gagement with one who had no real claims upon her. Only, she is so sorry that she promised to visit Myra this morning. Perhaps she is expecting her even at this moment—straining her ears to catch the sound of her footstep—waiting in feverish anxiety to repose some further confidence in her. The thought is too painful. Could she not run down to the cottage before they go, if it was only for tan minutes?

painful. Could she not run down to the cottage before they go, if it was only for ten minutes? She hears her husband in his dressing-room.

"Philip," she says, hurriedly, "I promised to see poor Myra again this morning. Is there no time before we start?"

"Time!" he echoes; "why, the carriage is coming round now, and the lailes have their things on. Voiling con-

coming round now, and the lailes have their things on. You've gone mad on the subject of that woman, Irene; but if it's absolutely important you should see her again to-day, you must go down in the evening. Come, my darling," he continues, changing his manner to a caressing, coaxing tone, which it is much difficult to combat, "we had quite enough fuss over this subject yesterday: let us have a peaceful, happy day all to curselves, for once in a way; there's a dear girl." And, after that, there is nothing more for Irene to do but to walk downstairs disconsolately, and drive off with her guests to Walmaley Castle.

They are a merry party; for it is just one of those glorious days when to live is to enjoy; and she tries to be merry, too, for gloom and ill-humor have no part in her composition: but she cannot halp her thoughts.

and she tries to be merry, too, for gloom and ill-humor have no part in her composition: but she cannot help her thoughts reverting, every now and then, to Myra, with a tinge of self-reproach for not having been braver. Yet her husband sits opposite to her, his eyegiowing with pride as it rests upon her countenance, and a quiet pressure of the head or for the trees. with pride as it rests upon her countenance, and a quiet pressure of the hand or foot telling her at intervals that, with whomsoever he may appear to be occupied, his thoughts are always hers; and she cannot decide whether she has done right or wrong. It is useless, however, to ponder the question now, when she is already miles away from Priestley; and so she tries to dismiss it from her mind, with a resolution to pay her promised visit the minute she returns. Walmaley Castle is a ruin, situated in a very picturesque part of the county: and, allowing for a long drive there and a fatiguing exploration, followed by a lengthy luncheon and a lasy discussion on the sward, it is not surprising that morning merged into noon, and noon into even-

morning merged into noon, and noon into eve morning merged into noon, and noon into evening, before our party were aware of the fact, and that the first thing that calls Irene's attention to the hour is a cool breeze blowing across the hills, which makes her shiver.

"How cold it has turned," she says suddenly as she changes her position. "Why, Philip, what o'clock is it?"

"Just five, dear," he answers quietly.

"Five! Five o'clock! It hever can be five."

"Within a few minutes."

"Within a few minutes. I suppose we had better be thinking of going home, or we shall be late for dinner.

"I hardly think we shall have much appetite for dinner after this," says Mr. Cavendish, laughing, as she regards the scanty remnants

"Five! It cannot be so late as five," repeats ene, in a voice of distress. "Oh! Philip, do der the horses to be put to at once. Poor

Mgra!"

Her expression is so pleading that he rises to do her bidding without delay; but he cannot resist a grumble as he does it. But she does not heed him: she heeds nothing now but her own thoughts, which have flown back to her broken promise, with a dreadful fear that she may be too late to redeem it. She remembers everything that happened with sickening fidelity: how Myra longed to detain her, and only let her go upon her given word that she would return. What right had she to break it—for any one, even for Phillip? What must the dying woman think of her?

She is so absorbed in this idea that she cannot

She is so absorbed in this idea, that she car She is so absorbed in this idea that she cannot speak to any one: her conduct seems quite changed from what it did in the morning. She is a pitiful coward in her own eyes now. And as she drives back to Priestley, she sits alone, miserable and silent, longing to reach home, and fancying the road twice as long as when they last traversed it.

"Are you ill, my dear?" says Mrs. Cavendish. "Has the day fatigued you?"

