, nor would delegate one service which her own hands could fulfil to those of any other."

"Then it was your mistress who supplied all these," indicating the before-named trifles which lay around.

"Ah! that it was," Gretchen said; warming to her subject, her tears had subsided to an occasional snift. "The niceties she made with her own hands everyone, and the books she had gone herself to buy or borrow. Oh, but she had worked, had her dear lady, and prayed too, and wept many a night, that Gretchen knew, for she slept in my lady's room, she was forced to — ah! truly she believed what the doctor had said, — that he owed his life to her mistress — it was just so."

"Why did she go away? How

long was it since the lady had been in the room?" he asked softly.

"Well, not since that day when he opened his eyes and asked what time it was? and how long had he slept? Her mistress was in the room there — over there, she had watched by him all that night, and when morning came she had gone to seat herself in the shadow of the window curtain — when he spoke, she just listened to his voice, and the doctor said something as he came to the bedside, then her mistress rose and left the room, and when she (Gretchen,) went into their own chamber, she was just rising from her knees, and her eyes were red with weeping."

"And she had not been back since?" he asked.

"No, only once, when she (Gretchen,) could not coax the dog there, — the beast, — from the room. He was asleep, and the hound was not to stay the night through — then the lady had come to get the creature away, it would heed no one else. Every day her mistress had said they must go, but she staid on. Gretchen believed it was the doctor who advised her to stay."

A more fervent blessing than ever that worthy man had earned from Arthur's heart before, was uttered mentally at that moment.

Now, Gretchen urged, she must go. Her mistress had cut herself badly, (here the tears threatened again :) indeed she had been too long, she must go.

In reply, young Power clasped her stout arm even closer, raised himself by the other on the side of the chair till he stood upright. The girl stared at him in amazement, while he slowly put back the friendly chair, released himself from sundry wrappings; and, feebly supporting himself by her arm, moved forward.

"Now, lead me to your mistress," he said in German.

The girl uttered an exclamation, "Sir, dear Sir! for Heaven's love! it will kill you — my mistress will never

forgive me! — oh, Sir! dear, good Sir!"

"Hush!" he said: "no more outcries. I will see her. If you will not show me the way, I will leave you here, and find the way myself — will your mistress blame you then?"

One idea had possessed his mind: — Josephine avoided him; should the girl inform her of what had passed, she might at once depart, and he never see her more. "If I am to die," was his thought, "it shall be at her feet."

In a room on the same floor as that occupied by the invalid Josephine had for some days past been located; a smaller one, opening from it, served as a bedroom for herself and maid. Both had been in fact nothing more than store-rooms, where the winter provision of apples and pears were preserved, together with sundry odds and ends which most good housewives set store by, with no apparent end, save that of harboring dust and obliging the rats, mice and spiders, with winter quarters free of expense. But the landlady had made her own market in routing out these closets and furbishing them up; and filling them with such furniture as she could command, they became the private apartments of the dear young lady and her maid. Since the crisis of the fever had turned to leave the poor sufferer spent and feeble, but stranded high and dry upon the shores of life, when he had opened his eyes to the sunlight of this world and recognized its objects once more, Josephine had avoided the presence of her lover. Schooled by her, Gretchen fulfilled all the duties of the sick-room, and obeyed to the letter the orders of the doctor, who, while he could not in his conscience — guessing what he did — dispute the decision of his young coadjutor, still fretted internally at being deprived of her services. "The very touch of her hand seemed to soothe him; her presence in the room did him good," he would say to himself.

Day after day, as the girl had said,

Josephine had decreed that it was time to go. Day by day came some fresh hindrance; there was this thing to be finished, the other must be arranged. Gretchen, the doctor declared, he could not spare, and Gretchen, alone, her mistress feared might talk; besides, there was yet time, she argued; no one came of the family of the sick man, though by telegraphic despatches the doctor had been apprised of the affliction which had befallen the head of the house; and had kept the Viscountess and Lady Geraldine informed as to the state of his patient, "who was improving, and for whom the very best attendance had been provided in the way of nursing." The good doctor not being possessed of his fair assistant's name, it was of course out of his power to specify her further than as an "excellent English nurse, of whose capabilities he had the highest possible opinion."

She sat there in the little low unceiled chamber, the rough beams above her head, the wide fireplace, the leaded casement all uncurtained, the bare floor, with a pretence of covering in one square morsel of matting, the clumsy wooden table and chairs, and the apology for a couch, of antediluvian conception; all formed a sorry contrast to the prettily furnished apartment in the little brown cottage where we first met Josephine. I doubt, however, if she thinks about it, as she sits by the open lattice; for though a fire crackles on the hearth, the evening air is pleasant, and she is very pale, and lacks sadly that fresh pure tint and that brightness of eye which were once chief among the attractions of her face. One arm lay upon her lap, a bandage half wound about it, stained with blood, which she presses tightly in the other hand; her compressed lips and half-closed eyes tell of pain which she is nerving herself to bear, yet that is not her chief trouble: —

"Doctor!" she says, as that gentleman enters, "did that foolish girl wake him; was he asleep? — silly creature — we could have done it."

"We have done it I think," replies he, good-humoredly, as he examines the wound; an ugly cut, in critical proximity to the wrist. "This poor little hand that did such good service too but now; how will my next patient fare? Are there no more English unfortunates, think you, deserted by kith and kin, who may need its assistance?"

So, half-scolding, half-soothing, he performed such service as the hurt required, and bound it up in the most approved manner. You see the companionship of a sick-room, the sympathies shared, the natural qualities evolved, are wonderful quickeners of acquaintance; these two might have been old friends, for the intimacy and esteem born of their singular introduction.

"And how did this happen?" he said, when all was done, and he lingered near the open casement, enjoying the fresh breeze. She pointed to the table, where some slips of wood and a goodly heap of chips formed a presentment of a truly woman-like cast.

"What might be the nature of your design? a kennel for that black fellow in the next room, or a bookcase?"

Josephine hastened to put a stop to his raillery, and with a slight confusion of manner, "You know," she said, "that casement; you noticed how it shook the other night; it was impossible for any one to sleep; it is enough at least to give them bad dreams. I thought—that is to say—Gretchen was trying to cut some wedges to keep it fast; but she is so dull at anything of the kind, so I went to show her—"

"Humph! and this is the result!"

"I suppose she must do them now," said Josephine, looking ruefully down at her arm and the dark stain on her pretty light dress.

"It is very inconvenient just when I am going—" the sentence ended in an exclamation of alarm, as she started from her chair. The doctor turned hastily towards the entrance, to which her gaze was directed. He beheld his patient, whom he had left so lately

sunk in an apathetic doze, his pale face flushed, his sunken eyes dilated with eagerness, as he tottered feebly in, leaning upon the sturdy arm of Gretchen; who, her apron to her eyes, seemed entering a vigorous protest against a proceeding which she had been coerced into aiding literally with her support.

