painfully conscious of being at a disadvantage with you; but I wish I could persuade you to trust me as—as—a brother."

"To trust you, Mr. Charlewood? I do trust you."

"No, not as I would have you trust me. Mrs. Saxelby has told you that she confided to me your project of going on the stage?"

"Mamma did tell me so."

"I strongly urged her to dissuade you from that project."

"She also told me that.'

"And have you allowed yourself to be convinced?"

"Convinced! Mr. Charlewood, on most questions I would defer to your judgment, but not on this. I have a vivid recollection of my life in my uncle's family, and I say that they were good people—good, true, honest people, living a much higher and nobler life than this Mrs. Hatchett, for example, who scarcely ever speaks a true word, or smiles a true smile, or looks a true look, from morning to night."

"You speak harshly," said Clement, with a pained manner.

"I speak quite truly. I cannot judge the woman's heart. There may be motives, excuses—what do I know? But it is vain to frighten me with a bugbear, represented by such a woman as my Aunt Mary, and then bid me turn and admire Mrs. Hatchett."

"Your aunt, I have been led to understand, is an exceptional person."

"She is so, and so, I trust, is Mrs. Hatchett. But I do not believe that the profession people follow makes them either good or bad.'

"Dear Miss Earnshaw, you cannot know all the considerations that weigh against your scheme. A woman should shun publicity. At least, that is my idea."

"A woman should shun dishonesty, evil speaking, lying, and slandering. All these things are very rife in the privacy of my school life. But we will cease this discussion, if you please. I appreciate your good motive, Mr. Charlewood, and, if you will let me say so, I am very grateful to you for your friendship towards mamma. As to me, I suppose I have put myself out of the pale of your good graces. But I am not cold-hearted or ungrateful. Perhaps some day you may think better of me."

The moment's softening of the candid brow, the unlocking of the haughty lips from their scornful curve, the half-timid, half-playful look of appeal in her face as she uttered these words, had an irresistible charm for Clement. He leant his folded arms upon the table, and bending across it, until his hair nearly brushed the hand she held up to screen her face, whispered tremulously, "Mabel, I love you."

She turned upon him for a moment in the full blaze of the lamp a countenance so white, and lighted by such astonished eyes, that he was startled. Then the tide of crimson rushed over neck, cheek and brow, and she dropped her head upon her outspread hands, without a word.

"Mabel, Mabel," he said, "won't you speak to me? Have I offended? have I hurt you?"

Here Mrs. Saxelby, turning in her chair, opened her eyes for a moment, and said with great suavity, "I hope you are entertaining Mr. Charlewood, Mabel. Don't mind my closing my eyes; I can hear every word you say." And the next moment she gave utterance to the gentlest and most lady-like of snores.

"Mabel," said Clement, in a voice that trembled from the strong effort he was making to command himself, I beseech you to speak to me, or I shall think I have pained you beyond forgiveness."

Mabel slowly raised her face, which was now quite pale again, and looked at him; but she said no word, and her mouth seemed fixed into a frozen silence.

Clement rose from his chair, and coming round to where the sat, knelt on the ground beside her, close to the child who lay nestling at her feet.

"Mabel," he said, "I did not intend to speak to you so, and now. But the words I have said, however poorly uttered, are the truth. I love you with all my heart, so help me Heaven!"

She clasped her hands so tightly together, to press a slight plain ring she wore, deep into the soft flesh."

"I am very sorry," she said at last, with an effort.

"Very sorry! Oh, Mabel!"

He rose and covered his eyes with his hand for a moment.

"Very sorry! And I would give the world to make you happy."

"Pray, pray do not speak to me any more now. I cannot bear it."

"No, no. I will not distress you. I will be patient. I will wait. I have taken you by surprise and have been brusque and awkward. Do not give me your answer now. You will let me write to you, see you again. Only this one word more. Believe that I shall always, always be your friend—your dearest and closest friend on earth, if you will let me—but come what may, a faithful and devoted friend."

She had hidden her face in her hands once more, but he could see by the heaving of her breast that she was weeping.

"I do not ask you to speak to me, Mabel. But if you believe that I will be true to that promise, and if you trust me, give me your hand. I shall understand and shall be grateful. You won't refuse me so much, for old friendship's sake."

For the space of a minute she sat motionless, save for the sobs which shook her frame.

Then, without raising her head or looking up, she held out to him her little hand, all marked and dented by the pressure of her ring.

He took it very gently between both of his, and, bending over her, whispered, "God bless you, Mabel." And then there was silence between them.

When Mrs. Saxelby awoke at the jingling entrance of the tea-tray, she found that Clement had partially withdrawn the heavy curtains from the window, and was gazing out into the blackness of the night.

