

nothing required to make one's-self a great swell now-a-days except three possessions all metallic—gold, silver, and brass."

"How amusing!" said Pauline. "And yet," she suddenly added, with a swift shake of the head, "I'm sure it will never amuse *me*! No, Court, I have grown a very different person from the ignorant girl you once saw me!" She lowered her voice here, and regarded him with a tender yet impressive fixity. "When I look back upon it all now, and think how I used to rank the code of living which those people adopt as something that I must respect and even reverence, I can scarcely believe that the whole absurd comedy did not happen in some other planet. You don't know how much I've been through since you met me last. I'm not referring to my husband. It isn't pleasant for me to talk about *that* part of the past. I wouldn't say even this much to any one except you; but now that I have said it, I'll say more, and tell you that I endured a good deal of solid trial, solid humiliation, solid heart-burning. . . There, let us turn that page over, you and myself, and never exchange another word on the subject. You were perfectly right; the thing I did *was* horrible, and I've bought my yards of sackcloth, my bushels of ashes. If it were to do over again, I'd rather beg, starve, die in the very gutter. There's no exaggeration, here; I have grown to look on this human destiny of ours with such utterly changed vision—I've so broadened in a mental and a moral sense, that my very identity of the past seems as if it were something I'd moulted, like the old feathers of a bird. Feathers make a happy simile; I was lighter than a feather, then—as light as thistledown. I had no principles; I merely had caprices. I had no opinions of my own; other people's were handed to me and I blindly accepted them. My chief vice, which was vanity, I mistook for the virtue of self-respect, and kept it carefully polished, like a little pocket-mirror to look at one's face in. I was goaded by an actually sordid avarice, and I flattered myself that it was a healthy matrimonial ambition. I swung round in a petty orbit no larger than a saucer's rim, and imagined it to have the scope of a star's. I chattered gossip with fops of both sexes, and called it conversation. I bounced and panted through the German for two hours of a night, and declared it to be enjoyment. I climbed up to the summit of a glaring yellow-wheeled drag and sat beside some man whose limited wit was entirely engrossed by the feat of driving four horses at once, and because poor people stopped to sigh, and silly ones to envy, and sensible ones to pity, as we rumbled up the Avenue in brazen ostentation, I considered myself an elect and exceptional being. Of course I must have had some kind of a better nature lying comatose behind all this placid tolerance of frivolity. Otherwise the change never would have come; for the finest seed will fail if the soil is entirely barren."

"You have taken a new departure, with a vengeance," said Courtlandt. He spoke in his usual tranquil style. He considered the sketch Pauline had just drawn of her former self very exaggerated and prejudiced. He had his own idea of what she used to be. He was observing her with an excessive keenness of scrutiny, now, underneath his reposeful demeanour. But he aired none of his contradictory beliefs. It is possible that he had never had a downright argument with any fellow-creature in his life. Somehow the brief sentence which he had just spoken produced the impression of his having said a great deal more than this. It was always thus with the man; by reason of some unique value in his silence any terse variation of it took a reflected worth.

Pauline's hands were folded in her lap; she was looking down at them with a musing air. She continued to speak without lifting her gaze. "Yes," she went on, "the reformatory impulse must have been latent all that time. I can't tell just what quickened it into its present activity. But I am sure, now, that it will last as long as I do."

"What are the wonders it is going to accomplish?"

"Don't satirize it," she exclaimed, looking up at him with a start. "It is a power for good."

"I hope so," he said.

"I know so! Courtlandt, I've come back home to live after my own fashion. I've come back with an idea, a theory. Of course a good many people will laugh at me. I expect a certain amount of ridicule. But I shall despise it so heartily that it will not make me swerve a single inch. I intend to be very social—yes, enormously so. My drawing-rooms shall be the resort of as many friends as I can bring together—but all of a certain kind."

"Pray, of what kind?"

"You shall soon see. They are to be men and women of intellectual calibre; they are to be workers and not drones; they are to be thinkers, writers, artists, poets, scholars. They can come, if they please, in abnormal coats and unconventional gowns; I shan't care for that. They can be as poor as church-mice, as unsuccessful as talent nearly always is, as quaint

in manner as genius incessantly shows itself." Here Pauline rose, and made a few eloquent little gestures with both hands, while she moved about the room in a way that suggested the hostess receiving imaginary guests. "I mean to organize a *salon*," she continued—"a veritable *salon*. I mean to wage a vigorous crusade against the aimless flippancy of modern society. I've an enthusiasm for my new undertaking. Wait till you see how valiantly I shall carry it out."