"Arthur!" exclaimed Josephine, while the doctor quickly hastened to the aid of the young man—and Gretchen with tears began to assert her innocence—"Indeed, madam, oh! my dear mistress—he would, indeed the gentleman would—oh, mistress—" She was little heeded in the scene that ensued. Putting them both aside, Arthur advanced unaided to where Josephine stood, as he reached her he tottered, by an impulse she extended her arms and he fell forward literally fainting with exhaustion.

The good doctor was beside him; between them they supported him, but his head rested upon the shoulder of Josephine, and his pale face was covered by the fair hair escaped from the cap which the sudden motion had displaced. He lay so still for the time her heart beat wildly—was it death?—but as the doctor lifted him his grasp still closed upon her hands dispelled the fear. It had been but a minute, hardly that, but such minutes are not reckoned by their length. New strength, new life, nay, the desire of life, seemed to revive within the debilitated form; as recovering from the syncope caused by the unwonted exertion and excitement, he opened his eyes upon that face that had haunted all his feverish dreams, as he had last beheld it in that sad farewell. His hand was fast clasped in hers, she could not have escaped, even had she tried. With bated breath she passively watched the doctor as he applied some simple remedy, and beheld the faint glow of animation steal over the wan face, the light of reason and life revisit the deep eyes, as they met hers.

"Josephine, Josephine;" murmured the invalid feebly, "it was you—

you were here—you, you, God bless you! you—will not—leave me again—you will not leave me?"

I know not what answer was upon her parted lips as she prepared to reply; but the doctor at his head touched her hand with an earnest gesture—and she said softly as she learned towards the poor eager face—"No, no; not till you bid me go—"

The painful anxious look left the sick man's features, a faint smile dawned upon his lips, and as his weary eyes closed, there settled down upon his face an expression of perfect rest and peacefulness, such as it had never worn till now.

Gretchen came and went, assiduously performing all the duties of the occasion; she was rapidly getting over her dread of reprimand. Perhaps she judged the crisis to be on the whole rather satisfactory than otherwise, and in her ignorance inclined to the notion that things could not be better.

"A pretty kettle of fish this!" soliloquized the doctor, as he descended the stairs later in the day, leaving his patient in a refreshing sleep. "But the young fellow is safe; this change for the better is marvellous—and, after all, it is no business of mine."

CHAPTER XXVI.

SETTING DOWN.

How uncertain are the phases into which the human mind resolves itself; how vainly we shall ever speculate upon the course which such and such an one will take under the action of various circumstances. It would have been but natural, we might suppose, that a man holding the views, and advocating the principles, which we have seen were those of the Honorable Aden Power, would at least have been less shocked at finding himself suddenly cast from that high position whose advantages he had always affected to ignore—than another, who should have more highly estimated the privileges it afforded; and that when fate, by a blow, had cast his lot among the

ranks of those "free-born independent sons of toil" whose glorious attributes he had so often dilated upon in language the most impressive, whose manly virtues and untutored dignity had most frequently made the theme of his grandest bursts of eloquence—he would at least have accepted the lot resignedly, and have even perhaps improved the occasion by an example of some of that heroic indifference to wealth and rank, and have enthusiastically kissed the sceptre of toil and donned the crown of patient endurance, the insignia of lowly birth and an obscure degree.

I grieve to say, not thus can I exhibit my hero, who is none, to your admiring gaze. And yet is it not after all the truest type of our nature? Do we not all make light of that we have, and which once slipping from our grasp, we frantically clutch after as our all?

As the reality of the horrid secret grew upon him, as fact after fact, which with secret and stealthy care he investigated, was proved and admitted of no doubt; as he recalled past incidents, as he pieced together the fitful snatches of the proud woman's speech—less confession than taunt, for what she would not for his satisfaction avow, she threw at him, to goad and pain and degrade, when her passion prompted—as all this I say was worked up and became one fixed, dense, incontrovertible truth; there was no getting over, no denying, no doubting—more fearful became the trial. He then was but one of the great unwashed, the "masses," for which he had legislated, the "populace" whose cause he had espoused—Great Heavens! he was but one of them.—He who had taken his place among the proudest of those whose future career was marked with the most glorious *prestige* of earthly triumph—he—a unit in the mob! nameless, despicable, base-born—red-blooded as the lowest hind that toiled in his grounds, or the lacquey that stood behind his chair. Words—and

poor as mine are at the best—must utterly fail to give any idea of the suffering endured by this proud man. Truly he was proud! The peer, his reputed father, was not prouder, though in a different way. Aden was proud of his power to do good, proud of his place and influence among men; of the gifts to which he in fact owed these; of his eloquence, his intellect, his wondrous faculties of memory, judgment, quickness, command of thought, and richness of imagination—helping the orator to the apt simile and facile illustration, which are to the sterling sense of his discourse what the glittering jewels are to the sterling metal of the diadem. And we pardon such pride, when men glory but in turning their gifts to account, and in benefiting their country and their kind, as we should forgive the man who, in forcing on us a gift, should discover to us his hoarded wealth, crying, "Lo! I can well spare it, embarrass not yourself."

Aden Power was proud, though few perhaps would call him so; but he had no vanity. Personal self-esteem would have done him good service at this crisis, by reminding him what of his success he owed to himself; but he had read human nature well, and while he despised the weakness which yielded chief homage to rank and station, he could ill afford to dispense with it. He was of a nature to feel all too keenly the rebuffs, the slights, the contusions, to which a too keen contact with the lower world must expose him, sharpened as it must be by the circumstances of his deposition from the high station now just within his grasp; and his suffering amounted to agony, ending in that blank despair of which the vista closes in utter darkness, and the mind refuses to acknowledge the possibility of anything beyond. Days passed in ceaseless perquisitions tending but to the same end. Nights came and went, finding him sleepless. To and fro, in and out he went, still torturing his mind with vain doubts and possibilities—still forever re-

curring to the ghastly phantom which ever haunts the fiat of irrevocable misfortune, "what might have been."

In it all, to do him justice, the idea of retaining possession of that which he held unjustly never entered his head. In the course of honor and justice there might be madness—death; but it was the only one open to him, ever sanctioned—nay, commanded—as it was by the breath of the dying parent. A fresh shock had left the Earl almost imbecile, and no chance remained of recovery; yet in Aden's presence the old man seemed to recover the balance of his mind, and in their short interviews never ceased to impress, by word or gesture, absolute secrecy upon his son.

The Countess he avoided. She seemed to do the same by him, though when they did chance to meet he read in her haggard looks and half-subdued haughtiness a desire that the Earl's last moments might, as she said, "be suffered to decline unmolested by a dread of exposure."

