

"She did go back. She turned the handle of the great folding-door, but before she could push it open, she was met by a heavy resistance from within. In the half-opened space stood Mrs. Moreton, confronting her with a stern, admonitory whisper: "Woman! are you mad or wicked?"

The mother stood arrested, guilty. She turned to follow the housekeeper, but there was an anguish at her heart that could not be controlled.

"Hark!" exclaimed the young lady, her pencil falling from her fingers, and she turning pale as death, "what is that?"

Mrs. Moreton shuddered. A cry, piercing and marvellous like that of a dumb creature in agony, burst from the inner room.

They rushed together into the boudoir. "It was the poor woman, ladies," said the housekeeper, anxiously. "I fear she is very ill. It has come upon her quite of a sudden."

She was standing up in the middle of the room, rigid as if her feet had grown into the unslid boards. Her eyes were glassy, and her mouth was drawn a little to one side.

"Run, Jenkin," exclaimed the young lady, "for wine, or whatever is most necessary. We will attend to her."

"She took the poor woman by the arm, she drew her into a chair; she bent over her; she rubbed her cold hands in her own. When the wine was brought, she raised the glass to the patient's lips; and while she did so, the sufferer's breath came and went thickly, with a hard stifling effort. She felt that kind young heart beating against her own. Who can tell who but the Giver of all consolation."

Who but the Giver of all consolation. What balm there was in that one moment; what deep, unspoken communion; what longing for a life-long wound? But the mother kept silence even from good words. Only, while the young lady was so tenderly busying herself about her, she took hold, as it were unconsciously, of one of the folds of her dress. She stroked it with her hand; she smoothed it down, as if pleased with its softness; and, so long as she dared to hold it she did not let it go.

It was almost dark. The young lady stood at the window of the great drawing-room, looking after a solitary slowly retreating figure, still distinctly visible, in spite of the grey dusk spreading like a veil over lawn and lake and garden; through which the distant mausoleum loomed dimly above the woods.

"The poor woman," she said, softly; "she is not fit to travel home alone; yet she would neither consent to stay all night, as I wished, nor let old William drive her. Strange, was it not, Mrs. Moreton?"

But Mrs. Moreton had left the room. The young heiress still looked out upon the scene she was so soon to leave, as her destiny had decreed, for ever. She mused on she knew not what. Her heart was stirred an invisible touch had been upon it. She leaned her head pensively against the window, while many thoughts, as vague as the shadows that were so thickly falling round her, chased each other rapidly through her fancy. Many visions gathered round her; but among them there was no presage of the coronet that afterwards spanned her brow—the coronet of the princely yet peasant-descended house of Storza. Still she watched the retreating figure, until it was lost in the deepening darkness; and when she did turn from the window, she heaved a deep and pining sigh.

Her sadness suited the hour of twilight, and it passed with it. She knew not, nor did she ever know, who had that day been so near to her.

### Marion's Birthday.

"Music and dancing to-day," said Dr. Jeddler, speaking to himself. "I thought they dreaded to-day. But it's a world of contradictions. Why, Grace, why, Marion?" he added aloud, "is the world more mad than usual this morning?"

"Make some allowance for it, father, if it be," replied his youngest daughter, Marion, going close to him, and looking into his face, "for it's somebody's birthday."

"Somebody's birthday, Puss," replied the doctor. "Don't you know it's always somebody's birthday? By-the-by, I suppose it's your birthday?"

"No! Do you really, father?" cried his pet daughter, pursing up her red lips to be kissed.

"Well! but where did you get the music?" asked the doctor.

"Alfred sent the music," said his daughter Grace, adjusting some flowers in Marion's hair.

"Oh! Alfred sent the music, did he?" returned the doctor.

"Yes; he met it coming out of the town as he was entering early. The men are travelling on foot, and rested there last night, and as it was Marion's birthday, and he thought it would please her, he sent them on, with a penciled note to me, saying that if I thought so too, they would come to serenade her."

"Ay, ay," said the doctor carelessly, "he always takes your opinion."

