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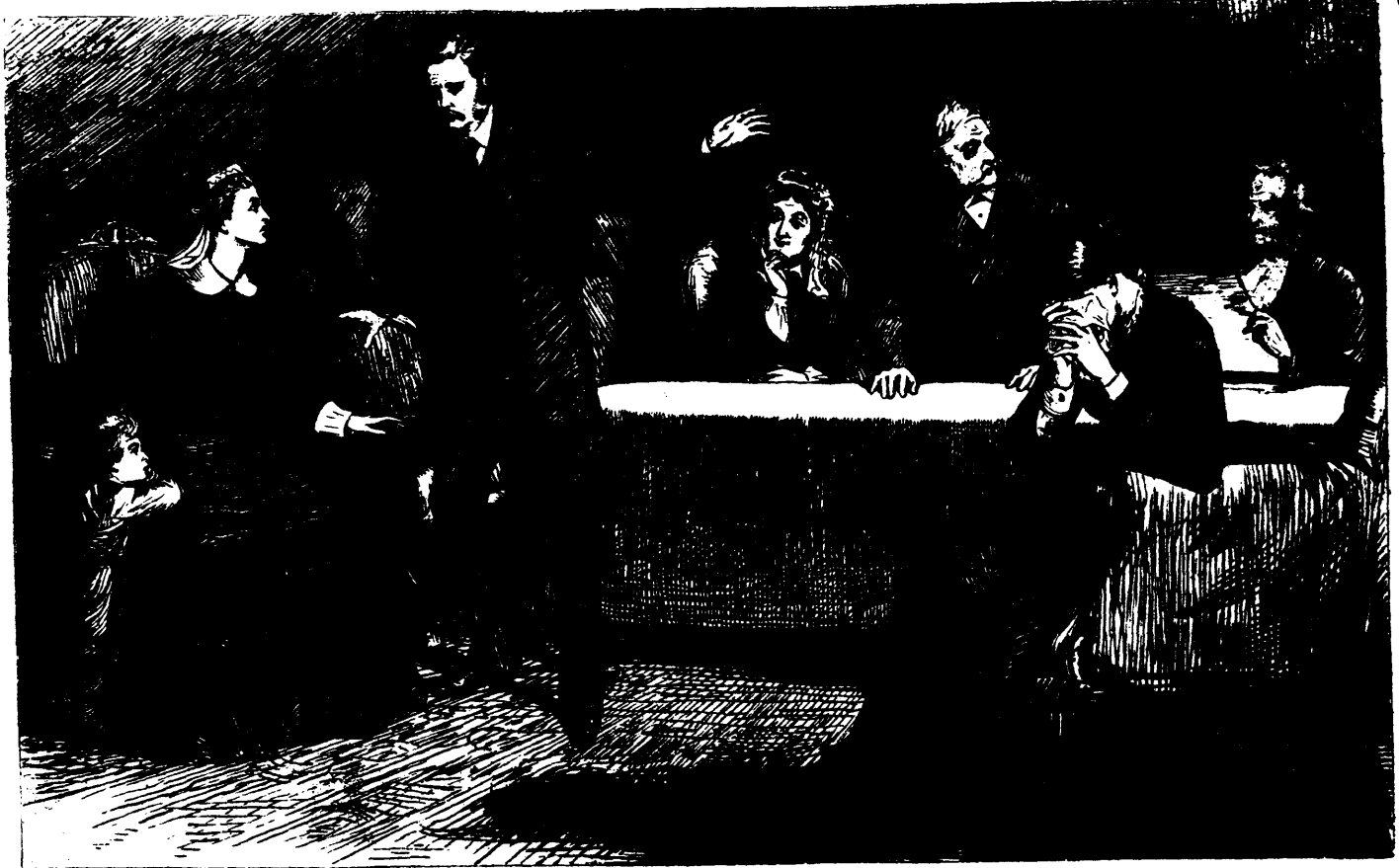
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CENTS

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"I WON'T BELIEVE IT," HE MUTTERS AS HE STAGGERS BACKWARDS."

"NO INTENTIONS."

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT.

Author of "Love's Conflict," "Veronique," etc.

CHAPTER XI.

