

he is shooting into the Smith-Delorraine school-room. They are lighting up an overset ink-bottle, topsy-turvy chairs, dislocated grammars and disembowled histories, diverted from their natural uses to hurtle as missiles through the air: a young Menad, with rent garters and tempestuous mane, flying in stormy gallop, armed with a fire-shovel over the prostrate furniture in hot pursuit of two fugitive boys both bellowing—the one with the joy of battle, the other with the fear. For the reign of Chaos and old Night has come again, and the young Smith-Delorraines have a month's holiday.

This the way in which they are inaugurating it. It is sudden and unlooked for good fortune which mostly turns people's heads. Perhaps it is the unexpectedness of their boon of liberty which makes them, and frightfully, misuse it. A week ago no such emancipation was even talked of, but to the surprise of every one, Miss Dering, whose summer holidays have been delayed thus late to suit her employer's convenience, and who, indeed, has hitherto shown a great indifference as to whether she has any summer holidays at all, has, on the day after the Dering party, asked for, with a quiet insistence which makes refusal difficult, and consequently obtained—a month's leave of absence. To be off—to be well away before the day of Anthony's announced return—this appears to her the one necessity which life for her still holds.

It seems as if stern-eyed angels had come to her as they had come to Syrian Lot as he sat at eventide at his city gate in the old time, bidding her arise and flee for life. And she, docilely listening to that inner voice, has arisen and fled. To-day she has been travelling all day long; her head is full of noise, and her eyes of grit. But the railway part of her journey is now ended. In a hired fly she is tardily jogging through the suburbs of Helmsley. The horse goes but slowly after its kind. "Not nearly so fast as the butcher's did," she says to herself, with a grim smile of recollection; so she has plenty of leisure to note the changes that two years and a half have wrought.

The scaffold-poles are fewer, and the stuccoed houses more. The brick-fields have shrunk and the dead-end grown. The town is stretching out thriving arms, which will soon take Portland Villa into their embrace. Even the hospital has thrown out an ugly wing from its bald, square bulk. The four little brother-villas are in sight now—even on them change has passed. Sardunopolis has painted its shutters green, Campidoglio has added a story to height. Only Portland Villa remains wholly unaltered, save for the necessary action of time and decay. There are a few more tiles missing from the roof, a few more patches of plaster from the walls; but that is all. The gate is still off its hinges, and still tied up with strings. She looks out with interest, as the driver pulls and fumbles at it. To all appearance it is the identical fragment of rotten cord which secured it when last she rolled through.

They have turned in now; down the little weedy drive comes the old pattering avalanche of dogs' feet—the same hallelujah chorus of loud pug voices. So to the sound of music Joan's vehicle draws up at the portal.

"If you please, m," says the driver, returning from useless quest to the fly-door, "I'm afraid I cannot ring, the bell is broke."

Still broken after two years and a half! On this particular occasion it is not of much consequence, as the door is now quickly opened, and the aperture is filled with eager, welcoming faces—all one broad smile, with welcoming voices outdoing each other and almost the dogs in loud salutations. The next moment Joan is in her aunt's copious embrace. One after another three pairs of substantial arms warmly unfold her. A feeling of remorse nips the girl's spirit that, after all, she has perhaps not enough store by her place in these homely hearts. Long ago indeed, she has repaid them, and with ample usury, her pecuniary obligations, but love is paid only by itself. In this debt has not she been but a laggard debtor?

They have passed into the drawing-room now; one of Joan's hands firmly held by Mrs. Moberley, the other by Di. Formerly she would have shrunk from having her fingers thus imprisoned; but time and its austere experience of the outer world's unlovingness has made her thankfully take affection's clasp, even though it may be a rather sultry one.

"This is but a poor home-coming for you, Joan," says Mrs. Moberley, sinking down into the roomy shabbiness of her own chimney-corner chair, and in so doing slightly protruding a boot burst in exactly the same place as of old. Can it possibly, in defiance of all the probabilities of time and leather, be the same boot?

"But you gave us no notice, child; if you had sent us but the least pen-scratch a week ago we would have had a few of them down from the Barracks to make a little fun; they are not" (shaking her head) "as good a lot as our old ones—more inclined to be high, and not so ready to take one as they find one, but still—with a smile of philosophic satisfaction—"after all, the army is the army, when all's said and done."

"We did stare when we got your letter," cries Bell, widely opening her large round eyes, her whole complacent, fat face, intricately towering hair, and lengthily floating curl, pleasantly agitated by curiosity. "I think" (looking down with an inexplicable air of consciousness) "that if we had not had a good many things to think of just lately, we should never have left off guessing and wondering about it."