"And my opinion being favorable, and Marion being in high spirits, we danced to Alfred's music until we are both out of breath. And

we thought the music all the gayer for being sent by Alfred. Didn't we, dear Marion?"

"Oh, I don't know, Grace. How you tease me about Alfred!"

"I tease you by mentioning your lover?"

"My sure! I don't much care to have him mentioned," said the willful beauty. "I'm almost tired of hearing of him, and as to his being my lover—"

"Hush! Don't speak lightly of a true heart, which is all your own, Marion."

It was agreeable to see the graceful figures of the blooming sisters twined together, lingering among the trees, love responding tenderly to love. The difference between them, in respect to age, could not exceed four years; but Grace, as often happens when no mother watches over both, seemed, in her gentle care of her younger sister, older than she was.

"Britain?" cried the doctor. "Britain, Hark!"

A small man, with an unceremoniously sour and discontented face, emerged from the house, and exclaimed, "Aa, aah!"

"Where's the breakfast table?" said the doctor.

"In the house," returned Britain.

"Are you going to spread it out here, as you were told last night?" said the doctor. "Don't you know there are gentlemen coming? That there is impudence to be done this morning before the coach comes by? That this is a very particular occasion, the birthday of Alfred, when our guardianship of him ends, and he leaves our home and goes abroad? Come! make haste! Where is Clemency?"

"Here I am, Mister. Everything shall be ready for you in half a minute, Mister."

"Here are them two lawyers a-comeing, Mister," said Clemency, in a tone of no very good will.

"Aha!" advancing to the gate to meet them. "Good-morning, good-morning! Grace, my dear! Marion! Here are Messrs. Stutchevy and Craggs. Where's Alfred?"

"He'll be back directly, father, no doubt," said Grace. "He had so much to do this morning in his preparations for departure, that he was up and out by daybreak. Good-morning, gentlemen."

"Happy returns, Alf," said the doctor, as Alfred approached the company.

"A hundred happy returns of this auspicious day, Mr. Alfred Heathfield," said Stutchevy, bowing low.

"Now, Alfred," said the doctor, "for a word or two of business, while we are yet at breakfast."

"And now it Britain will oblige us with some ink," said Mr. Stutchevy, returning to the papers. "We'll sign, seal and deliver as soon as possible, or the coach will be coming past before we know where we are."

In brief, the doctor was discharged of his trust as Alfred's guardian, and Alfred, taking it on himself, was fairly started on the journey of his life.

"Britain!" said the doctor, "run to the gate and watch for the coach. Time flies, Alfred!"

"Yes, sir, yes," returned the young man hurriedly. "Dear Grace, a moment. Marion so young and beautiful—dear to my heart as nothing else in life is—remember! I leave Marion to you until I return to claim her."

"She has always been a sacred charge to me, Alfred. She is doubly so now. I will be faithful to my trust, believe me."

"Coming down the road!" cried Britain.

"Marion, dearest heart, good-by. Sister Grace, remember!"

The coach was at the gate. There was the usual bustle with the luggage. The coach drove away. Marion never moved.

"He waves his hat to you, my love," said Grace. "Your chosen husband, darling, look!"

The younger sister raised her head for a moment, and then turned and said: "Oh, Grace, I cannot bear to see it. I cannot bear to hear you talk so about him."

### CHAPTER II.

STUTCHEVY & CRAGGS had a snug little office on the Old Battle Ground, where they drove a snug little business. They sat opposite each other at a neighboring desk. One of the fire-proof boxes was upon it, part of its contents was spread upon the table, and the rest was then in course of passing through the hands of Mr. Stutchevy. He looked at every paper singly, shook his head, and handed them to Mr. Craggs, who likewise shook his head and laid them down. The name on the box was Michael Warden, Esquire, and we may infer that the affairs of Michael Warden were in a bad way.

"That's all," said Mr. Stutchevy. "Really there is no other resource—no other resource."

"All lost, spent, wasted, pawned, borrowed, and sold, eh?" said the client, looking up from his abstractions.

"All," returned Mr. Stutchevy.