The words which have struck him to the ground are these:

MY DEAR
has decided me
which has given me
it is very painful to
to it before you, but I
You have taken a great
called Tommy Brown, and

discover who is his father to let him know of the boy's will you say if I tell you he is your own child. Do not condemn you without proof my possession, contain your his mother—your photograph your hair so that I cannot be taken. I love the dear child as he is my own, and it would break to part with him so you may it costs me to make this known since he belongs to you I feel right to him. In the old days I

And here the letter, which is but a fragment of one of the many epistles which Irene commenced to Lord Murraven, and then, in her uncertainty, tore up again, comes to an abrupt conclusion.

It lies upon the desk before him, but he has not the courage to lift his eyes and look at it again, nor is there need, for every word is lithographed upon his brain in characters that nothing in this life will have the power to efface.

Colonel Mordaunt has received his death blow.

And so the wretched man lies where he has fallen, across his study table, and, regardless of the sweet sights and sounds with which the summer evening has environed him, suffers himself to be led forth by that relentless guide, Suspicion, into the dark mysterious Past, and loses Hope at every footstep of the way.

It is true then—he has been fighting the good fight of faith in her innocence and purity in vain. Quekett is right, and he is wrong. His wife and Lord Murraven have not only met before, but there is a secret understanding between them relative to her adopted child. And why has not he also been admitted to her confidence?

He tries to remember all the incidents that took place at the time of Myra Cray's death and the boy's admission to Fen Court; and he cannot satisfy his own mind that Irene did not intentionally deceive him. How astonished was every one who knew her at the unusual interest she took in that child's welfare—how distressed she was at the idea of not being allowed to succour him—how she has clung to and indulged and petted him ever since he has been in her possession! What other poor children has Irene been thus partial to? What anxiety does she now evince at the fate of many other little ones left in the same predicament? She knew the boy belonged to Lord Murraven all the while; and yet she declared at the time of the Glottonbury ball that she had never met him!

God! is it possible that this creature, whom he has almost worshipped for her saint-like purity and truth, can be a mass of deceit—a whitened sepulchre—fair to the view without, but inside nothing but rottenness and dead men's bones?

He writhes upon his seat as the idea occurs to him. And yet upon its impulse his thoughts go hurrying madly back into the Past, tripping each other up upon the way; but collecting, as they go, a mass of evidence that appals him. What!—what in Heaven's name was it that her mother said so long ago in Brussels, about Irene having had a disappointment which compelled her to bring her abroad—about some scoundrel who deceived her, and had broken down her health?

What scoundrel? What disappointment? How much or how little do women mean when they use such ambiguous terms as those? And then Irene herself—did she not confirm her mother's statement, and refuse altogether to marry him until—Ah! what was the reason that made her change her mind so suddenly at the last? Is this another devil sprung up to torture him? Yet she seemed happy enough



after he brought her home, until the child came here. Was the child always here? Was it in Priestley when Irene came, or did it follow her? Poor Colonel Mordaunt's head is becoming so confused that he can think of nothing collectedly; but all the events of his married life are being shaken up together like the pieces of coloured glass in a kaleidoscope, and working in inextricable confusion in his seething brain.

But he is sure of one thing. His wife told him Lord Mulraven was a stranger to her, and yet she writes him private letters concerning this child of his and Myra Cray's. But did the boy belong to Myra Cray? Quekett has discovered the truth in one instance: may she not have done so in the other? He raises his head slowly and sorrowfully, and drawing a long breath, reads through the fragmentary witness to Irene's deception once again.

Heavens! how the faint colour deserts his cheek, and his eyes rivet themselves upon the last line but four, where the words, "he is my own," stand out with fatal perspicuity and want of meaning, except to his distempered vision. He has read the letter over several times already, but his sight and understanding were blurred the while with an undefined dread of what it might reveal to him; and he was unable to do more than read it. But now it seems as though the scales had all at once fallen from his eyes, and he sees men, not "as trees walking," but in their own naked and misshapen humanity. He sees, or thinks he sees it, and rises tottering from his chair with twenty years added to his life, to hide with trembling hands the fatal witness to his wife's degradation in the deepest drawer of his private escritoire. He feels assured that he is not mistaken. He believes now as completely in her guilt as he once did in her innocence; but for the sake of the love however feigned, she has shown him, and the duty she has faithfully performed, no eye, beside his own, shall henceforward rest upon these proofs of her indiscretion. The shock once over, memories of Irene's goodness and patience and affection for himself come crowding in upon his mind, until, between grief and gratitude, it is reduced to a state of the most maudlin pathos.