"No disagreeableness, I hope, Joan?" says Mrs. Moberley, with a not unkindly inquisitiveness in her jovial eye. "You have not had any tiff with your mistress, I hope?"

Mrs. Moberley can never be persuaded that there is any difference between the phraseology of that of servitude and that of tutelage. Joan shakes her head.

"Oh no, nothing."

"What does it matter what has brought her?" cries Diana, brusquely, coming as of yore to the rescue, since she sees a look of disquiet and embarrassment on her cousin's face; "that is her business; she is here now—that is ours."

"Of course," answers Bell, still with a continuance of that mystic consciousness, and holding her head extremely on one side; "only that coming just now it happens so pat that one is almost inclined to think that there is something not quite canny about it."

"To be sure!" cries Mrs. Moberley, heartily, brought back by this suggestion to the remembrance of their own glories and interests, which her niece's arrival has momentarily thrust into the back-ground of her mind—"Well, Joan, whatever you have to tell us, we have a piece of news to tell you: we are going to have a wedding in the family."

"The first break in a family is a sad thing, but in other respects I am sure I have not a word to say! One of our old lot and of poor papa's profession, and altogether—I have always said"—(with a relieved lapse into mirth, as sudden as the leap back into uprightness of an unstrung bow)—"that it would be very handy to have a medical man in the family!"

"He is the doctor in the 170th," says Diana, with laconic explanation; "don't you remember him?"

"The regiment is at Cork now," continues Mrs. Moberley, "the bride and bridegroom are to join at once after the wedding."

"It is quite an old attachment," says Bell, having by this time recovered the power of utterance, though she still speaks in a small, coy voice, as if she was saying something strange. "It is more than two years since he began to be particular. I remember so well that the first time I noticed anything out of the way was the day that you and Mrs. Wolferstan passed us in the barouche; we had just been changing hats for a bit of fun, and you came round the corner so suddenly upon us, that we had scarcely time to change back. I thought I should have expired! I remember his saying what a pretty girl you were, and that he hoped you would get a good husband."

Three years ago Joan would have shuddered and shrunk like a sensitive-plant at hearing such a wish expressed by such lips, but time has made her more lenient.

"It was very good of him," she says, smiling gently and without irony; "I pass on the wish to you now heartily."

#### CHAPTER X.

JOAN'S return is now a three-days-old event. She is no longer treated with guest-privileges or guest-formality, but has subsided easily, and as a matter of course, into her niche as one of themselves. Even their curiosity as to the cause of her sudden reappearance among them—a curiosity which ought to be all the keener, seeing that it is never gratified—has died, swallowed up by the more absorbing and personal topics of Bell's trousseau, Bell's cake, Bell's bridesmaids.

Joan has smiled to herself once or twice with ironic sadness at the recollection of her unnecessary fears as to the difficulty she would find in parrying their questions and baffling their kindly inquisitiveness; when in fact, there is after all no one sufficiently interested in the matter to try to force the lock, or even turn the key of her shut confidence.

She has reached the wood again, and is out of the rough wind's reach. She has sat down at a birch-foot, and clasped her hands round her knees while her eyes stray pensively over the woodland pageant round her. It is quite a different show from that which Nature set before her on that her first visit, which to-day brings so vividly back. Then everything was waxing; now everything is waning. There is now no abundant noise of loud music in the air; only once again a little robin's pipe, wintrily cheerful as if it were his duty, not his pleasure, to sing. Where the primroses opened their young eyes on a strong new world there are only long, limp leaves, sapsless and outworn; and where the low violets shook out their perfume, a d the ground ivy spread its little blue carpet, the sorrel and the rag-wort, that sadly close the procession of the summer flowers, reign unloved and alone.

But suddenly, in one moment, she has sprung into broad wakefulness to find herself sitting bolt upright; the dogs at variance, but now united in one vociferous din of angry barking; to find her own heart bounding, as if it would leap away from her body; to find, lastly, one standing over her, death-pallid, statue-still—one from whom five days ago she fled for her life!

"Did you think that you had escaped me?" he says slowly, in a hollow voice, not holding out his hand or offering her any other greeting.

"Why have you come?" she says in a voice that is almost compassionate, stern, yet most gentle too.

Under that voice he winces, and a shiver runs over all his body.

"When you look at me like that," he says, shuddering, "when you look at me like that, you make me feel as if I were some unclean creeping thing, that must crawl away out of your sight; but yet—but yet"—stammering and breathing heavily, as one oppressed by some great and ponderous weight—"to-day not even your eyes shall daunt me!—for once I shake off their tyranny!"