"Nothing else to be done, you say?"

"Nothing at all."

The client bit his nails and pondered again. "I'm not personally safe in England?"

"In no part of the United Kingdom."

"A mere prodigal son with no father to go

home to and no wine to feed his hawks to share with them, eh?"

"Not so bad as that. You are not entirely ruined. A little nursing—"

"You talk of nursing. How long nursing?"

"Six or seven years."

"To starve for six or seven years," said the client, "and to live all that time abroad? Well, you don't like to have me starve."

"We can secure you a few hundreds a year. I am not only deep in debt," said the client, "but I am deep in sin."

"Not in love," cried Stutchevy.

"Yes, deep in love," said the client.

"With an heiress?"

"Not with an heiress."

"A single lady, I trust," said Mr. Stutchevy.

"Certainly."

"It is not one of Dr. Jeddler's daughters? I heard of your spending six weeks at his house after your accident."

"Yes," returned the client, "it is his youngest daughter, Marion."

"I am happy to say it don't signify, Mr. partner, and I know the facts."

"Why should I? What of that? Are you men of the world, and did you never hear of a woman changing her mind?"

"There certainly has been witness for breach," said Mr. Stutchevy. "I think, sir, that of all the scrapes Mr. Warden's horse has brought him into, addressing his partner, the worst scrape may turn out to be his having been left by one of them at the doctor's garden wall, with three broken ribs, a snapped collar-bone, and the Lord knows how many bruises. It looks bad, sir, very bad. Dr. Jeddler, too, our client, Mr. Craggs."

"Mr. Alfred Heathfield, too, a sort of client, Mr. Stutchevy."

"Mr. Michael Warden, too, a kind of client," said the careless visitor.

"He can't do it. She sits down Alfred," said Mr. Stutchevy.

"Does she?" asked the client. "She avoids his name, shrinks from the least allusion to it, with evident distress."

My story passed to a quiet little study, where on that same night the sisters and the half-old doctor sat by a cheerful fireside.

"It is only me, Mister," said Clemency, putting her head in at the door.

"And what's the matter with you?" said the doctor.

"Nothing, ain't the matter with me," said Clemency, entering, "but come a little nearer, Mister," and she stily handed him a letter.

"Here, girls," cried the doctor, "my life help it, I never could keep a secret in my life. Alfred is coming home, my dears, directly. He wanted it to be a surprise to you."

"Directly!" repeated Marion.

"Why, perhaps not what your impatience calls 'directly,'" returned the doctor, "but pretty soon, too. He promises to be here this day month."

"This day month!" repeated Marion.

"A gay day, and a holiday for us," said the cheerful voice of her sister Grace.

One night as Britain and Clemency were conversing in the kitchen, after the family had retired, they were startled by a noise outside.

"Hark! that's a curious noise. Are they all a-bed upstairs?"

"Yes," replied Clemency.

Britain ventured out to look round. Clemency remained in the kitchen, and was immediately joined by Marion.

"Hush!" said Marion. "You have always loved me, have you not? I am sure I may trust you. There is some one out there, and I must see him. Don't go to bed, send off Britain and wait for me here. Oh, be true to me!"

"All still and peaceable," said Britain, on his imagination. "One of the effects of having a lively return, you see. Why, what's the matter?"

"Matter!" she repeated, "that's good in you, Britain, that is! After going and frightening one out of one's life with noises and lanterns."

Britain, after declaring it was impossible to account for a woman's whims, bade Clemency good night and retired.

When all was quiet Marion returned.

"Open the door," said she, "and stand there close beside me, while I speak to him outside."

A month soon passes even at the tightest pace. The day arrived. A raging winter day.

Mr. and Mrs. Craggs came arm in arm, but Mr. Stutchevy came alone. Many other guests were present, to welcome Alfred home. Mr. Stutchevy whispered to his partner after the music had struck up. Craggs started.

"Has he gone?"

"Hush! He has been with me for three hours or more. He drops down in his boat on the river precisely at twelve."

"Has Alfred arrived?"

"Not yet—expected every minute."

