

"All right! And if not, you can have a special. Money's no object."

"Moxon, I always thought you were rather a well-meaning fellow; but it strikes me that you've not got much feeling in this matter."

"I always thought you were a man of sense; but it strikes me that you're going to make an ass of yourself."

"Do you want to quarrel with me?" says Muiraven grandly, as he steps opposite to his friend.

"Not in the least, my dear fellow; but if anything could make us quarrel, it would be to see you acting with so little forethought."

"Ah, Moxon, you don't know what it is to—"

"To be the father of a charming child," no; but if I were, I am sure I should feel seeing him till to-morrow."

"Gentlemen, have you left off saying your A B C?" demands old Walmsley, as he puts his head in again at the door.

"My dear, sir, I am so much obliged to you," exclaims Muiraven, seizing his hand with unnecessary warmth.

"I am rejoiced to hear it, my Lord; but what for?"

"For telling me Mrs. Mordaunt's address."

"I'm sure I never told you that. It's against all my principles to betray a client's confidence."

"But for slamming the door in that delightful manner. It comes to the same thing, you know. Cocklebury in Hampshire. There can't be two Cockleburys. And now I must be off to see if I can get a train down there to-night."

"I can satisfy you on that point, my Lord. No train stopping at the nearest station to Cocklebury leaves town after two o'clock."

"The devil!" says Muiraven.

"Come, Muiraven, be reasonable. Keep your appointment with Cray this evening, and don't think of leaving London till to-morrow."

"He can't do it," interposes the solicitor drily.

"He is equal to anything: he will bestride a forty-horse power bicycle if I don't prevent him," replies Moxon, laughing.

But Muiraven does not laugh. All the light seems to have faded out of his face.

"You are right, Moxon," he says gloomily.

"Take me home, and do what you will with me. I am worse than a child."

Old Walmsley sees them go with a sly chuckle and a rub of the hands.

"Hope I haven't departed from my principles," he thinks to himself; "but I couldn't have sent him away without it. Poor young thing. How it will brighten up her dull life to see him. And if it should come right at last—and it looks very much to me as if it were coming right—why—why, I hope they'll let me draw up the settlements—that's all."

Joel Cray's untutored mind is vastly astonished by the reception which he receives at Lord Muiraven's hands that evening.

"I hope you understand perfectly," says his host, when, after considerable difficulty, he has induced the rough creature to take a chair and sit down beside him, "that I had no idea but that my wife had left me with another man, else I should have advertised openly for her, or set the detective officers to find out her address. But feared that discovery would only lead to an exposure of my own dishonor, and preferred the silent, solitary life I have adhered to since. Could I have known that Myra was still true to me, I would have risked everything to place her in the position she had a right to claim."

"She was true to you, sir, and no mistake; for I don't mind a-telling you now, that I tried hard to make her my wife; but 'twasn't of no good. She always stuck to it that she couldn't forget you; and till strength failed her, she was on her feet a-tramping after you."

"Whilst I was out of the country, trying to forget the disgrace which I thought attached to me. Poor Myra!"

"She's dead and done with, sir. It's no use our a-pipin' nor a-quarrellin' over her any more."

"You speak very sensibly, Cray; but at the same time, I am anxious to show you that I regret the past, and should like to make some amends for it, if possible. I cannot let any of Myra's relations want. You tell me you are going back to Priestley. What do you do there?"

"I'm a day laborer, sir—my Lord, I mean," with a touch of his hair.

"And your mother?"

"She takes in washin', my Lord, and has five little 'uns to keep on it."

"It is those five little ones I wish to help her and you to maintain; so I've placed with my friend here, Mr. Moxon, who is a lawyer, two thousand pounds to be disposed of as you may think best; either placed in the bank to your credit, or laid out in the purchase of land, or in any way that may most conduce to your comfort."

"Two—thousand—pounds!" repeats Joel, with drawn-out incredulous wonder, as he rises from his chair.

"Yes! that will bring you in about sixty pounds a year; or if you expend it in a little farm—"

"Two—thousand—pounds!" reiterates the laborer slowly, "it ain't true, sir, surely?"

"I would not deceive you, Cray. I give it you, not as compensation for your cousin's blighted life, remember, but as a token that if I could I would have prevented her unhappiness. I loved her, Cray; didn't marry her to desert her. She deserted me."