It was a temptation—it was a trial such as we may be thankful few of us are called upon to undergo. On one side, the honor of a noble family preserved, its name and rights upheld by one who no flattering conscience told him was more fitted to uphold and perpetuate them than the amiable but weak-minded Arthur. On the other, shame, expatriation; the lofty name, for ages unsullied, dragged through the mire of foul-mouthed gossipry, and made the nine days' wonder of the vulgar crowd, and for himself—well, God help him!—such of us as can conceive of such a trial, and to such a mind, will scarcely wonder that at this point Aden Power turned his eyes upon the case which lay near his table, and which contained his pistols, still primed as on the day he returned in haste from abroad.

So worked the account, so mounted up the reckoning of her subtle scheme; when, summoned from the bedside of her dying husband, where (alas that that too should be so poor!) the un-

happy woman found her sole refuge in this crisis—she went to meet her daughter-in-law, the Lady Geraldine, who had estranged herself from the house since her return. In truth the Countess had spoken somewhat too plainly upon the wife's desertion of her favorite son in his illness.

The beauty met the elder lady with flashing eyes and cheeks whose dazzling tint outvied their own natural hue. She lingered not over courtesies, but at once dashed in *medias res*, as he assured, my dear but plebeian reader, patrician tongues *can* dash.

"I am to suppose that your Ladyship is not aware of that which I have come to tell you—the last insult which your son has offered me. You hear often from him or of him I know, but *my* information is perhaps more certain or correct. The nurse, the *English* nurse, Madam, who has been attending him so assiduously, is no other than a cast-off mistress of his, a German girl who I understand was favored with a residence upon your estate. She had followed him to Germany, he conveniently fell ill in her neighborhood, and I am given to understand she has fulfilled the duties of nurse, and takes *my* place, as your Ladyship was pleased to consider it, to admiration."

To see the sneer that accompanied these words; the flush, not of hurt honor, not of outraged innocence, not of offended wifely dignity, but rather of triumphing hate, of bitter contempt, which kindled in that face of surpassing beauty. If there be indeed fallen angels, who, retaining their pristine form, are to the full endowed with the powers and attributes of evil, here was one. For the moment she triumphed over the pale, haggard, lorn woman that stood before her—queen, though fallen as she was; the one radiant, glorious, triumphant in her cruelty—the other crushed, lost, faint—but no, she rises to the summons of the occasion, and true mother to the last, she cried, as she faced the scornful beauty

with indignant haughtiness, she threw back her glance of defiance—

"It is a lie! My son would never so dishonor himself! Lady Geraldine, she was not his mistress!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

INTO THE VALLEY AND THE SHADOW.

THOSE words, that bitter accusation, were the key-note of the cruel discord which the malignant beauty had set herself to raise; and of which she, in few but meaning sentences, now warned the hapless lady. Never in all her triumphs had Geraldine so exulted as at the moment when, to the mother of her husband, she announced her intention and power to prove him false and unworthy—to proclaim to the world her "wrongs"—to put him from her, covered with shame and obloquy. Stunned by the suddenness and enormity of the charge; overwhelmed by the torrent of the other's cutting eloquence, and by the array of seeming evidence in support of that she alleged; the Countess for the time was staggered: and, as she recalled too well certain facts which she had wilfully ignored, relative to her son's marriage, she shuddered, while the possibility of the truth overcame her like a cloud. But only for a time. Ere the triumph of the other was sated with contemplation of the misery depicted in the face before her, the Countess approached her daughter-in-law.

"I know not what your motive may be," she said, speaking with a forced calmness; "God knows what cause you may have to think yourself wronged: but this I do know,—that the woman you have named is incapable of what you accuse her of—ay, Geraldine, utterly incapable! I have seen her, I have spoken to her, I would answer for her as I would for yourself."

Strange trick of the sad fatality pursuing this unhappy woman, which gave to her less the right to testify to

the innocence of her own child than that of the stranger. She felt it, even as she uttered the words; but conscience in that moment sternly forbade compromise with its claims, and she dared not in her soul ignore the possibility that her son might have succumbed in the toils she had herself assisted to fling around him. Had she known all, had she even dreamed of whom she thus constituted herself the champion, would she have so spoken? It is likely; for to the most artificial, the greatest hypocrite or sinner of us all, there comes most frequently a time, when the soul renders tardy homage to virtue, and will speak aloud, even to its own condemnation.

Lady Geraldine was not slow to catch at the strange defence set up by the Countess; and her sneer at the coupling of herself with another in her mother-in-law's speech, was mingled with the expression of surprise at that which might be interpreted as a tacit admission of Arthur's probable criminality, and which, as appeared by subsequent events, was not lost sight of by the exemplary beauty.

Perhaps the unhappy mother perceived something of this, or nature pleaded too powerfully to be denied; she put forth a few sentences in defence of her son—his known honor and truth, even as exemplified in the life of his father before him—his apparent devotion to his wife. The other deigned no further parley, but with a curl of her lovely lip, and a heightened flush that even added to her matchless beauty, she merely said, "We shall see," and with a lofty courtesy withdrew.

What an error it would be to suppose such scenes confined only to courts and alleys; and that (with a slight difference in choice of language and tone, perhaps) satin couches and velvet hangings could not report to the full as much bitterness and evil-speaking as the pestilent rags and gin-sodden pallets of the "slums!"

Alas! for the lady of Honiton and Loftborough: darkness is fast closing

down upon her course; on whatever side she may look, still gloomier looms the prospect; and not a friendly ray of light, not a hand of helping tenderness, not a kindly word, nay, not a blissful memory, not a record of the past on which she may repose or hope to draw strength, for the threatening storm that hourly gathers round her.

To her son, her only child, offspring of her many prayers, granted all too late—the longed-for boon, marred by her own crime—to him her heart yearns, and she would fain have flown to seek refuge in his love, to lavish upon him her cares and all the woman's tenderness stagnated at her breast.

But how quit a dying husband's bed? and, were even that to be thought of, how elude the watchful eyes of him, that other—*son*, she would never call him,—who held her, she knew not how, a sort of prisoner to his will? Since that terrible scene between them there had been truce; on one side of contempt and pity, on the other of fierce hatred: each felt it was so, yet to outward appearances they were as mother and son—met at the sick man's couch, issued their orders to their household, dwelt under that roof; yet never under one roof dwelt souls so apart, so severed. She knew it, and she knew, too, that upon his decision, upon his will, rested her future.

God knows, great as had been the woman's fault, we might afford pity for her in this pass; who, amid all her anguish, sighed for nothing so much as solitude! Ay, when we count up the blessings attendant on wealth and high position, when we take note of this indulgence and that advantage, making of the sum-total perfect earthly enjoyment, do we dwell sufficiently upon the reverse side;—the pomp, the conventionality, the *bien-séance* which hedge around so squarely the would-be luxuriance of nature; and trim and curtail all to due proportion and the trick of custom? I think not, nor how hard a thing it must be not to dare shed our tears, give utterance to our griefs,

nor our joys, nor ponder over dilemmas without comment, or for fear of deranging the pretty pageant in which we play our part. Let us give more heed to this, the debtor side of the account, and we may perhaps find the balance not so heavy after all.

