

What could Hannah say ? or would there be any good in saying it ? Can the experience of one heart teach another ? or must each find out the lesson for itself ? I fear so. Should she—as with the strange want of reticence which men sometimes exhibit much more than we women, he poured forth the anguish of his life—open to him that long hidden and now healed, though never-forgotten, woe of hers ? But no ! she could not. It was too sacred. All she found possible was gently to lead him back to their old subject of talk—common-place, practical things—the daily interests and duties by which, as a clergyman, he was necessarily surrounded and out of which he might take some comfort. She was sure he might if he chose ; she told him so.

“ Oh no,” he said bitterly. “ Comfort is vain. I am a broken-down man. I shall never be of any good to anybody ! But you will take care of my house and my child. Do just as you fancy. Have everything your own way.”

“ In one thing I should like to have at once my own way,” said she, rushing desperately upon a subject which she had been resolving on all the evening. “ I want to change rooms with baby.”

“ Why ? Is not yours comfortable ? Those horrid servants of mine ! I desired them to give you the pleasantest room in the house.”

“ So it is ; and for that very reason baby ought to have it. A delicate child like her should live in sunshine, physically and morally, all day long. The nursery only catches the sun for an hour in the day.”

“ How can you tell, when you have not been twelve hours in the house ?”

She touched the tiny compass which hung at her watch chain.

“ What a capital idea ! What a very sensible woman you must be.” And Mr. Rivers smiled—for the first time that evening. Miss Thelluson smiled too.

“ What would become of a governess if she were not sensible ? Then I may have my own way ?”

“ Of course ! Only—what shall I say to grandmamma ? She chose the nursery, and was quite content with it.”

“ Grandmamma is probably one of the old school, to whom light and air were quite unnecessary luxuries—say, rather annoyances.”

“ Yet the old school brought up their children to be as healthy as ours.”

“ Because they were probably stronger than ours : we have to pay for the errors of a prior generation ; or else the strong ones only lived, the weakly ones were killed off pretty fast. But I beg your pardon. You set me on my hobby—a governess’s hobby—the bringing-up of the new generation. Besides, you know the proverb about the perfectness of old bachelors’ wives and old maids’ children.”

“ You are not like an old maid, and still less like a governess.” He meant this for a compliment, but it was not accepted as such.

“ Nevertheless, I am both,” answered Miss Thelluson gravely ; “ nor am I ashamed of it either.”