"You had better not speak to Irene," replies Colonel Mordaunt, in her stead. "She is in one of her Lady Bountiful moods! You an I I are not worth attending to in comparison."

of her Lady Bountiful moods. You an I I are not worth attending to in comparison."
She is too low-spirited even to be saucy in reply: and presently her husband's hand creeps into hers; and she knows that her reticence has pleased him, and gives it a good squeeze for

But as the carriage drives up to the Court her quick eye catches sight of a dirty little figure crouched by the doorsteps, and all her vague

crouched by the doorsteps, and all her vague forebodings return.

"Ob, there is Jenny!" she exclaims excitedly. "I felt sure there was something wrong. Jenny, what is it?"—as the carriage reaches the door—"is Myra worse?"

"Please, mum," says Jenny, with a bob, "she's as bad as ever she can be: and mother says, please, mum, could you come down and see her, for she's a-goin' fast, and she keeps on a-callin' for you. And mother says—"

"Oh! I will go at once," says I rene leaving.

"Oh! I will go at once," says Irene, leaping town from the carriage. "Philip, dearest, you yon't be angry. And with that, begins to run own the drive.

"Stop, Irene, stop!" cries her husband; but "stop, frene, stop i" cries her husband; but she does not heed or hear him; and, having handed the other ladies out, he drives after her, and catches her before she has reached the out-side of the grounds. "Stop, dearest! Get in. I will drive down ith you," he exclaims, as he overtakes her. You, Philip!"

"You, Philip!"
"Yes, why not? Am I to have no share in the trembles of this kinn little heart?"
"Oh, Philip! Thank yon! You are too good to me! It is such a comfort to me!" And, with that, the seless the great rough hand that has that, the seless the great rough hand that has drawn her so tenderly to his side, and ories over it quietly. He smears her tears all over her face with his pocket-handkerchief in well-meant attempts to wipe them away, after the manner of men, but not another word is exchanged between them till they reach the cottages.

changed between them till they reach the cottage.

There all is silent. The lower part of the house seems deserted. And Irene, leaving her husband pacing the garden in front, finds her way quietly upstairs.

Myra's room seems full. Mrs. Cray is there with her soapy satellites, and all her children, except Joel and Jenny; and at first Irene's entrance is unnoticed. But as the women nearest the door perceive her, they fall back.

"Ah! you've come too late, mum," says Mrs. Cray reproachfully. "I doubt if she'll recognise you. She's a'most gone, poor creetur."

"I am so sorry," replies Irene, making her way up to the bed on which the sick girl lies motionless; "but I could not come before. Dear Myra, don't you know me?" And she lays her warm lips upon the clammy forehead. The Dear Myra, don't you know me?" And she lays her warm lips upon the clammy forehead. The dying eyes quiver—open—recognise her; and a faint smile hovers over the lead-colored lips.

"We were—we were—"she gasps, and then stops, still gasping, and unable to proceed.

"Is it anything you want to tell me?" says Irene gently; trying to help her.

"We were—" commences Myra again: her

"We were—" commences Myra again; but Death will not let her finish. "Tomny!" she Death will not let her finish. "Tommy!" she ejaculates, with a world of meaning in her eyes, but with an effort so painful to behold that Irene involuntarily closes her own: and when she opens them again Myra's are glazed, her lips are parted, and two quick, sobbing breaths herald the exit of her soul.

"She's a-going." saveans.

lips are parted, and two quick, sobbing breaths herald the ext of her soul.

"She's a-going," screams Mrs. Cray, rushing forward to assist in the Great Change.

"She is gone," says Irene quietly, as awe. struck, she sinks down by the bedside and covers her face with her hands.

"Poor dear!" quoths Mrs. Cray, in order to better the occasion, "how bad she's bin a wanting of you, mum, all to-day, to be sure; and how she's bin a-asking every minute when I thought you'd be here. It seemed to me as though the poor creetur couldn't die till she'd seen you again. I've seen 'em lie like this, bless 'em, for days a fighten for their breath, and not able to go, when there's bin a pigeon-feather in the ticking, but never from trying to see a face as that poor thing as longed to see yours. And I'm sure, if I've sent one message to the Court to-day, I've sent a dozen, and she a-watchin' each time as though—"

"Oh! don't tell me! please, don't tell me!" entreats Irene, as the whole mournful panorama passes betore her mental vision, and over-whelms her with reproach, that ends in sobbing. Colonel Mordaunt hears the sound of her tears through the open casement, and comes to the bottom of the stairs.

through the open casement, and comes to the

through the open casement, and comes to the bottom of the stairs.