Joel's dirty, horny hand comes forth, timidly, but steadily, to meet Muiraven's.

"May I do it, sir? God bless you for them words. They're more than all the money to me. And if the poor gal can hear them too, I believe heaven looks the brighter to her. You're very good, sir. I ask your pardon humbly for all my bad thoughts towards you, and I hope as you'll get a good wife and a true wife yet. That'll be neither shame nor blame to you."

"Thank you, Cray. I hope before long you'll do the same, and teach your children that gentlemen have hearts sometimes as well as poorer men. I shall always take an interest in you and your doing, and my friend here will see that the money I spoke of is handed over to you as soon as you are ready to receive it."

"I don't know about the marrying, my Lord," says Joel sheepishly, "for it seems a troublesome business at the best to me; but there'll be plenty of prayers going up for you from Priestley, and the worst I wish for you is that they may bring you all the luck you deserve."

"And to think," he continues to himself as he returns to his own home, "that that there's the chap I swore by my poor gal's grave to bring to judgment for her wrongs!"

The eleven o'clock train next day takes Muiraven down to the nearest town to Cocklebury. All by himself: he has positively refused to travel any more in Moxon's company. Two hours bring him to the place; but there is no hotel there, only an old-fashioned inn, with raftered ceilings and diamond-shaped windows, called "The Coach and Horses," where our hero is compelled to put up and dine, whilst he sends a messenger over to Cocklebury. He has not come down unarmed, for he sat up late last night, writing a long detailed account to Mrs. Mordaunt of his early marriage and his wife's identity, so that the worst may be over before he and Irene meet again. And this letter, which winds up with an entreaty that he may go over at once to Cocklebury to see and claim his child, he despatches as soon as possible to Irene's residence, striving meanwhile to beguile his impatience by an attempt to masticate the freshly-killed beef which the landlady of the "Coach and Horses" places before him, and which only results to its emptying the flask of cognac he has brought with him, and walking up and down the cold, musty-smelling, unused town, until he has nearly worked himself into a fever with impatience and suspense. How he pictures her feelings on opening that important packet! She will shed a few tears, perhaps, at first, poor darling, to learn he has ever stood in so close a relationship to any other woman; but they will soon dry up beneath the feverish delight with which she will recognise the truth that he is once more free—that they are both free, to love and comfort one another. Ah! that he could but be on the spot to comfort her now! What is this fool of a messenger about not to return? It is not half a mile to Cocklebury! Why did he not go himself?

Peace! patience! He knows that he has done what is most right and proper in sending an avant-courier to apprise her of his coming; and it will not—it cannot be long before he holds her in his arms again.

In his arms! God of heaven! how they tremble at the thought—in his arms!—that have seemed so many times to fold her sweet self against his heart, and closed upon the empty air instead! In his arms! His darling—his Irene—the one love of his life! He will kiss away her tears; he will pour his protestations of fidelity in her ear—he will have the right now to explain everything—to atone for everything—to offer her the rest of his existence for reparation for the past! And she—his injured angel—his dear, suffering martyr—what a vista of happiness will open out before her!—what—Hark! what is that? A tap at the door.

"Come in! come in!"

His messenger has returned: the landlady appears before him holding forth an envelope.

"Give it me—at once!" He tears it from her hand impetuously, and she says afterwards, with some degree of umbrage, that the gentleman looked more like a hungry wolf at her than a man who had had his dinner at the "Coach and Horses."

The room is dark and gloomy. He takes the precious letter to the window; his hand shakes, so that he can scarcely open it. At last! yes, it is her dear writing. Before he reads it, he presses kisses on the senseless paper:

"MY DEAR LORD MUIRAVEN,

"I have received your letter. I need not tell you that its contents were a great surprise to me. I was aware, from certain papers belonging to his mother, and confided to me after her death, that my adopted child was your son; but I was little prepared to hear that he had been born in wedlock. For his sake, I sincerely rejoice that it should be so. I can fully enter into your natural anxiety to claim and acknowledge him, and I will send him to you with as little delay as possible. But you must forgive me for declining your kind offer to visit me here, for I have literally seen no one since my dear husband's death, and feel quite unequal to the task of receiving visitors. If you will be so good as to let me know how and when Tommy is to join you, I will be careful to see your wishes are attended to."