So with the weight of tribulations we wot of, pressing her to the earth, the Countess received the condolence of her dear five hundred friends, tendered in proper form and with no omission of due ceremony; answered all inquiries after her younger son, proffered with the expressions of anguish at the double calamity fallen upon her house, and sympathy for the forced absence of the invalid from his father's bedside at such a moment. Penetrating thousand eyes of the dear five hundred—you made out little, from that self-sustained and haughty woman, of the real truth. Your curiosity suffered dreadfully, from your inability to sift out the essence of those floating rumors, that scent of the Cresswell Court, which already began to float upon the air of the great world. Lady Geraldine was here, with her child. He was absent—rumor said, with his mistress—that looked like something; but then her ladyship's calm front and bearing, ever the same, unconscious of all save her heavy afflictions—that gave the lie to "the shocking report, which, my dear, I only hope may have nothing in it, but yet"—alas! that "but yet" from feminine lips, what does it not presage!

A fortnight had thus passed, and there came a night when three persons stood by the bedside of the fast-failing Earl. He had just sunk into an uneasy doze, within the last hour the change had been decided, as his worn and sunken features too plainly told.

"You are certain of that?" Aden Power was saying, in an under tone, to the physician who stood at his side, both gazing earnestly upon the wasted figure before them.

"I fear so," was the reply; "there

is no rallying power; every breath he draws is more labored than the last." "And you doubt his lasting out the night?"

The old physician turned his eyes upon the face of the young man. "You must learn the truth," he said sadly, and with the ring of real feeling in his tone, which even long custom in such scenes had not hardened. "I fear his Lordship will hardly wake to consciousness again; if he live till daybreak it will surprise me."

An expression of intense emotion passed across the face of the other, as he heard these words.

"I must go," he murmured: then turning to the physician,— "It is necessary that I should at once see my brother. You may believe that only the most imperative need could take me away at such a moment: but then my father has long ceased to recognize me; he will not miss me." (The doctor shook his head). "You will remain," Aden continued, addressing himself to the remaining person present,—the clergyman, Mr. Chepstow. "The Countess will need all your care," he added significantly; then to the physician—"It will be well to spare her further distress, Sir James."

"Decidedly!" acquiesced the doctor; "I will see that all proper measures are taken for her Ladyship's comfort."

In a few brief but earnest words the young man thanked both gentlemen for their unwearied attention to the invalid; then approaching the bed of the unconscious nobleman, whose sleeping breath scarce made itself perceptible, he bent down and pressed his lips upon the damp brow, murmuring a few words of earnest affection and farewell. As he passed by Mr. Chepstow to the door, he said, in a low voice, "Remember!" In silence the minister pressed his hand, and as he glanced into the pale face of the young man he saw that tears were falling. A carriage was in waiting; a servant attended him, swift and mute-like, with cloak and

travelling bag; but alone Aden Power sprang into the vehicle, and drew down the blinds; while, swift as horses' feet could travel, he was carried to the nearest railway station. Ten minutes later, an express train was whirling him fast and far from the deathbed of his reputed father.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PENDING.

THE malignant tongues which sought no better cause than that which now set them freely wagging, would have rejoiced over the added pretext which the lingering of young Arthur in his chamber of convalescence could have supplied them, had they been aware of all the circumstances connected with it. Yet, even had they been so favored, as on the spot to draw their own deductions, and conclusions, these would still have contained about the average amount of accuracy belonging to such results. True, the kindly hands and genial smile, the equable voice and serene presence, which had tranquillized his worst paroxysms, still hovered near; to have wholly withdrawn them would have been to risk a relapse with (at least so the doctor's judgment certified) almost a certainty of serious results. But Josephine had resigned the tenancy of her little chamber to faithful Gretchen, and domiciled herself in a little cottage hard by, tenanted by an aged relative of her maid. There she slept, and thence at a very early hour in the day was usually summoned by the doctor, or his embassy the rosy Gretchen, under pretext of holding consultation on some plan of amusing or catering for the invalid; whose restoration to health, despite all the care lavished upon him, was of the slowest, though none less sure. A depressing languor, that seemed to have taken possession of him even to the subduing of his bodily energies, was now his sole ailment; the disinclination to exertion, the carelessness of returning to life and its duties, yet

hung upon him, and only the presence of Josephine had power to rouse him. In her sprightly and soothing conversation, in the perusal of their favorite books, he would for a time rally to something of his former self; at her persuasion he would exert himself to take the little exercise within his power; the dishes her hands prepared would tempt his appetite; but, these inducements past, he would relapse into the dreamy despondent invalid, from which state no effort, nor even the gentle reproaches of the doctor, could arouse him.

"It is easily said, Doctor," (he exclaimed one day, when that good friend had ventured on some stronger exhortation than common.) "Easy to say, rouse yourself—but for what; what object in life have I? If you knew what a hell upon earth!"—he stopped, flushed and panting; but a moment after said abruptly: "Did you ever think what a curse it is to be born to a position? Good heavens! to be as you are now, a useful, ay, a blessed member of humanity, a service to your fellow-creatures—there is a motive for existence if you will!"

"Surely position does not hinder a man being what he will, but rather helps—"

"Does it?" scornfully interrupted Arthur; but a moment after he added, more calmly—"Well, perhaps not—perhaps not." He sighed heavily. At that moment Josephine approached them: as if in her hands lay his very mood, he added again, in a gentle tone, "Perhaps it need not, Doctor; but it does, it does!"

There was that in the tone, in his regretful gaze upon the fair woman, as she approached, in the despairing sigh that followed, which might have told much. I know not how clear-sighted the only spectator there, might be to read such passages; it says little for his penetration, that when his patient, suffering from an attack of nervous prostration, took to his bed betimes that evening, the man of medicine attributed the reaction to the

over exertion of the morning's-walk, the first he had attempted, not two hundred yards from the house. And Josephine?—how much of what the wagging tongues will ere long canvass freely really attaches to her? Can we say she was anxious to leave the invalid, certainly in good hands enough; or that even such glimpses of the truth as had reached her, moved her to shorten what was after all but a fierce probation?