"Irene—Irene!" he says, remonstratingly.

"Oh! please to walk up, sir; it's all over," says Mrs Cray, with her apron to her eyes, and, for the sake of his wife, the Colonel does walk up. When he reaches the little room, he is distressed beyond the measure at the sight before him; the poor dead, wasted body stretched upon the bed, and his beautiful Irene crying beside it as though her heart would break.

"Come! my dearest," he says soothingly, "you can do no mere good here. Let me take you home."

But she turns from him : she will not ans she does not even seem to be a

him: she does not even seem to be aware that he is present.

"I hate myself, I hate myself," she says vehemently: "why did I ever consent to go to that detestable picnie, when my place was here? I promised her, poor dear girl, that I would come again this morning, and she has been waiting and watching for me, and thinking that I had forgotten. And her last word was to remind me of the oath I took to protect her child — and even that I must break. And she is about me now; I feel it: despising me for my weakness and my falsehood. But she cannot think me more degraded than I think myself."

Colonel Mordaunt is shocked at the expression: he cannot bear that it should be connected, even wrongfully, with any action of Irene's.

"Degraded! my darling! what can make

"Degraded! my darling! what can me ou use such a term with reference to your you who are everything that is true and

ble."
"True, to break my promise to the dying —
noble, to swear an oath and not fulfil it!Oh, very
true and very noble! I wish you could see my
conduct as it looks to me."
"If that is really the light in which you view
the matter, Irene, I will oppose no further obstacle to the satisfaction of your conscience.
You shall keep your promise, and adopt the
child."

child."
At that she lifts her tear-stained face and regards him curiously.
"Are you in earnest, Philip?"
"Quite in earnest! I could hardly jest on such

"Gutte in earnest: I could hardly jest on such a subject."

"Oh, thank you! thank you...you have made me feel so happy;" and, regardless of spectators (for though the room is nearly cleared by this time, the laundress and some of her oblidiren still remain in attendance), up comes her sweet mouth to meet his. Ocionel Mordaunt is alrea-

dy repaid for his generosity. And then Irene turns to the bed.

"Myra!" she says, as naturally as though the poor mother were still alive, "I will be true to my word. I will take your little one and bring him up for you; and when we meet again you will forgive me for this last breach of faith."

At this annual Mrs. Cray pricks up her care.

At this appeal, Mrs. Cray pricks up her ears she understands it at once, and the idea of get ting rid of Tommy is too welcome to be passed over in silence; but, being a cunning woman, she foresees that it will strengthen his claim if she foresees that it will strengthen his claim is she professes to have been made aware of it be

forehand.

"Your good lady is talking of taking the poor child, Colonel," she says, whining, "which I'm sure it will be a blessing to him, and may be he'll bea blessing to her. Ah, you see I knows all about it: Pve bin a mother to that poor girl as lies there, and who should she tell her troubles and 'lone' to It'll worshill to be a lies to lies there, and who should she tell her troubles and 'opes to, if it wearn't to me? But I kep' her misfortune close, didn't I, mum?—not a word passed my lips but that all the village might have heard, which it's proved by not a soul knowing of it, except ourselves and Joel — and one or two neighbors, maybe, and my brother as lives over at Fenton. But now she's gone—poor dear—and you've promised to do kindly by the child, I don't cares who knows it, for it can't harm no one." one."

harm no one."

"Then your niece told you of my wife's offer to look after her little boy?" says Colonel Mordaunt, falling into the trap.

"Oh, lor! yes, sir; a many times: which I've looked forward to her doing so, knowing that no lady could break her promise; and she's always been so fond of Tommy, too; I'm sure he'll take to her jist as though she was his mother. And it's a fine thing for the child; though it'll near break my heart to part with him."