"Poor child! poor unhappy, misguided child," he thinks at one moment, "without a friend to guide her actions, and her own mother her accomplice in deceit; what else could one expect from her than that she should eagerly embrace the first opportunity that presented itself for escape from the dangers with which error had surrounded her? But to deceive me, who would have laid down my life to redeem her: to accept the most valuable gift my heart was capable of offering—the pent-up affections of a lifetime, only to squander and cast it on one side! And yet—God bless her—she never did so. She has been tender and considerate in all her dealings with me, and would have warded off this terrible discovery, even at the expense of incurring my displeasure. Why else should she have shown such remarkable distaste to the idea of that man being located here?"

"Yet," his evil genius whispers to him, "her objections may have been prompted only by the instinct which dictates self-preservation. This letter proves now easily it comes to her to address him in terms of familiarity. And the child too!"

"Good God! if I think of it any longer I shall go mad. What can I do? What can I say? Shall I go straight to her with this letter in my hand, and accuse her of a crime—too horrible to think of in connection with my wife—and see her look of terror and dismay—to be followed, perhaps, by a bold denial—more sin, more guilt upon her poor young head—or by avowal and separation; and for the rest of my days—solitude, and hers—disgrace, with his off-spring on her bosom? Oh! no! no!—the happiness of my life is ended—but the deed is done. No accusation, no reproach can mend it—it must remain as it is now—for ever; and I—heaven pity my weakness—but I cannot live without her. Oh, Irene! Irene!" in a rush of unquerable tenderness, "my darling, my treasure would to God that the joy of possessing you had killed me before I had learnt that you never were mine! But you are mine—you shall be mine—no one shall take you from me! I—I—" and here Philip Mordaunt's reflections culminate in a burst of bitter tears that shake his manhood to the core, and a resolution that how ever much he may suffer, Irene's shameful secret shall be looked within the recesses of his own breast.

He will prevent her ever meeting Lord Mulraven again. He may in time, perhaps, effect a severance between her and the child, but she shall never hear from his lips that he has arrived at a knowledge of the truth she had sinned so deeply to conceal from him.

This is the most impolitic resolution which Colonel Mordaunt could register. It is always impolitic for friends who have a grudge against each other to preserve silence on the subject, instead of frankly stating their grievance and affording an opportunity for redress; and impolicy between husband and wife, is little short of madness. Did Colonel Mordaunt at this juncture go to Irene and overwhelm her with the reproaches which he naturally feels, he would receive in answer a full and free confession which would set his mind at rest for ever. But he has not sufficient faith in her to do so. He has too humble an opinion of himself and his powers of traction, and is too ready to believe his incapacity to win a woman's love, to think it possible that he could ever hold his own against such a man as Mulraven, or even be able to claim sympathy in his disappointment. So, in his pride and misery, he resolves that he

will suffer in silence; and the unnatural constraint which he is thus forced to put upon himself eats like a canker into his loving, honest soul, and kills it. The change is not all at once apparent; but from the hour Colonel Mordaunt leaves his study on that fatal evening, he is another man from what he has been. Irene, indeed, is much astonished, when on inquiring later, why her husband does not join her in the drawing-room, she hears that, without a word of warning, he has retired to rest; still more so, when, on seeking his bedside to know if he is ill, or if she can do anything for him, she receives no sort of explanation of his unusual conduct, and the very shortest answers to her expressions of surprise and sympathy. But after the first brief feeling of vexation, she does not think much more about it; for Philip's temper has not always been equitable of late, and Irene is beginning to take into consideration the fact that her husband is much older than herself, and cannot be expected to be always ready to enter into the spirit of her younger moods and fancies; so, with a little sigh, she goes downstairs again, and, in the absorbing interest of planning and outfitting out master Tommy's first suit of knickerbockers, has soon forgotten all about it. In a few weeks, however, the alteration in her husband's demeanor is palpable enough, and accompanied by such a visible falling-off in outward appearance, that Irene at first ascribes it entirely to want of health. She cannot imagine that she has done anything to offend him; and so entertains him pathetically to see a doctor. But Colonel Mordaunt is roughly obstinate whenever the subject is mentioned, and curtly informs his wife that she knows nothing at all about it, and bids her hold her tongue. Still, he has no appetite and strangely variable spirits. Irene sees his health is falling, and sometimes, from his unaccountable manner towards herself, she almost fears his brain must be affected. She becomes thoroughly alarmed, and longs for the presence of Oliver Ralston at Fen Court, that she may have an opportunity of confiding her suspicions to him, and asking his advice about them. But Oliver is working valiantly at his profession, as assistant to a surgeon in a country village miles away from Leicestershire; and, thanks to his own poverty and Mrs. Quekett's continued influence over his uncle, there is little chance of his visiting the Court again for some time to come. So Irene is reduced to confide in Isabella; but though Miss Mordaunt sees the change, she dares not acknowledge it.

