

Family Reading.

"THY WILL BE DONE."

"Thy will be done, O God." How could I say it?
 Say it, and think that what He did was best;
 How could I take my own strong will and lay it
 Low at His feet, nor question His behest?
 When, there beside me, on the snowy pillow,
 Lay my pale darling in the grasp of Death,
 And sorrow whelmed me, like an ocean billow;
 I could not speak—I only gasped for breath.
 Dumb with my grief, I raised my eyes in pleading
 That God would spare her yet a little while;
 I could not feel his loving hand aleading,
 Through the thick cloud I did not see His smile.
 But as I knelt, there came to me a vision;
 I seemed to gaze adown the vale of years;
 And bowing low my head, in meek submission,
 I hushed my sobs and wiped away my tears.
 For I beheld a girl whose heart was broken;
 And on whose brow, the Demon of Despair
 Had pressed his fatal signal-ring, in token
 That Hope should never, never blossom there.
 With one quick glance I read her sad, sad story,
 That old or new is ever still the same.
 The love that should have been a woman's glory,
 Through man's deceit, was sorrow, sin, and shame.
 "Dear Lord," I cried, "far better thou shouldst take her
 To sit beside Thee on Thy holy throne;
 I do not fear that Thou wilt e'er forsake her."
 And thankfully I prayed, "Thy will be done;
 Thy gracious will, O God, be done."

OUR NEW NEIGHBOR.

CHAPTER IX.—(CONTINUED.)

He was not prepared, however, for the possibility that any one besides himself might have an inkling of the real state of the case, and when Miss Harcourt opened their interview by saying, with well-feigned frankness, "I have long wished to speak to you, Mr. Darrent. We are both acquainted with a very sad story—Mrs. Cockburn's, I mean," he was too much taken aback to make any attempt to conceal his knowledge.

This was enough for Miss Harcourt; but in decency she was compelled to continue—

"Will you give me your advice, your advice as a man? Her story is getting about. That is nothing. Such stories will spread; but we are not judged, I am thankful to say, by the deeds of others, whatever our relationship with them. We are judged by ourselves, and the lady who calls herself Mrs. Rosebay is everything a lady should be. She is received everywhere here, and that is right. But," she fixed her eyes on James Darrent, who turned a little pale, "something new is coming out about her, and presently, I know, she will be as generally shunned as now she is received. I feel sure she acts in ignor-

ance. Oh, yes! there can be no doubt of that. Still—" pausing meditatively, which pause gave him time to ask, with threatening sternness in his voice, what was this new fact that had come to light.

Miss Harcourt answered by a question. "How did she come by her money?" she asked, impressively; then, in answer to a movement expressive of scornful indignation, "Dear Mr. Darrent, I feel with you, indeed I do. These things seem petty. What does it matter to us how our neighbor lives? Yes; but when there is danger—I should say, perhaps, prospect—of closer connection—There," pressing her pocket-handkerchief to her lips, "I am as foolish as usual. I allow my tongue to run away with me. To come to the point, Mrs. Rosebay—we may call her by the name she has assumed—is living on the proceeds of her husband's guilt—innocently, I believe. Now, the question is, ought one to deceive her?"

Scarcely could James Darrent have been more surprised if a bombshell had burst at his feet. He made no answer, and Miss Harcourt went on, blandly, "I can see you are surprised; but why? You must be very impractical if you can imagine that houses are kept up and people fed and clothed upon nothing. I happen to know—I think you know, too—that in this case there was no nuptial settlement. The whole of Andrew Cockburn's estate should have gone to his creditors. Should have—but did it? That is the question. Now, I have heard a singular story; it may be untrue, of course, but it fits in curiously with facts. On the eve of his bankruptcy a friend brought him in some money to invest in his business—it was a bank, I believe. He took it, and said nothing. That sum never appeared in any of the accounts. His friend was also his wife's friend, and he would not enter into the matter closely. He believed it would be impossible to recover the sum lost, and he was not absolutely ruined. Now, what became of that sum of money? My belief is, and others think the same, that the lady who calls herself Mrs. Rosebay, and is actually Andrew Cockburn's widow, lives on its proceeds. What is your opinion?"

"I have none; it does not concern me in the slightest. Why should I pry into my neighbor's business?"

"Why, indeed? You will ask why I should. I answer at once, not from idle curiosity. Had it not been for a certain prospect, a certain fear, Mrs. Rosebay might have gone her way; I should have gone mine. But when it is possible our paths may meet—Mr. Darrent" (his face was as pale as death, his lips and eyelids trembled), "I dare not speak more plainly; but I think you begin to understand me. My family is ancient and honorable. Poor we may be, but we have never disgraced ourselves. If the representative of our family chose to ally himself with a poor woman, I might regret his decision, but I should not dare to combat it. There is one step he might take which would be worse, infinitely worse, and against that I should fight so long as breath was left in my body. For disgrace to fall upon the Harcourts would break my heart."

"But why do you tell me all this?" cried James Darrent. "I do not believe it," he added hurriedly—"God forbid that I should! If Mrs. Cockburn lives on an income derived from her late husband's estate, the wrong she commits is done innocently. Women know nothing of business."

"Ah! now at last we come to the point," said Caroline Harcourt, serenely. "If this is the case, she ought to be undeceived. Will you undertake to tell her the truth?"

"I?"

"Yes; you. Are you not the most natural person? You met her formerly."

"But I know nothing of her affairs. To suggest your idea about her property would be to insult her. Besides, if she were undeceived—if she should give up

this money—what would become of her?"

"True, she would be penniless; she would share the fate her precious husband inflicted on so many helpless women. However, that need not trouble us. I am inclined to think that under no circumstances would Adeline Cockburn be allowed to starve."