He stops suddenly, as if suffocated, and so stands, with dilating nostrils and clenched hands, before her.

"Why have you come?" she repeats, in the same tone of inexorable icy gentleness, still holding him with that austere yet pitying gaze.

"You know what my life is," he replies in a rough low voice, as though afraid that if he paused for one moment, or gave himself any breathing-space, his nerve would fail him; killed by the stony misery of that face of hers; "you have seen with your own eyes—close, so that there can be no mistake about it—that ghastly comedy, that caricature, that we are pleased to call marriage!"—(with a most bitter sneer)—"you know as well as I do, that this is a theft that robs no one!—Joan!"—(his voice rising to new heights of woful entreaty)—"I tell you that in all this wide, full world there is not one living soul but you that wants me!" But still there is neither voice or movement—only the grave, green forest silence. "Speak!" he cries, maddened by her dumbness, laying his hand heavily on her shoulder, as if to wake her out of sleep; "speak! speak! you can say nothing for which I have not an answer ready. You can use no words to me that I have not used to myself beforehand. Speak!—there is no extremity of your anger which I am not prepared to bear the brunt of; but, in the name of all mercy and sanity, let it be an anger that speaks."

Then, indeed, she obeys him.

"Anger!" she repeats, lifting her eyes with difficulty, as if there were some great weight, from the grassy earth at her foot, to the smoke-gray sky, faintly seen between the tossing tree-tops overhead; and speaking very slowly, in a tone of heaviest, heart-wrung anguish. "Anger! does one hurt as I am feel anger?"

At the unmeasured sorrow yet meekness of her words, a wave of unspeakable shame and remorse rolls over his stormy soul; but it is too late to go back now.

"You know what my life is," he goes on desperately; pushing away from his forehead the hair, damp and matted with the cold sweat of that agony; "have I not read it often in the pity of your face? you know what—but for you—it might have been! honest and just as you are, do you dare look me in the face and tell me that you owe me no reparation?"

"It is dark!" she says stammeringly—"oh! dark! dark! What greater depth of darkness can there be than when Wrong wears Right's face!—right!—wrong!" she repeats, a little wildly; "the one is a word and I do not know which is which! but yet—but yet"—(lifting her haggard eyes uncertainly)—"I know that on the other side of this night God's day is shining, though no gleam—none—comes to me here now!"

Her voice dies away in a sob; and, for a while there is a miserable silence. Then Anthony breaks once again into unsteady speech.

"If you think that it is only a mad, unreflecting rage of mere passion that has brought me here," he says, in a thick, low voice, "you are wrong! I think that any such would fall dead under the rebuke of your eyes! Joan, you were always calling me to rise to the better life; I tell you I cannot! Without you I cannot! I summon you to a task that is worthy of you!"

As he speaks she turns, and facing him, fixes him with a steadfast regard. The wildness has gone out of her eyes, they have resumed their look of infinite pity, of meek, unmeasured woe.

"This is my punishment, then," she says, in an intense low voice; "I am fitly chastised for my presumption in thinking that my love for you was of so high and pure a quality that no unclean thing could come nigh it; I would have meddled with the functions of the angels," she says, "and now"—(breaking into an agony of sobbing)—"what basest, vilest among women could have dragged you lower, or sunk you deeper, than I have!"

Again there is a silence, broken only by the slender woodland noises. Anthony has thrown himself on the ground and suddenly covered his face with his hands, as if to take shelter from that gaze of hers, intolerable else. By-and-by she speaks again; "I did you a wrong," she says, very humbly, in a soft and broken voice—"a great wrong; I see it now; I would have loved you better than any other woman loved, and instead I loved you worse! I wanted to be kinder to you than any other, and instead I have been crueler than any! I made a mistake, and in my obstinacy and self-opinion I clove to it in the face of all reason and sense; yes, I did you a wrong, and for that"—(her self-command gives way a little)—"I have been asking your pardon on my heart's knees for the last two years and a half! If it makes your pain any easier to know that I suffer too, well, then, I can truly tell you that in all God's army I think there is no sharper sword than that with which I am to-day smitten."

At the exceeding gentleness and truth of her tone he takes courage to drop his shielding hands. It is no longer the upbraiding angel

that speaks—it is the woman who loved him and lay in his arms. He lifts his miserable gray eyes haggardly to hers.