"Oh dear, Mrs. Mordaunt, is it really so? Well, perhaps—but yet I should hardly like to say—and is it wise to notice it?—the toothache is a distressing complaint, you know—no! I never heard that Philip had the toothache; but still I think it so much better to leave these things to mend themselves."

So the spring and summer days drag themselves away, and Irene finds herself thrusts farther and farther from her husband's confidence and affection, and growing almost accustomed to its being so. His loves for her at this time is shown by strange fits and starts. Sometimes he hardly opens his lips for days together, either at meals or when they are alone; at others he will lavish on her passionate caresses that burn at the moment, but seem to leave no warmth behind them. But one thing she sees always. However little her husband cared for her adopted child in the olden days, he never notices him now, except it be to order him out of the way in the same tone of voice that he would use to a dog. For this reason Irene attributes his altered mood in a great measure to the effect of jealousy (which she has heard some men exhibit to the verge of insanity), and, with her usual tact, keeps Tommy as much out of his sight as possible. She institutes a day nursery somewhere at the top of the house, and a playground where the boy can neither be seen nor heard; and lets him take his meals and walks with Phoebe, and visits him almost by stealth, and as if she were committing some evil by the act. It is a sacrifice on her part, but, although she faithfully adheres to it, it does not bring the satisfaction which she hoped for; it makes no difference in the distance which is kept up between her husband's heart and hers.

She follows Colonel Mordaunt's form about the rooms with wistful, anxious eyes, that implore him to break down the barriers between them, and be once more what he used to be; but the appeal is made in vain. Her health, too, then commences to give way. There is no such foe to bloom and beauty as a hopeless longing for sympathy which is unattended to; and Irene grows pale and thin and miserable looking. At last she feels that she can bear the solitude and the suspense no longer. June, July, and August have passed away in weary expectation of relief. Mulraven is in India, Oliver at Seamount. She looks around her, and can find no friend to whom she can tell her distress. One night she has gone to bed in more than usually bad spirits, and laid awake thinking of the sad change that has come over her married life, and crying quietly as she speculates upon the cause. She hears Isabella stealing upstairs, as though at every step she were asking pardon of the ground for presuming to tread upon it; and Mrs. Quekett (of whom the poor child can scarcely think without a shudder, so truly does she in some occult manner connect her present unhappiness with the housekeeper's malignant influence) clumping ponderously, as if the world itself were honored by her patronage; and the maids seeking the upper stories, and joking about the menservants as they go; and then all is silent and profoundly still, and the stable clock strikes the hour of midnight, and yet her husband does not join her. Irene knows where he

is; she can picture him to herself—sitting all alone in his study, poring over his accounts, and stopping every other minute to pass his hand wearily across his brow and heave a deep sigh that seems to tear his very heart-strings. Why is it so? Why has she let all this go on so long? Why should she let it last one moment longer? If she has done wrong, she will ask his forgiveness; if he has heard tales against her, she will explain them all away. There is nothing stands between them except her pride, and she will sacrifice it for his sake—for the sake of her dear old husband, who has always been so kind to her until this miserable, mysterious cloud rose up between them. Irene is a creature of impulse, and no sooner has her good angel thus spoken to her than she is out of bed, and has thrown a wrapper round her figure and slipped her naked feet into a pair of shoes. She will not even stay to light a candle, for something tells her that, if she deliberates, the time for explanation will have passed away—perhaps for ever; but quickly leaves her bedroom, and gropes her way down the staircase to the door of her husband's room. A faint streak of light is visible through the keyhole, but all within is silent as the grave; and as Irene grasps the handle she can hear nothing but the throbbing of her own impatient heart.