"Stir up the fire, let him see his welcome blazing out of the windows upon the night."

He was lit—yes! From the chaos he caught the light as he came near the house. Tears were in his eyes. His heart throbbled violently. How he had longed for that hour!

"Clemency," he said, "don't you know me?"

"Don't come in, to-day."

"What is the matter?" he exclaimed.

"I don't know. I am afraid to think, to look back."

There was a sudden tumult in the house. Grace rushed to the door.

"Grace," he caught her in his arms. "What is it? Is she dead?"

She disengaged herself, and fell at his feet.

"What is it? Will no one tell me?"

There was a murmur among them. "She's gone."

"I don't see how Alfred came from her home and so. She writes that she has made her in heaven and heavenless choice. Entreat us to forgive her, and to give," exclaimed the doctor.

"With whom? Where?"

There was hurrying to and fro, confusion, noise, disorder. Alfred never heard them, he never stirred.

### CHAPTER III.

The world has grown six years older since that night of the return. The village inn was kept by Mr. Britain, who had married Clemency. Dr. Jeddler had succumbed, the latter of whom had been dismissed by the doctor for the part he took in Marion's elopement. Mr. and Mrs. Britain were sitting down to tea, when a gentleman stirred in a morning coat, cravat and hooded, like a rider on horseback, stood at the bar door.

"Is this a new house?" inquired the stranger.

"Not particularly new, between five and six years old," said Clemency.

"I think I heard you mention Dr. Jeddler's name as I came in. Is the old gentleman living?"

"Yes, he's living."

"Much changed?"

"Since when?" returned Clemency, with great curiosity.

"Since his daughter went away."

"Yes," he's greatly changed since then," said Clemency. "He's grey and old. He hasn't had the same way with him since, but I think he's happy in it. A great change came over him in a year or two, and he began to talk about his lost daughter and to praise her, and to ever tried to tell that she was beautiful and good, and was. He learned that she was perfectly happy with the most honorable and devoted of husbands. That was about the same time as Miss Grace's marriage to Alfred."

"The water is married then?"

"They were married on Marion's birthday, and no two people ever lived more happily together."

"And what is the after-history of the young lady who went away?"

"I've heard that Dr. Jeddler knew it all. Miss Grace has had letters from her sister, and written letters back. But there's a mystery about her life which only one other person could tell."

"Who may that be?" asked the stranger.

"Mr. Michael Warden," said Clemency, much excited.

"Ah! I see you remember me."

"Our story need not be prolonged. Mr. Michael Warden brought back Marion, a most happy and beloved wife. The family were reunited, honored and respected by all their neighbors, and lived many years in great prosperity and peace."

### THE DAUNTLESS FEW.

He of good cheer, ye firm and dauntless few,  
Whose struggle is to win an unloved foe,  
Ye shall be taunted by reviling rade,  
Ye shall be scorned for that which ye pursue;  
Ye faint not—but be ever strict and true,  
Greatness must learn to be misunderstood,  
And perseverance is your better foe.  
Who, the great promptings of the spirit do,  
Though no one seem to hear, yet ever word  
That thou hast linked into an earnest thought  
Hath fiery wings, and shall be clearly heard  
When thy frail lips to silent dust are brought  
God's guidance keeps thee noble thoughts that shine  
With the great harmony, beyond all time.

It is known that the Princess of Wales to give her "mental photograph" in one of the albums for this purpose that used to be so fashionable, but now have gone out of date. She gave her favorite name as "Dagmar," which is that of her sister, the Empress of Russia, her favorite dish "Yorkshire pudding," her favorite hour, "twilight," her favorite art, "millinery," her favorite occupation, "minding my own business." The Princess is evidently a woman of good sense.

This following advertisement was some years ago posted up at North Shields: "Whereas several idle and disorderly persons have lately made a practice of riding on an ass belonging to Mr. —, now lost any accident should happen, he takes this method of informing the public that he has determined to shoot the said ass, and cautions any person who may be riding on it at the same time to take care of himself, lest by some unfortunate mistake he should shoot the wrong one."