This last assertion is a little too much. for Colonel Mordaunt's softened mood, and he

or Colonel Mordaunt's softened mood, and he rises to his feet hastily.

"Come, dearest!" he says to his wife, "it is time we were going."

"And Tommy?" she replies inquiringly.

"You don't want to take him with you now, surely?" is the dubious rejoinder.

"No! I suppose not but

"No! I suppose not! but ome ? '

"Lor, mum! I'll bring him up this evening
—he shan't be kep' from you, not half an hour
more than's heedful; but I must reddle him up
a bit first, and give him a clean face."

"Oh! never mind his face," begins I rene; but
her husband outs her short.

"There there, my love! you hear, the child will be up this evening. Surely that is all that can be required. Good evening, Mrs. Cray. Come, Irene; " and with one farewell look at Myra's corpse, she follows him from the room. All the way home the husband and wife sit

All the way home the husband and wife sit very cluse to each other, but they do not speak. The scene they have just witnessed has sobered them. Colonel Mordaunt is the first to break the silence, and he does so as the carriage stops before the hall-door of the Court.

"I am thinking what the d—l you'll do with it," he ejaculates suddenly.

"With the child?—oh! a thousand things," she says joyously. Her voice startles him; he turns and looks into her face; it is beaming with happiness and a wonderful new light that he has never seen there before.

"Why, Irene," he exclaims, as he hands her out, "what is this? you look as if you had come into a fortune."

into a fortune."

"Because I have such a dear, good old h

"Because I have such a dear, good old husband," she whispers fondly, as she passes him and runs upstairs te dress for dinner.

Of course the whole conversation at the dinner-table is furnished by the discussion of Mrs. Mordaunt's strange freak. By the time Irene descends to the dining-room, she finds the story is known all over the house; and the opinions on it are free and various. Mrs. Cavendish holds up her hands at the very idea.

"My dear Colone! I you spoil this child. Fancy, letting her adopt the brat of no one knows who!—the trouble it will give you—the money it will cost."

"Oh, Irene has promised faithfully I shall have no trouble in the matter," laughs the Colonel, who, having once given his consent to the arrangement, will never betray that it was against his will; "and as for the expense—well, I don't think one poor little mortal will add much to the expenditure of the household."

"Particularly as I intend to pay for him out

"Particularly as I intend to pay for him out of my pin money," says Irene.
"But the nuisance, my dear: no money will pay for that. Ah! you won't believe me now —but by-and-by—wait a bit—you'll see!" with mysterious nods and winks, of which her niece takes no notice.

mysterious nous and winks, of which her niece takes no notice.

"She'll have to end by turning him into a buttons-boy," remarks her husbands, who is secretly delighted with the pantomime.

"I'm sure I shall do nothing of the sort," says Irene quickly, and then calms down again. "I mean that I shall grow too fond of the child to make him into a servant."

"You fond of a baby, Irene," says Mary Cavendish; "that is just what pussles me-why I'm sure you always said you hated children."

"Oh, very well, then I keep your own opinion—you know so much more about it than I do," with a little rising temper.

"Irene, my darling!" says the Colonel soothingly,

why do they all set upon me, then, Philip?

"Why do they all set upon me, then, Philip?

What is there so extraordinary in my wishing to befriead a wretched little outcast? I'm sure I almost begin to wish I had never seen the child at all."

"Let us change the subject," is her husband's

But when the dinner is over and the evening draws to a close, Irene begins to move restlessly up and down the house. She has already taken her maid Phœbe into her confidence, and the girl, being country bred and with no absurd notions above her station, is almost delighted at the prospect of having the little child to take care of as her mistress. And they have arranged that he is to sleep in Phœbe's bed, which is large and airy. And before the housemaid comes up with a broad grin on her countenance to announce that Mrs. Cray, the laundress, has brought "a little boy for missus," these extravagant young women have sliced up half-a-dozen or more good articles of wear, in order that the young rascal may have a wardrobe.