"Dear me," said Mrs. Saxelby, apologetically, "I beg a thousand pardons, Mr. Charlewood. I am afraid I have been dozing." The good lady had been wrapped in a profound slumber. "I'm so sorry, for I fear that dear Mabel has not been the liveliest companion in the world. Poor darling! She is tired and worn. I shall be so thankful when Easter comes, that she may get away from this place."

Then they had tea, and Dooley had to be aroused and wrapped up for his journey, and then it was time to go. They drove first to Mrs. Hatchett's, and set down Mabel.

Very little was said on the journey back to Hammerham, Mrs. Saxelby merely told Clement that she had given Mabel leave to write to her aunt, but nothing was decided on. Clement leaned back against the cushions of the railway carriage and mused. The day had been a disappointment. That was his predominant feeling. He had hoped, he scarcely knew what, from this little expedition, and now, everything looked very blank, very dreary.

Mabel stole quietly into the garret, already occupied by three tired little girls, and lying down in her poor bed, cried herself to sleep in the darkness.

THE LATE LORD PLUNKET.*

THE annals of Ireland are the most melancholy and depressing of all annals. They read as if a curse was laid upon her from her earliest connection with England to this hour. She is always struggling and insurrectionary, always looking forward to a constantly receding future, never prosperous, hopeful, or independent; and, worst of all, deriving no strength, no confidence, or substantial benefit of any kind—hardly a fair proportion of national glory—from the genius, eloquence, statesmanship, or heroic qualities of her sons. Moore represents the Genius of Erin weeping over the sad record.

> But, oh! how the tear in her eye-lids grew bright,
> When after whole pages of sorrow and shame,
> She saw History write,
> With a pencil of light
> That illum'd all the volumes, her Wellington's name

Yet who associates the name of Wellington, except incidentally, with Irish history? The hero of a hundred fights and his illustrious brother did much to consolidate the British empire and elevate the British name—little or nothing to raise the country of their birth. The same may be said of Burke, Sheridan, Goldsmith, Thomas Moore, and Swift, who, as Macaulay remarks, would have thought it an insult to have been called an Irishman. Their brilliant endowments were displayed on an alien soil, and their imperishable productions form part of an alien literature.

There was a period, however, in which a galaxy of Irish celebrities shone in and for Ireland: when she flung off her provincial fetters and rose up a nation · when her own Parliament and halls of justice rang with her own oratory, and the social circles of her metropolis glowed with wit and beauty of domestic growth, hardly inferior to that which about the same time clustered around Charles James Fox and Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire.

This Augustan era of Ireland was transitory as bright It lay between the Declaration of Independance in 1782 and the rebellion of 1798. It rose in splendour and it set in blood. Its brevity was beautifully shadowed forth by Grattan, when he exclaimed, 'The Parliament of Ireland: of that assembly I have a parental recollection I sate by her cradle, I followed her hearse.' He spoke of the free Parliament of Ireland which lasted till the Union, and the champions of free institutions will dwell with pride upon the fact, that her intellectual and material resources received their fullest development during the brief interval when the incubus of British supremacy was thrown off. Some of the principal illustrations of that Parliament were enumerated by Grattan on another memorable occasion. "The pamphlet (Lord Clare's) in its oblique censure and in its direct animadversion, disparages every great act and every distinguished character in this country for the last fifty years—Mr Malone, Lord Pery, the late Lord Shannon, the Duke of Leinster, the Ponsonbys, Mr Brownlow, Sir William Osborne, Mr. Burgh, Mr. Daly, Mr. Yelverton, Mr. Ogle, Mr. Flood, Mr Forbes, Lord Charlemont, and myself. I follow the author through the graves of those honourable dead men, for most of them are so, and I beg to raise up their tombstones as he throws them down. I find it more instructive to converse with their ashes than with his compositions."

If the vindication had not been limited to the subjects of the calumny, the list might have comprised many more whose memories the patriot orator would equally have rejoiced to dwell upon—Curran, Bushe, Burrowes, and, last not least, Plunket, the ablest of those who compassed the last grand object of Grattan's life, the emancipation of the Catholics, and the Irishman who did most to prolong the independence of his country and brighten the fading halo with which her short-lived freedom had surrounded her. No one who ever heard Plunket in the senate or the forum will talk lightly of Irish eloquence, or associate it with that school of which the late Charles Phillips was the popular type, till he settled down into an Old Bailey practitioner—a subsidence which provoked the remark that he had gone up like a rocket and come down like (not the stick but) a good useful tallow candle.

William Conyngham Plunket was the son of a Presbyterian clergyman, whose reputation as a preacher had caused him to be promoted from a provincial ministry to that of the first dissenting community of Dublin. His social position was high, and his opinion on the subject of oratory was so much valued and sought after, that a comfortable seat in the stranger's gallery of

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* *The Life, Letters, and Speeches of Lord Plunket.* By his grandson, the Hon. David Plunket. With an Introductory Preface by Lord Brougham.