"Day and night, day and night, day and night!" he says, with a slow and dragging emphasis; "Joan have you counted how many days and nights there are in fifty years? We are strong and healthy!—there is no reason why we should not live for fifty years!"

The dark, apathetic despair of his voice makes her own heart sink lead-heavy within her. She sits down on the leafy couch of herbs and moss beside him.

"It is dark!—dark!" she says in an awed whisper; then, after a pause, lifting to his her streaming eyes, in which there is yet a ray of purest, tenderest heaven-light—"Anthony!" she says, solemnly, "whether it be ten, or twenty, or fifty years, I think that neither you nor I will be able to bear our lives unless we lay fast hold of the thought that out of our mistakes God builds up his completeness."

There is a long, long silence. Those last high words of hers have tied the young man's tongue, and stemmed the torrent of his agonized, mad pleading. Of what use any longer to stretch out his empty, rash arms to hers? She has soared beyond their reach. In utter dumbness they sit side by side; he has again covered his face with his hands. Only a low groan of extreme pain now and then disturbs the stillness. The green gloom of the wood has grown deeper; the night is gently fallen.

By-and-by, with a long, soft sigh, Joan slowly rises to her feet. Her movement rouses her companion from his stupor. For a moment before she can stop him, he has thrown himself prone before her in the grass.

"Trample me!" he says, in a hoarse, rough voice. "I am not worthy that you should set your feet on my neck! Oh, high, pure love! (lifting his bowed head and his face disfigured and furrowed by tears), "who have ever warily striven to lift me to your level, forgive me that, brute-like, following my nature, I have striven to drag you down to mine!"

At his last words she stretches out both her hands to him, with a solemn smile of pardon and farewell.

"Love," she says, very sweetly, while, for the last time, her blue eyes wetly dwell on his—"for this once I may call you so, seeing that it is as if I stood by your death-bed—love: you used to tell me that I was your guardian angel—your better self! and of all your tender names there were none that I so dearly loved; perhaps it is a foolish thought, but snuff me to keep them still! Suffer me to think that by-and-by, in the after time when life is going hardly with you—when the earth-fogs close around you, when the satyr-voices call you down—that then, perhaps, my face, my voice, which hitherto have brought you nothing but disquiet and woe, may be present with you in memory, as a solace and a sustenance!" Then, without another word, she slowly draws away her hands from his, and, with one solemnest good-by smile, passes away from him into the falling night.

THE END.

#### LITERARY.

MIHAT PASHA is engaged in writing a book. It will be published at Vienna.

DR. RUSSELL'S account of the Prince of Wales's tour in India will be published in a few days. It is said to have been carefully revised by his Royal Highness, who has manifested great interest in its progress, and has ordered a number of copies for presentation in India.

THE 400th anniversary of the invention of printing will be signaled by an exhibition in Stationer's Hall of the works of Caxton and other antiquities connected with printing, and doubtless collectors throughout the country will be proud to lend their aid to the success of the undertaking.

OXFORD University students want Matthew Arnold to fill the chair of poetry which has been held by Sir Francis Doyle. But while Mr. Arnold has few equals as a writer, he is helpless on his feet in a lecture room as though his father had not been one of the admired preachers of the Established Church.

MR. JOAQUIN MILLER is in Washington, and one letter writer thus mentions him: "He was an intense listener during the reading of the returns, and one had a fine opportunity for studying his appearance. His soft, fine hair is of a richly golden hue, his beard tawny, and his eyes brightly blue. In sunset light Joaquin is a perfect picture that an artist would despair of reproducing. One who saw him standing on a hill near Santa Barbara at sunset, looking out over the golden waves of the Pacific, said that the vision could not be effaced from memory. The lion locks were longer then, the beauty of his face fresher and younger, and the figure shown in its perfection by the picturesque costume he wore before he left the Sierras and the sea to receive the laurels conventional society heaped upon him. In his appearance there is nothing of the top boots and red shirt that sensational reports have credited him with. A bell-crowned felt hat, military cloak, silver-headed cane, and large solitary diamond studs and ring are the only noticeable features of his dress."

An article which has long been sought after and but recently made known in this country is *Luby's Parisian Hair Renewer*. A few applications as an ordinary hair dressing is all that is necessary to restore gray hair to its natural color, after which one application a week will be sufficient. It imparts a most beautiful perfume and gloss to the hair and keeps the head cool and entirely free from dandruff. It is quite a favourite toilet dressing with ladies, as it does not soil the most delicate head dress. It can be had of all chemists in large sized bottles 50 cents each. DEVINS & BOLTON, Druggists, Montreal, are agents for Canada.