Caroline Harcourt had obtained all she wanted. She was tired of the interview; the gentle dissimulation she had been practising for the last hour began to bore her unspeakably. In those last words she allowed her true bitterness to creep out.

But, bold as she was, she had scarcely spoken before she repented her temerity. She rose, and he rose. He stood facing her, and, smitten with a new fear, she drew back trembling.

What had happened? Was this a transformation? Were her senses fooling her? She had thought she was alone with the grave and quiet traveller, who had no enthusiasm but that of science; she found herself actually in the presence of a man—a man of deep nature, deeply stirred, whose eyes were flashing with indignant wrath, whose muscles were knotted together as if he saw before him his deadly foe, whose starting eye-balls, swelling veins, and quivering lips made him terrible. Her first thought was that he was seized with a paroxysm of madness; her second that she had been mistaken, that she had gone too far, that some strong personal feeling bound him to the lady who had been the subject of their conversation, and, swallowing as best she might her fear of his mood, an anger at his expression and attitude, she said, with soothing apology in her voice—

"Mr. Darrent, I am afraid I have offended you. Let me assure you that I spoke in ignorance."

"Offended me!" he burst out. "You have been torturing me for the last half-hour. You have done it deliberately, for purposes of your own. That I could have borne; but you have done more. In your pride of position, in your security and strength, you have dared to insult and tread under your feet a weak and friendless creature. Miss Harcourt, be thankful you are a woman!"

With those words he turned and left the room.

Caroline was alone, and for a moment she trembled.

His look and words, like those sudden flashes which for one brief moment enlighten the black night, had acted as a revelation. She seemed to see whither she was going; the pitfalls dug by hatred and self-feeling round the feet of the unwary opened hideous mouths around her, warning her back. Should she seize the opportunity? Should she retrace her steps? She had found herself too weak to guide circumstances. Why should she not drop the reins? Beautiful old childish thoughts, soft and weak, but fair as pictured cherubs, came back to her, as, for a few moments, she idly mused. Thoughts of benignant Providence, the Divinity that shapes our ends; of belief and hope and charity; of, in the best sense, "taking no thought for the morrow."

Thinking, she looked up. A small mirror was before her. She saw her own face, haggard, drawn, the eyes dim, the brow contracted. Saw, and reflected how these last few weeks had aged her. She had missed her power. The sceptre that was slipping from her nerveless hand, should it finally depart, would leave her desolate. And now she had nothing but this power to give interest and dignity to her life. But to-night the opportunity of asserting herself, of proving her own foresight, and avenging herself on the woman who had thwarted her, was put into her hands, and she was weak enough to hesitate.

Caroline Harcourt smiled. There was self-contempt in that smile. Then she tied her bonnet-strings, looked at herself once more in the mirror, observed with pleasure how her brow smoothed, how her color returned, and

her eye brightened at thought of this anticipated triumph. Then she went out, resumed her gently dejected manner, said good-bye to the party on the lawn, and, having thanked John Darrent for his assistance, returned to her home.

On the following day she gave her weekly reception, an evening entertainment, to which the little world of Melbury, with the sole exception of Mrs. Rosebay, had been bidden.

Mrs. Harcourt's parties were pleasant. She succeeded often in captivating one or two stray celebrities from town; there was an abundance of good music, and she had the useful talent of grouping her guests appropriately.

Her evenings were generally well attended. This one was no exception to the rule. Miss Harcourt's friends said she was quite herself again upon the occasion—as quiet, as cheerful, as self-possessed as she had ever been. And this was true.

The fact was that, feeling her feet once more upon the neck of her generation, she was able to forget her puerile fears and hesitations. Besides, the traveller was not amongst her guests.

The day after the party at the Lodge it was known through Melbury that the beautiful and fascinating Mrs. Rosebay, whom society had taken up—society, with the exception of Miss Harcourt—and Miss Harcourt, Melbury remembered ruefully, never did anything without reason, had imposed upon them all. She was living under a false name. She was the widow of a dishonored bankrupt; she was practising charity and fine living upon other people's money. Melbury was horrified, and more than one breathed fervent vows never again to act with unadvised haste. "There is certainly something in breeding," was a remark that might have been heard in several quarters when Mrs. White's and Miss Harcourt's respective attitudes towards the new neighbor were discussed. It was decided that Mrs. Rosebay must be dropped.

By some, that is, not all.

The rumors reached Mrs. Darrent's ears. Maggie, shedding indignant tears, brought her the story. It had been retailed to her by Sidney, who said it was the universal talk.

"You will not give her up, mother?" cried the impulsive girl. "If you do, it will break my heart."

Mrs. Darrent answered in a grave sad manner, for she was perplexed. There were some inexplicable circumstances. She hoped she was not deceived; she trusted that, sooner or later, they would be cleared up. Meantime, she soothed her impulsive child by the assurance that she would not act upon idle gossip. And she made a point of calling upon Mrs. Rosebay, who was slowly awaking to the fact that evil rumor was busy with her name, and looked sad and dejected; but she said nothing, though Mrs. Darrent, being anxious to clear her in her own mind and before her neighbors, gave her several openings for explanation.

To her husband Mrs. Darrent said, sadly, on her return, "Can we have been mistaken?"

He answered, apparently wide of the mark, though his words had their own significance, "I should like to understand what it is that has come over James."

"It is true that he knew Mrs. Rosebay formerly?"

"He does not deny it; but he says very little—only I can see that something has moved him strongly. It seems like a sudden revulsion of feeling."

"He would not join the children yesterday," said Mrs. Darrent, musingly.

"He does not go out at all. He worked the whole of last night. Yesterday he consulted me about the possibility of getting out his work on the flora of South Africa six weeks earlier than he intended. You know I have taken on my shoulders the business part of the undertaking. It could be done; but