When the doctor escorted her, in the early nightfall, back to her humble abode, there was but one theme of conversation between them, and it sufficed. Could she quit him? Did he (the doctor) think it would be best?—"No! decidedly," was ever the answer, "not at least this very moment; a day or two might work great changes,—we should see." Did she, I wonder, anticipate that same decision, to which she bowed so humbly, and never questioned for one moment?—I cannot say; nor whether in event of any other she would have dared dispute its soundness. All we know is that she did remain; still presided at the cooking of such simple dishes as were needed, still stealthily ministered to the little luxuries and comforts of the convalescent;—read, played chess, talked, and even, at his desire, sang—but this reluctantly, and only once; for she saw too plainly the recollections that song evoked, and, perhaps, her old feelings best told her what, it was better to avoid. Yet this much let me set down: that never in all that time was one word spoken that even the wagging tongues could have twisted into aught to swell the foul pool of which they love to lap. No allusion to the past, no mention of hopes or joys or desires belonging to it; separated from it by that barrier which she never for one moment sought to ignore, though which had but once been alluded to between them. Once a telegram had been brought in from Lady Geraldine, it was in the early part of his recovery; it was necessary to reply to

it, and she offered to do so. But he put her aside sternly, and with a great effort answered it himself with four words, closing the paper and handing it to Gretchen for the messenger. Josephine had begun some simple inquiry relative to Lady Geraldine, her health or movements; but he held up his hand deprecatingly, as he said, "Hush!" The tone and the look, as he fell back into his chair, with closed eyes and compressed lips, was enough. He never alluded to the subject more; but she learned from the doctor that, so far from the lady wife distressing herself at her husband's state, the telegrams which were addressed to him consisted for the most part of information as to her own movements with her child, with whom she was visiting various watering places, deeply anxious for his health; the inquiries after her husband's being merely supplementary; though of this Arthur was not informed, neither that latterly they had ceased altogether. The fact of his father's illness, too, was softened to him in detail, though it was held to account for the absence of his brother or the Countess, whose inquiries were incessant. Those at home, on their side, learning Arthur's continued weakness, feared to give the worst, and suppressed the fact of the Earl's danger, by the especial desire of the Countess, anxious for her son, whose presence she felt would but increase her troubles. And thus the young man had remained in ignorance save of his father's indisposition, and of the fact that his mother entreated him to recruit his strength to the utmost before he attempted the journey home. One small addenda, too, was made to the budget of news, which owed its being to the fertility of the physician's invention.

"I hope to be forgiven; I am sure if there is such a thing as a white lie this is one," he muttered to himself, after delivering himself of an explicitly worded and wife-like message to his patient, purporting to come from the Lady Geraldine at the Isle of

Wight; the indisposition of the child forming an excuse for not writing; which was only too easily accepted by the invalid. "It must be pardonable to cover the omissions of a wife to her sick husband," continued the soliloquizer; a shrewd suspicion crossing his mind that he had only deceived one of his hearers. Josephine's large soft eyes raised to his face had made the falsehood less easy to him; but, think as she might, she said nothing, and certainly wished him no worse for his kindly meant device.

Her friends of the White House had found out her retreat, and corresponded with her. Sydney had even visited her, and Mr. Meryt had, on his daughter's representations, written to the doctor, inviting the invalid to avail himself of the superior accommodations of his house, as soon as he was able to travel so far.

Urgent business called the physician to the neighborhood of the town nearest to Mr. Meryt's estate, and, all things seeming to point that way, it was decided that in a couple of days the attempt should be made whether Mr. Power felt equal to the undertaking. On this point Arthur had expressed himself so sanguine that the doctor was bound to express considerable gratification at the improvement, doubtless oblivious of the fact that Josephine had expressed no dissent to the very decided intimation given by her friends that she was "wanting" at the White House.

But they little dreamed what events were at hand to interrupt their plan. Since the intimation received of the Earl's increasing illness, the doctor had exercised due precaution with regard to such papers as were seen by his patient, still fearing for him any sudden shock, such as the announcement of his father's danger or death. On the evening preceding that of the intended journey he had taken up one, newly arrived, which he was hastily scanning, according to custom, when the sheet dropped from his hand, as he uttered an exclamation of dismay.

Hastily he recovered it, and devoured with his eyes half a column of large type—rapidly he opened and explored all the broadsheets on the table beside him, apparently finding in all but too certain confirmation of the first; for, with something too much like an oath, he struck his fist upon the last with violence. "A pretty mess this is to get into!" he exclaimed, knitting his brows. "This is the end of it! And I, too, I shall be dragged into it of course. Confound the women I say; thank God I never got tied to any one of the sex! Confound—though there are exceptions—a better nurse than this, and a wiser little head—but no, they're all alike; sure to go wrong, or get wrong some time or other. Why on earth—how the deuce I shall get out of the bother?—what does the fellow say?"—and again he referred to the paper.

"Set of—scamps, these penny-a-lining fellows!" he next broke out: "like to make double and treble of anything. Daresay only a rumor got up by the clique—can't be that, either—names mentioned, ah! there it is—that looks like reality—a pretty hussey she must be, 'beautiful, accomplished lady in her own right'—ah, I daresay, and as big a viper as the rest when she pleases. But something must be done; the poor girl's character musn't be taken away. Yes, yes; I see I shall be chief witness of course, confound!—" and at it went the excitable medico again.

After some time spent in letting off the steam of his wrath he cooled down perforce, and, despite his exasperation, one resolve was uppermost in his mind,—that, come what would, he would never desert the cause of his young friends. "Though," he muttered with a raising of his eyebrows, "it is hard to say which that is. For all I see, it would be the best thing that ever happened to him if he were to get rid of this fair fiend; yet to suffer his own honor and that good creature's to be blasted for her whim—no, no!"

He gathered up some of the papers, and was leaving the room; at the door he paused, and thoughtfully said,— "It will be best; she has sense, though she is a woman."

He found Josephine, basket-in-hand, just setting out from her own domicile to return to the house, which she had quitted early in the afternoon upon some secret little mission, such as she was fond of indulging in: the invalid had been desired to rest all he could, in anticipation of the coming journey, and they hoped solitude would woo him to slumber.

The doctor had never seemed to be aware of other claims to admiration in his favorite than her light hand and noiseless step, with such-like qualifications for nurse-tender; but as he saw her coming from the cottage, her light dress in its ample folds falling softly round her robust figure, suggestive of the grace it veiled; her gauzy scarf playing about her; the long, full curls, rolling back from her pale face, shaded by the round straw hat, with its floating violet ribbon; one plump hand holding so carefully the basket with its dainty store of autumn fruit;—all seemed to unite in an harmonious picture. The doctor involuntarily uttered an ejaculation, as he half said, half thought, "No wonder, no wonder!" He had never seen Lady Geraldine.

"What have you there?" he said; "some fresh temptation for my perverse invalid? Really," he added, "I think I must lay an embargo on these, and deliver them myself."

"She looked at him, seeking some hidden meaning in words that he really was hardly conscious of uttering, filled with the terrible news he was about to break to her.

"Would you mind returning for a few minutes to the cottage?" he asked.