"Am I to understand," said Courtlandt, without the vestige of a smile, "that you mean to begin by cutting all your former friends?"

She glanced at him as if with a suspicion of further satire. But his sedate mien appeared to re-assure her. "Cutting them?" she repeated. "No; of course not."

"But you will not invite them to your *salon*?"

She tossed her head again. "They would be quite out of place there. They are not in earnest about anything. Everybody whom I shall have must be in earnest. I intend to lay great stress upon that one requirement. It is to be a passport of admission. My apartments are to be at once easy and difficult of entrance. I shall not object to the so-called aristocratic class, although if any applicant shall solicit my notice who is undoubtedly a member of this class, I shall in a certain way hold the fact as disqualifying; it shall be remembered against him; if I admit him at all I shall do so in spite of it and not because of it. . . Is my meaning quite clear on this point?"

"Oh, excessively," said Courtlandt; "you could not have made it more so. All ladies and gentlemen are to be received under protest."

He let one of his odd, rare laughs go with the last sentence, and for this reason Pauline merely gave him a magnificent frown instead of visiting upon him more wrathful reprimand. At the same time she said:—"It's a subject, Court, on which I am unprepared for trivial levity. If you can't treat it with respect I prefer that you should warn me in time, and I will reserve all further explanations on my project."

He gave a slight, ambiguous cough. "If I seem disrespectful you must lay it to my ignorance."

"I should be inclined to do that without your previous instructions." Here she regarded him with a commiseration that he thought delicious; it was so palpably genuine; she so grandly overlooked the solemn roguery that ambuscaded itself behind his humility.

(To be continued.)

## READINGS FROM NEW BOOKS.

A PARISH PRIEST.

FATHER PETER MORRISSEY was considered a lucky man when he succeeded in obtaining the parish of Kilnasclap. The parish is large and the income proportionate. The river that runs its rapid course through the "scalp" or ravine, from which the ruined church close by takes its name, affords excellent sport for the fishermen, and the surrounding plains have been the scene of many a hard run course. Father Morrissey had not been installed in the parish for more than a year when he announced that the chapel was too small for the congregation, and called for the subscriptions of the faithful towards the erection of a new building that would not be a disgrace to the parish. Appeals published at home and abroad were assisted by a lottery, in which the principal prize was a pony phaeton and a pair of ponies or £100. Tens of thousands of tickets at sixpence each were sold; and the small and unpretending whitewashed chapel, outside which, in sunshine or rain, knelt scores of people every Sunday who could not gain admission by reason of the closely packed crowd within, has been replaced by a large and handsome structure of hammered stone; while a comfortable glebe-house close by affords more ample accommodation than the modest two rooms in a farmhouse heretofore occupied by the parish priest.

Father Morrissey's education has not been conducive to breadth of view. As a boy, sitting by the fireside in his father's farmhouse, he listened to stories of the days of the cruel penal laws or joined in cursing the memory of the brutal yeomanry, whose atrocities preceded the rebellion of '98. He heard extracts read from the *Nation* and ballads sung, all having for their burden the baseness of England, the slavery of Ireland, and the glory of revolution. Brought up on such literary pabulum he entered the college of St. Patrick, at Maynooth, where, amid 500 divinity students of the same class, he passed through his classical and theological studies, and emerged to enter the priesthood with every prejudice of his boyhood strengthened: profoundly ignorant of the world or its political systems, regarding the Church as the divine source of all human power, and himself as the repository of no small portion of her infallibility.

Allocated to a parish he loudly assured the people that in him they had a champion whose tongue and pen would more worthily and effectively secure their interest than would the soft words of their parish priest. The affairs of the surrounding properties were closely watched and the walls of Ballintemple chapel resounded to denunciations of various people for various shortcomings. When Mr. Taylor threatened to evict Michael Garvey who owed four years' rent, Father Halloran, an old friend of the land-