Colonel Mordaunt is sitting, as she imagined, in his study-chair, not occupied with his accounts, but leaning back, with his eyes closed, and his hands folded before him listlessly, inanimately, miserably. He used to be an unusually hale and young-looking man for his age. Irene thought upon their first introduction, that he was the finest specimen of an old gentleman she had ever seen; but all that his past now. Life and energy seem as completely to have departed from the shrunken figure and nerveless hand as the appearance of youth has from the wrinkled face. It is about the middle of September, and the next day is the opening of the cubhunting season—an anniversary which has been generally kept with many honors at Fen Court. Colonel Mordaunt, who before his marriage held no interest in life beyond the pleasures of the field, and who has reaped laurels far and wide in his capacity as master of the Glattonbury foxhounds, has been in the habit of throwing open his house to the public, both gentle and simple, on the occurrence of the first meet of the season; and, although the lack of energy which he has displayed of late is a general theme of conversation amongst the sportsmen of the county, the hospitable custom will not be broken through on this occasion. Preparations on a large scale for the festivity have been arranged and carried out, without the slightest reference to Irene, between himself and Mrs. Quekett; and to-morrow morning every room on the lower floor of the Court will be laid with breakfast for the benefit of the numerous gentlemen and their tenant-farmers who will congregate on Colonel Mordaunt's lawn to celebrate the recommencement of their favorite amusement. At other times how excited and interested has been the Master of the Foxhounds about everything connected with the reception of his guests. To-night he has permitted the housekeeper to go to bed without making a single inquiry as to whether she is prepared to meet the heavy demands which will be made upon her with the morning light; and though, as a matter of duty, he has visited the kennel, it has been done with such an air of languor as to call forth the remark from the whipper-in that he "shouldn't be in the least surprised if the Colonel was breaking up, and this was the last season they would ever hunt together."

And then the poor heart-broken man crept back, like a wounded animal, to hide himself in the privacy of his own room, where he now sits, alone and miserable, brooding over what has been and what may be, and longing for the time when all shall be over with him, and his sorrows hidden in the secret keeping grave. He is so absorbed in his own thoughts that he does not hear the sound of Irene's light footsteps, though she blunders against several articles in the dark hall before she reaches him; and the first thing which apprises him of any one's approach is her uncertain handling of the door.

"Who is there?" he demands sharply; for he suspects it may be Mrs. Quekett, come to torture him afresh with new tales and doubts against Irene's character.

The only answer he receives is conveyed by another hasty battle at the handle of the door, and then it is thrown open, and his wife, clad in a long white dressing-gown, with her fair hair streaming down her back, appears upon the threshold.

He shudders at the sight, and draws a little backward; but he does not speak to her.

"Philip! Philip!" she exclaims impatiently and trembling lest all her courage should evaporate before she has had time for explanation, "don't look like that. Speak to me. Tell me what I have done wrong, and I will ask your forgiveness for it."

He does not speak to her even then; but he turns his weary, grief-laden face towards her with silent reproach that cuts her to the heart, and brings her sobbing to his feet.

"What have I said? What have I done?" she questions through her tears, "that you should behave so coldly to me? Oh, Philip, I cannot bear this misery any longer! Only tell me how I have offended you, and I will ask your pardon on my knees."

"Don't kneel there," he says in a dry, husky voice, as he tries to edge away from contact with her. "I have not blamed you. I have kept

silence, and I have done it for the best. By breaking it I shall but make the matter worse."

"I do not believe it," she says energetically. "Philip, what is this matter you are so desirous to conceal? If it is shameful, it can be in no wise connected with me."

"So young," he utters dreamily, "(were you nineteen or twenty on your last birthday, Irene?) and yet so full of deceit. Child, how can you look at me and say such things? Do you wish to crowd my heart with still more bitter memories than it holds at present?"