"Believe me yours sincerely,  
"IRENE MORDAUNT."

She will not see him—will not receive him at her house. What devil's charm is again at work to circumvent their meeting?

(To be continued.)

## SPRING MEMORIES.

BY J. SUSANNA.

Unclose the gate with gentle touch,  
And lightly tread the fragrant ground—  
The stillness of the wood is such  
I fear to break it with a sound.  
It seems to me these temples wide  
By silence best are sanctified.

Since one who walked these paths with me,  
And learned with me their Spring-tide lore  
Of swelling bud and waving tree,  
Hath passed from earth for evermore,  
I cannot see the young leaves wave,  
And quite forget that wayside grave.

But just as bright the violets blow,  
And just as sweetly sing the birds,  
As when we wandered long ago,  
And felt our joy too deep for words;  
Since then as vainly have I sought  
To tell the grief the hours have brought.

The bounteous fulness of the Spring  
Had thrilled our hearts with gratitude;  
And when the South wind's whispering  
Flowed through the silence of the wood,  
The happy tears stood in our eyes—  
Earth seemed so like to Paradise.

But even then man's fatal thirst  
For knowledge dimmed that hour of bliss;  
His words—"Which of us will be first  
To gain a fairer world than this?"—  
Cold on the happy silence fell  
As echoes of a distant knell.

And so it was that, ere the Spring  
Had waked again the sleeping flowers,  
He had the summons from the King  
To know a sweeter Spring than ours,  
And, entering on the joys above,  
To feel no loss of human love.

'Twas I who felt it—I whose feet  
Were faint—whose heart was sick with tears—  
Who could not pray for strength to meet  
The looming burden of the years.  
Still to my soul these memories cling,  
New waked by every dawning Spring!

## JENNIE'S LIFE-LESSON.

"I've made my choice, auntie; what do you say to it?"

Mrs. Maltravers looked at her niece, who sat before her writing-desk with a couple of open letters in her hand.

"That depends upon which of the two you have chosen," she replied.

"Why, Ralph, of course," laughed Jennie.

The lady looked serious.

"I am sorry, Jennie," she said. "You're not suited to be a poor man's wife; you are too proud, too fond of your own ease and comfort. You had better have followed my advice and accepted John Parker."

Jennie shook her head, showering the golden ringlets in bright confusion over her white temples.

"No, auntie, no! I wouldn't marry John Parker if he were ten times richer than he is, and I'm going to send back his diamonds."

She closed the casket as she spoke, with one last, longing glance at the gleaming stones.

"They are lovely," she sighed; "how I would like to wear them to-night."

Her aunt crossed the room, and smoothed the girl's bright hair as she said—

"You're a little silly, Jennie. You covet Mr. Parker's diamonds—why not accept them, and shine resplendent to-night?"

But Jennie shook her curls with redoubled decision.

"Because I love Ralph, auntie, and would sooner wear this poor little rose of his than to own the queen's jewels."

The fair matron's cold eyes softened as she looked down upon the blushing girl; and she turned to the open casement with a dreamy, far-away look, her memory going back to her own girlhood, and some sweet dream that made it bright. But Mrs. Maltravers had sacrificed her love on the altar of Mammon, and she held it worse than folly to indulge in any such foolish regrets.

"I have always said, Jennie," she continued gravely, "that I would let you have your own choice in regard to marriage. But think well of this. Mr. Hilliard is poor. As his wife you will be subject to all manner of privation, forced to live in a vulgar, common way, to pinch, and stint, and economise, and that won't suit a girl raised as you have been. You love wealth and luxury, and display. You worship costly jewels and beautiful apparel, and John Parker can give you all these, Ralph Hilliard cannot. Think it all over before you make your decision."

"My decision is already made," responded Jennie resolutely. "I shall send back Mr. Parker's diamonds and wear Ralph's poor little rose to-night."

She took up the half-blown bud and set it in a vase, a warm, tender light in her young eyes. Ralph's letter lay open before her. A manly, straightforward declaration of love, an offer of his heart and hand, a true heart, a strong hand, willing to shield her and work for her for ever. If she favored his suit, she was to wear the white rosebud at her birthnight ball that night.