Josephine at once turned, wondering; and they were soon in the secluded little parlor, looking upon beehives, and pear-trees bending beneath golden harvest, and quaint old box-borders cut in strange devices.

"You are a sensible woman," the doctor said, looking at her fixedly, and having taken the precaution to have her seated; "you do not faint, or shriek, or fall into any of those absurdities when you hear bad news—"

Her eyes dilated; she sprang to her feet, and caught his arm—"He is worse!" she cried. "Oh, Doctor—!"

"No, no, no!" the good man hastened to reply; he was truly grieved at the alarm, and that disturbance of her pale face, before so calm.

She reseated herself, and strove to cover her involuntary betrayal by a forced composure.

Then the doctor spoke sternly of the wickedness of the world, of the misconception to which our finest actions are liable; finally, he showed her the paragraphs which hinted, none too reservedly, at the threatened proceedings in the Divorce Court on the part of Lady Geraldine, and whence the scandal had arisen on which she founded her accusation.

She read them through with a calmness, contrasting strangely with her previous excitement; then she looked up at him, with compressed lips, certainly, yet perfectly firm and composed. The grey-haired man was moved to admiration at that example of such self-possession.

"Has Mr. Power seen this?" she asked.

"He has not. I had scarcely time to resolve how best to break it to him. Meanwhile, it affects you so nearly; it is so painful—"

"It is, indeed," she said, slowly beating the floor with her foot; "it is indeed—that there should be such people." Her thoughts were far from his.

"Of course you will decide at once to leave this place," he went on: "you will permit me to assist you in any way that is possible. I have, I fear, been to blame—"

She hastily interrupted him:—"To blame, Sir, you!—quit this

place!—what can you mean?—what have I done?" She rose to her feet, and stood looking at him, displeasure and indignation mingling in her regard.

"My dear lady," stammered the physician, "we all know how malicious is the world. I, as having double your experience, should have warned you—"

Again she by a gesture arrested his speech.

"Pardon me, doctor; you did not think of that when, the night I first put foot in that house, I found you and your patient—ah! you remember: you warned me then, I think, of contagion; what would you have said had I turned away from helping you?"

"But, my dear lady, a woman's reputation is her most precious treasure."

"It is; and who can harm the one that is without stain? You know, Doctor, that those cruel, false words, no more concern me, than they do Gretchen yonder, and I will no more regard them."

"But to remain would be to give a coloring to the base scandal."

"To fly would, most certainly," she replied. "What! I, who have, thank God, no reproach to make to my conscience,—I, coming here to fulfil a sacred duty,—to fly before a wicked unfounded calumny! Oh doctor! well might they then say I was afraid—that my conscience upbraided me."

"The world will not see it in that light, my dear lady," he replied. "It is not enough to be right; we must seem—"

She gently shook her head.

"To be, will suffice for me," she said; "and never could I justify to myself the cowardly flight from the most dear friend, because danger or annoyance threatened myself. Oh! Sir, you talk of experience; but I have my own creed, and you will not dissuade me from it."

"But this is no common danger; the sacrifice of your good name—"

"It will not be sacrificed," she retorted proudly. "But, if needs must, why so be it; better so than desert a friend, who has done no wrong."

"It is all very well," the doctor hastily returned; "but we must respect the position of a wife."

"Respect! position!—oh, Sir!" she cried, with a pained tone that struck her hearer—"If you knew, if you knew, how, (even when in your need and his, I came, and you accepted my aid,) I trembled, thinking who should have been there; had she come, do you think I would not instantly have resigned my place; would I not have shrunk away and never have been seen? But she never came; the high privilege that was hers she left neglected, and you know, you know how, since—"

"Yes, I know," he cried testily, self-reproach somewhat stinging him perhaps; "I know this is what has come of it."

"This!" she repeated. "Do you think, Sir, that the woman who is cruel enough to harbor such a thought against her husband would hesitate for want of another victim? Oh, no, no!"

She spoke hurriedly; the faint tint which excitement always called into her pale cheeks was there; her eyes were filled with an indefinable light, and her tones were tinged with the slight accent which they took at times.

The doctor stood amazed. He beheld a different being; it was no longer his quiet, subdued, obedient, little nurse. She was gone, and in her place stood a woman, radiant, animated, defiant, full of purpose. The transformation bewildered him. When he next spoke, it was in a tone more subdued.

"At least," he said, "my dear lady, you will consider what harm may accrue to him."

"Do not fear, Doctor," Josephine hastened to reply, "and do not be angry that I do not straightway follow your advice. If it were advisable

yesterday that I should be here, it is no less so to-day—so it seems to me. I said once—you heard and did not contradict me—that I would quit Mr. Power only at his own bidding. I mean to keep my word."

She gathered her scarf about her, sought her hat and basket, and again set out. The baffled physician walked at her side in silence, by no means inclining to bless his stars which had decreed him to figure in so unpromising an affair.

"One never knows where to have these women," he soliloquized: "who would have thought it?"

As they reached the house, a post-chaise had driven furiously to the door, a gentleman had leaped therefrom, and was hastily inquiring of the open-mouthed servants for the "English gentleman."

The doctor approached the stranger. "Is it Mr. Power you seek?" he said.

"Yes," the other replied, removing his hat; "I must see him immediately. My name is Aden Power:" he hastened to add, "I am his brother."

CHAPTER XXIX.

PUT ASUNDER.

THE brothers stood face to face, upon the hearth of the sick chamber, where the younger had seen visions that were truth, and pictured realities that mocked at dreams. It was now the weaker who stood erect and self-sustained; the strong man who bowed down his face upon his arm, subdued and broken. All had been told, there was no longer a secret, and now they were silent—the crackling of the wood fire made itself distinctly heard. Arthur was the first to speak.

"I say that it shall be so!" he said earnestly, and his voice was no longer that of the querulous invalid—"Aden, I repeat it, I entreat you; be my brother, as you have ever been, my true-hearted, high-minded brother: let there be no difference."

"Do not urge me, Arthur," the

elder sadly returned; "How can I take that which is mine by no right; act a deception?"

"None is acted, when there are none whom it concerns," the other returned. "Take as a gift, doubly insured to you, that which should have been yours by right. Aden, for my sake, for the sake of the good old man who was more a father to you than to myself, say you will—for the sake of my mother's name,—Aden, she is my mother,—for her sake, let me be your brother still, your younger brother."

He was touched, that elder man; the final resolve which had brought him there at such speed, which had kept with him in his forced midnight journey, was melting before the pleading of the generous-hearted heir.

"But, Arthur, you will repent this request in future years."