In the midst of their arrangements, Master Tommy, clean as to the outside platter, but smelling very strong, after the manner of the Great Unwashed, even though they dwell in villages, is introduced by his guardian. Irene cannot talk to Mrs. Cray to-night, she dismisses the subject of poor Myra and her death struggles summarily; and thrusting a five pound note into the laundress's hand, gets rid of her as soon as she decently can. She is longing to have the little child all to herself, and she does not feel as though he were really her own until the woman who beats him is once more outside the door. And then she turns to Phœbe triumphantly.

"And now, Phœbe, what shall we do with But when the dinner is over and the evening

phantly.

"And now, Phœbe, what shall we do with

him 1

him?"
"I should wash him, ma'am," replies Phœbe,
following the advice of the great Mr. Dick, with
respect to David Copperfield.
"Of course! we'll give him a warm bathRun downstairs and get the water, Phœbe. And
is this his night gown?" examining the bundle
of rags that Mrs. Cray has left behind her. "Oh! what a wretched thing; but, luckily, it is clean. He must have new night-gowns, Phosbe, at once,

"He must have everything new, ma'a''s less his heart!" exclaims Phœbe enthusiasti bless his heart!" exclaims Phoebe enthusiastically, as she disappears in quest of the water. When she is gone Irene lifts the child upon her knee, and gazes in his face

"Tommy," she says gently, "Tommy, will you love me?"
"Iss," replies Tommy, who has seen her often enough to feel familiar with her.
"You are going to be my little boy now,

Tommy."

"Iss," repeats Tommy, as he surveys the
wonderful fairy-land in which he finds himself. wonderful fairy-land in which he finds himself.

It must be recorded of Tommy, that, with all

wonderful fairy-land in which he finds himself. It must be recorded of Tommy, that, with all his faults, he is not shy.

In another minute Phebe is back with the water, and the bath is filled, and the two women undress the child together and plunge him in, and sponge and lather him, kneeling on each side the bath the while, and laughing at their own awkwardness at the unaccustomed task. And then Tommy gets the soap into his eyes, and roars, which cheerful sound attracting Colonel Mordaunt's attention as he mounts the stairs, causes him to peep into the open bedroom-door unseen. And there he watches his young wife and her maid first kiss the naked cupid to console him, and then return to the soaping and splashing until they have made him smile again. And when the washing is completed, and Phebe stretches out her arms to take the child and dry him, Colonel Mordaunt sees with astonishment that her mistress will not allow it.

"No, no, Phebe! give him to me," she says authoritatively, as she prepares her lap to receive the dripping infant; and then, as the servant laughingly obeys her orders, and carries the bath into the next room, he watches irene's lips pressed on the boy's undried face.

"My little Tommy!" she says, as she does

lips pressed on the boy's undried face.
"My little Tommy!" she says, as she does

He sees and hears it, turns away with a sigh, and a heart heavy, he knows not wherefore, and goes downstairs as he ascended them, unnoticed.

A week has passed. Poor Myra's form has just been left to rest beneath a rough hillock of clay in the churchyard, and Joel Cray is seated in the sanded kitchen of his mother's cottage, his arms cast over the deal table, and his head bent down despairingly upon them.

Mrs. Cray, returning abruptly from having just "dropped in" to a neighbor's to display her "black" and furnish all funeral details, finds him in this position.

"Come, lad," she says roughly, but not unkindly, "it's no use frettin'; it won't bring her back agin."

"There's no call far you to tell me that, mother," he answers wearily, ashe raises two hollow eyes from the shelter of his hands; "it's writ too plainly here" — striking his breast "but you might have warned me she was goin'."

goin'."

"Warned you! when all the world could see
it! Why, the poor creetur has had death marked in her face for the last six months; and Mrs.
Jones has jest bin a sayin' it's a wonder as she
lasted so long," replies Mrs. Cray, as he
hangs her new bonnet on a nail in the kitchen
wall, and carefully folds up her shaw!

"All the world but me, you mean,
"Twould
have come a bit easier if I had seen it, perhaps,
why, "was only the other day I was begging
of her sie to be my wife, and now, to think I've
just come from burying her! Oh, good Lord!"
and down sinks the poor fellow's head again,
whilst the tears trickle through his earthstained fingers,