"Yes, I'll wear it," she murmured, as she folded the letter and put it in her pocket, "and, aunt, you'll oblige me by sending a servant to Palace Hill with Mr. Parker's diamonds."

"Very well, my love," and with a stately rustle of her costly silk Mrs. Maltravers swept from the room. Jennie ran for her maid and made ready for her birthnight ball in hot haste; and when Ralph Hilliard entered the glittering drawing-room that night he was transported to the third heaven of delight by seeing his rosebud amid her yellow ringlets.

A few months later they were married, and started on their honeymoon as nappy and hopeful a couple as the sun ever shone on.

Ralph was a lawyer by profession, and also equal to any undertaking, at least in his own brave determination; consequently he felt little or no concern in regard to his young wife's future. He meant to work so hard, and achieve such wonderful things; and as for Jennie herself, she was all enthusiasm—never was woman such a helpmate as she would be.

For the first six months they got on bravely—not that Ralph made any great progress in his profession—but he had some little money in hand, and they rented as pretty a cottage as could be had and Jennie kept a cook and chambermaid, and wore the pretty clothes with which her aunt had provided her, and looked upon marrying a poor man as one of the most delicious things imaginable.

But in course of time funds began to run low, and Ralph saw that it was time to look around him. They gave up the cottage and took rooms in the city; still Ralph could find nothing to do, and they wandered from place to place till the last pound was expended, and Jennie's wardrobe was sorely in need of being replenished. Just then a baby came, a wee, dimpled girl, with a face like a rose-bud. Ralph was the happiest man alive.

"Never fear, Jennie," he said bravely; "let law go to the dogs; I'll take my saw and plane; they'll bring us bread at last."

He went to work like a man, coming home at night with a glow in his handsome eyes that ought to have rewarded Jennie for every privation she suffered; but she had been tenderly raised, and her tastes were luxurious. She wanted a fine house and fine apparel for herself and baby, and it hurt her pride to see her husband brought down to the level of a common laborer. All these things vexed her, till she grew moody and discontented. The wild-rose bloom faded from her cheeks, she got to be careless about her household matters, and slovenly and untidy in her dress.

When Ralph came home, instead of the shining fireside and smiling wife that had once welcomed him, he found a disorderly house, and a gloomy, slatternly woman, but never a complaint did the poor fellow utter. Jennie was ill, he argued—overworked, poor thing—he must try and do better for her, and he made his hammer ring with redoubled energy.

The second autumn after baby's birth they journeyed to various places in search of work. They had a snug home and an efficient girl, but Jennie's discontent grew more apparent day by day. The place and people were so unrefined, it was cruel in Ralph to bring her there she said; she wanted to be back at her old home amid her own friends.

Ralph said never a word, but the warm glow faded from his eyes, and they wore a look of wistful regret that was piteous to see; but he worked all the harder, as if to conquer fortune by the power of his sturdy strokes.

One day, late in autumn, a dreary, rainy day, matters came to a crisis. Margie, the servant, fell ill, and all the household work fell upon Jennie's hands. Ralph did all he could to help her.

"You won't have occasion to go outside the house, Jennie, dear," he said, on starting, "and I'll be home early."

Jennie was pouring out some tea for Margie, and baby catching at her frock, caused her to spill it. The mishap increased her impatience.

"Oh, it don't matter," she replied crossly; "I've got to work myself to death anyhow, and I may as well do it outside as in."

Ralph made no answer, but his brown eyes were full of unshed tears as he went out. Jennie felt that she had made an unwomanly answer the instant the words escaped her lips, but it only served to increase her vexation.

Everything she put her hands to seemed to go wrong with her. Margie grew worse, and baby was unusually active and troublesome; and in addition, the wailing easterly wind whistled down the chimney, and filled the room with smoke and ashes.

Jennie threw down her broom and duster in despair, and in the midst of her untidy room, in her slovenly attire, she burst into hysterical weeping. Baby toddled to her side, and essayed to climb into her lap, but she pushed her crossly away.

"Oh, go away, you troublesome little thing; I'm tired enough without having you hanging round me."

Thus repulsed, little Birdie wandered off, and