"Never"—the other slowly shook his head—"I have weighed too well the gifts of this world; I know, Aden, how, far beyond all our station has given us, are the peace and freedom we find only elsewhere. It suits you and your talents, brother; you will grace the position; to me it would bring only the heaviest of burdens. What can I say to induce you!—do I not plead for the dead? He would have had it so I am certain, could he have spoken at the last. Poor Father!—he died tranquilly, Aden?"

"Passed away in his sleep unperceived," the deep voice of Aden replied: "the telegram awaited me at the station here: he died at day-break."

"And I to know nothing of it!" murmured the other. "And my mother?"

"They said only that she was in deep grief," was the reply.

"My poor mother! Aden, Aden, let that weigh with you; think of the exposure, think of her suffering in the past! Oh, brother, do but give way!"

"I never dreamed of this," hoarsely replied the elder; "Arthur, I never dreamed of this."

"Say it is agreed!" pressed the

former, eagerly. "Give me your hand upon it, and from the moment we quit this room let it be as if what you have told me had never been."

Aden slowly held out his hand. Arthur took it in both of his, and so they remained fast locked together.

"Lord of Honiton and Loftborough," said Arthur solemnly: "let me be the first to greet you."

Tears rose to the eyes of the elder man, as he laid the other hand upon the shoulder of his brother. "The Countess must not know of this," he said; "we will spare her the humiliation of believing it known to you—she loves you, Arthur."

The younger started. "How!" he exclaimed, "how account for your entering on the title?"

"She will believe me to have yielded to the Earl's persuasions," was the reply. "Nay, Arthur, you must let me have my way in this."

"And judge you interested?"

"No matter," Aden replied, gravely; "you know the truth; let all be as if this had never been—you desired it. Meet the Countess so that she may feel still you are all to her. Arthur, you will do this?"

Again there was silence; a mutual pressure of the hands sealed their compact, and when next they spoke it was in reference to that other painful incident of which Aden had been fated to be the bearer to his brother.

"They have kept these things from you," the former said, in answer to an observation of Arthur's. "It was as well. You have been very ill," he added, looking with affection, that might well have been a kinsman's, at the pale face, hollow eyes, and the shorn locks, wout to be so profuse.

"Yes; at death's-door, I know; but Heaven sent me a good doctor, and a dear woman for a nurse, and this is her reward." He spoke bitterly, but with a vigor that was new to him.

"You will return with me," said Aden; "painful as it is, this matter must at once be met."

"Tell me frankly, brother," said Arthur, "you never credited——!"

The other interrupted him with a gesture. "Credited!—of his son!—of my brother! No, Arthur, I think I may have chanced to hit the truth in my conjectures." He looked at Arthur, but there was no direct answer.

"You shall see her," he said, after a pause; and in a few minutes they repaired to the sitting-room where Josephine usually passed some hours of the day.

There they found her, her busy fingers working mechanically upon something which must surely have needed little or no thought. She was very pale, but calm and self-possessed as ever, even though she knew not what the stranger's visit might portend.

"Aden, this is the lady to whom I owe my life. My brother, Josephine; Lord Loftborough now." That was the introduction. They shook hands; she looked up to his robust figure and handsome massive face, he gazing down upon her clear appealing eyes. Where were the sympathies of Nature then, to tell them what they looked on? that they had lain at the same breast, gladdened the same mother's heart, been clasped in the same arms, but not drunk of the same milk; that was denied her, poor Mary!

"His brother," was the idea that hallowed the new comer in her sight; "He loves her"—gave Josephine an interest to the eyes of Aden: and with that conviction came the painful one, "they must part." She had not expected it so soon. She knew it must be, but the brave heart needed all its strength when the time came.

He sought her no more alone. The man feared himself; he knew now that which known sooner would have made parting impossible: now,—when parting was imperative,—he knew how deep, how self-devoted, how entire was the love she had given him; a love for which his nature hungered, for want of which such natures starve and sink. Yet he could say farewell;

for he went to defend her name from foul aspersions.

The brothers departed the following morning. A few hours later, the doctor attended Josephine to the White House; whence he was in a few hours to follow them to England; but fate again interposed to detain the good physician among women, perhaps to afford him an opportunity of amending his judgment of the sex.

The nurse became the patient! For five days the poor girl lay at the mercy of nervous fever, which struck her down as by one blow. Unwearied were her nurses, vigilant and efficient the good man's skill; and the tears started to his eyes, long since unused to such emotions, when, in her first recognition of him, and with almost the first words she had uttered, she feebly said, with a sad smile, "Not barbarians here, Doctor." She recovered fast, once the tide of the disease turned; but not so quickly did her old, glad spirit return; and when the doctor was at length compelled to leave her for England, he quitted the White House with more reluctance than ever he would have believed possible.

The news that greeted him on his return was of a nature to redouble all his interest in the friends he had left behind.

His services were not needed as a witness; the cause was concluded, the fiat gone forth, the united put asunder—Arthur Power was free.

The lady had well chosen her instruments. Long ere the case was opened, they found the insecurity of the ground on which they had hoped to build; gave up the first pretext, and substituted another of more solid pretension. A French maid of her Ladyship's, by dint of certain sharpeners of memory, succeeded in exhuming sundry choice incidents, which, plausibly arranged, and heartily sworn to, made great play, and furnished forth a substantial enough substratum for the learned counsel to erect the edifice of flowery speech, and mild invective, necessary to the occasion. A simple denial from the other side went for

naught, or but added fuel to the flame. The wrongs, the slights, the matrimonial sorrows of the suffering Lady Geraldine, were the theme of the season. The ladies, by a large majority, voted the "man" a "brute;" the young men vowed that he was "spiritless," "slow," and quite unfitted to that "splendid creature;" while the married ones shrugged their shoulders at the clubs, with "poor devil, no wonder!"—the most charitable construction being, that the beautiful vixen had provoked her husband to a too common retaliation. Little troubled by rumor or surmise, Arthur let them pass him by; he could well afford it. Better than he could the expenses of the divorce; which it is whispered were discharged, in fact, by the new Earl.

Shrouded in deepest mourning, hidden in the recesses of a distant country-seat, the Countess could not yet shut out the news of the rupture of the marriage she had planned; this fresh instalment of the life-long debt she had incurred, the heavy cost of her scheme. It was, indeed, with relief to her heavily burthened heart she had learned Aden's resolve to assume the title and estates; with certain settlements upon his brother; small indeed, but all the other would accept. To save herself in the eyes of her own child was something, and they never undeceived her.

When, a twelvemonth later, Arthur introduced to her his intended bride; the Countess was affected visibly; at the first opportunity she took Josephine aside, who answered sweetly and with patience to all the questions Arthur's mother put. We know what the unhappy woman learned of her answers, knowledge she had better for her peace of mind have been without. Well might she ask herself, in the gloom of her solitary hours, whether she have indeed brought a curse upon her family, and that the blood of the patrician house shall henceforth flow not unmixed. She had sought the alliance of the base-

born, and it had come doubly to fasten itself upon her; she had robbed the mother of her child, and the daughter of that wronged mother took from her her son.

So the poor sinner wrought out her final penalty, seeing retribution instead of mercy; wrath where justice might be traced. She never quitted the small northern estate which she held in her own right; the world forgot her, save when they dubbed her mad; the visits of her son were those of duty and mercy only.

CHAPTER XXX.

EXEUNT OMNES.

THE knell is tolled, the mutes departed. Let in the bell-ringers, light up the windows, twine the festive wreaths, as we strike the glad keynote of a happier strain. "A time to weep, and a time to make merry," saith the wise man; and for the latter no time so appropriate as when the man takes to his heart the woman tried and found worthy to receive, and truly to appreciate, the distinction. On a sweet summer morning, in an ivy-covered church, not so far from the little brown cottage, the joy-bells of Arthur Power's life took up the cheerful peal which never since that day has ceased for him. We know, dearest of readers, there are such harmonies even in this world, which, once united, their gentle music fills a lifetime. It was a very unpretending selection this, for their first month of married life, nestled away even out of sight of the outer world; but it pleased them; and what henceforth had each to do but please the other? thus unconsciously encouraging the most selfish of ambitions. Aden Power would fain have had them make a splendid fete of the occasion, but he wasted his eloquence, and was compelled to wait for a similar one some few months later, in which he played a principal part.

Why Sir James D'Etain should all at once relent, and reward the con-

stancy of the lovers with the consent to their becoming husband and wife, is more than we shall attempt to account for; unless, indeed, there might be anything in the fact of the young Earl's declining to take a prominent part in public matters, and signifying his intention to withdraw from active advocacy of the principles to which he still professed adherence. There might be a little consideration mingling with this for his daughter's wan looks and absent manner that had been noticeable of late; I think it probable, however, that the former had more weight with the old Tory baronet.

And certainly it was not to be denied that the Earl by no means verifies all the opening promise of Aden Power. The politician is merged in the good patriot, the zealous partizan in the warm-hearted progressionist—the active country gentleman, eager for the welfare of his tenantry, has succeeded to the eloquent young expounder of mob rights; the "people's man" is recognized no more in the bountiful landlord, the loyal subject, the faithful but upright servant of the Crown.

At Florence, in the most beautiful of her beautiful villas, made home-like too by English taste, dwell an English gentleman and his wife; patrons of the arts, benefactors of the poor, lovers of—each other. Later years have added to their duet, making of it a trio.

But that I promised no cypress or rue should mingle with this, our festive garland, I would tell you of a sad mischance which befel a gallant gentleman of our company; who needs must make himself the embassy of good tidings to the White House, and thus fell into the toils he had so long escaped. But as Sydney makes him a loving and true wife, and as each thinks it the highest praise to be deemed worthy of the other, we will suppose their case to come within our limits of rejoicing.

Gentle Adela on a visit to her sister in England, met Mr. Chepstow, who, the summer after, was seized with an

intense desire to visit Germany. His visit was prolonged; and on his return he was the affianced husband of Adela Meryt, not without her father's compliance with her earnest request that he would take up his abode with them in England, where, with the Earl for a patron, the young clergyman has prospered.

And even to the withered and unfruitful heart eating out itself in the grim old northern mansion, there may be a glimpse of comfort in the fact, that, while a sturdy boy bears Arthur's name and features yonder in the Italian city, two fair but delicate girls are, as yet, all the representatives of the

Earl, who sits within the gates of Deansholme. Her son's son may yet reign under his father's roof-tree; let her forget, if she can, that his fair hair and sunny eyes date from a plebeian source.

So peace be with them, and let us be thankful that not all the evil we work is permitted to bear unmixed fruit—that the hand of justice often sows mercy broadcast in the furrows where the seed of vengeance might have been suffered wholly to take root untempered by the quality which yields the harvest of a healing and wholesome repentance.

TALES OF THE DAY.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

From the North American Review, October, 1861.

"We feel interested in the success of this enterprise. The question is not whether tales shall be extensively read. A large and increasing public has answered this question in the affirmative.

"Those whose pursuits are of the very gravest character, are not unwilling thus to occupy their weary hours, their vacation seasons, and their journeyings; while for the many who will read little else, it is certainly of great consequence that their appetite should be catered for without detriment, and, if possible, with benefit to principle and character.

"The tales issued in this publication of Messrs. Carter are, without exception, high-toned in their moral character, most of them are attractive and entertaining, some of them are of thrilling interest, several of them are of superior worth in a didactic point of view, and, as a whole, they commend themselves to a cultivated literary taste.

"The prose stories are interspersed with poems, some of which are of a very high imaginative and poetic character.

"If the work is sustained as it has been begun, it cannot but win increasing favor and an extended circulation."

"'Tales of the Day.' It is about as good a collection of really good stories as can be obtained, the skill shown in the selection of those of real merit being very marked.

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"There is surely need enough of such a work as this, to correct, as much as possible, the pernicious influence of the light trash that circulates so freely." — *Dover Gazette*.

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TALES OF THE DAY.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"The promise and performance of the undertaking are thus far excellent; and as the moderate price of each number of so handsome and interesting a serial is only twenty-five cents, we can well conceive of its proving highly successful."—*Boston Courier*.

"The collection is to be made with care, and is to contain nothing that is not good in its moral tone and superior in literary execution. As one can see at a glance, the materials for such a work are very abundant; and, as volume after volume is completed, it will form a valuable storehouse of fiction well worthy of preservation and of repeated perusal. The enterprise of the publishers is a good one, and we trust it will meet with encouragement, even in these hard times. The present number is beautifully printed."—*Boston Recorder*.

"We have received the first three numbers of this very attractive serial. The publishers promised to collect the very best of the tales of the day which appear, 'admitting none that are not good in moral tone and superior in literary execution.' They are redeeming their promise; the series is beautifully printed, and the matter is of rare popular interest, and is afforded at a moderate price." . . . "We notice in the May and June numbers two poetic effusions of rare merit. We wish the publishers abundant success in their enterprise."—*Monthly Religious Magazine*.

"This publication is issued in a neat form, is cheap, and promises to be well suited both to the tastes and the wants of the public. Although it is brought out at a time when most enterprises of the sort are held back, it bids fair to be both successful and popular."—*Boston Daily Advertiser*.

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"We can confidently recommend the project to those who love good stories, (and who does not?) and have not the slightest doubt it will be as well executed as it has been conceived. . . . The first numbers certainly exhibit the greatest taste and judgment on the part of the editors, and liberality on the part of the publishers."—*Boston Transcript*.

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"The number [No. 2], as a whole, amply redeeming the promise of the publishers to furnish a collection of tales of healthy tone and elevated literary character."—*Boston Daily Advertiser*.