"You are raving, Philip," she answers, "or I have been shamefully traduced to you. Oh, I was sure of it! Why did you not speak before? That woman who has such a hold over you that—"

"Hush, hush!" he says faintly; "it is not so. I have had better evidence than that; but, for God's sake, don't let us speak of it. I have tried to shield you, Irene. I will shield you still, but whilst we live this matter must never more be discussed between us, or I cannot answer for the consequences."

"And do you think," she replies, drawing herself up proudly, "that I will live under your protection, and eat your bread, and avail myself of all the privileges which in the name of your wife accrue to me, whilst there is a dead wall of suspicion and unbelief and silence raised between us, and I am no more your wife, in the true meaning of the word, than that table is? You mistake me, Philip. I have been open and true with you from the beginning, and I will take nothing less at your hands now. I do not ask it—I demand as a right—to be told what is the secret that separates us; and if you refuse to tell me, I will leave your house, whatever it may cost me, and live among strangers sooner than with so terrible an enemy."

He raises his eyes, and looks at her defiant figure with the utmost compassion.

"Poor child! you think to brave it out, do you? But where would you go? What door would open to receive you?"

"I am not so friendless as you seem to think," she answers, growing angry under his continued pity. "There are some who love me still and believe in me, and would refuse to listen to accusations which they are ashamed to repeat."

"Would you go to him?" he cries suddenly, as a sharp pang pierces his heart.

As this insulting question strikes her ear, Irene might stand for a model of outraged womanhood—so tall and stately and indignant does she appear.

"To whom do you presume to allude?" Colonel Mordaunt shrinks before her angry eyes. There is something in them and in her voice which commands him to reply, and he rises from his seat, and goes towards the escritoire.

"I would have saved you from this," he says mournfully. "I wished to save you, but it has been in vain. Oh, Irene, I have borne it for more than three months by myself! Pity, and forgive me that I could not bear it better. I would rather it had killed me than it had come to this."

He takes out the torn and crumpled sheet of note paper that he has so often wept over in secret, and lays it on the desk before her.

"Don't speak," she continues; "don't try to excuse yourself; it would be useless, for you see that I know all. Only remember that I—I—have forgiven you, Irene—and wish still to watch over and protect you."

She takes the scribbled fragment in her hand and reads it, and colors painfully in the perusal. Then she says shortly,

"Who gave you this?"

"What signifies who gave it me? You wrote, and I have seen it."

"Very true; but what then? Was it a crime to write it?"

Colonel Mordaunt regards his wife as though she had been demented.

"Was it a crime to write it?" he repeats. "It is not the letter—it is of what it speaks. Surely—surely you cannot be so hardened as not to look upon that in the light of a crime?"

"I know it to be a crime, Philip, and a very grievous one; but it has nothing to do with me—except, perhaps, that I should have told you when I found that it was his."

"When you found what was his? Irene! you are torturing me. You told me at the Glattonbury ball that you had never met this man Mulraven, with whom I find you correspond in terms of familiarity. What is the secret between you? In God's name speak out now, and tell me the worst! Death would be preferable to the agony of suspense that I am suffering."

"There is no secret between us. I never told Lord Mulraven of what I now see I should have informed you—that I found out from Myra Cray's papers that he is the father of her child."

"The child, then, is Myra Cray's?" he says, with hungry eyes that starve for her reply.

"Whose do you suppose it is?" she demands with an angry stamp of her foot. Her figure is shaking with excitement; she has struck her clenched hand upon her heart. Beneath her blazing looks he seems to shrink and shrivel into nothing.

"Forgive! oh! forgive me, Irene," he murmurs as he sinks down into his chair again, and covers his face from view. "But look at the paper—read what it says, and judge what I must have thought of it."

She seizes the letter again, and, running her eye rapidly up and down it; characters, gives vent to a sort of groan. But suddenly her face lights up with renewed energy.

"Stop!" she says commandingly, as she

seizes one of the candles off the table and leaves the room. In a few minutes—minutes which seem like ages to him—she is back again, with the corresponding fragment of her mutilated letter (which, it may be remembered, she thrust into her davenport) in her hand. She does not deign to offer any further explanation, but places them side by side upon the desk before him, and stands there, silent and often led, until he shall see how grossly he has wronged her. He reads the unfinished epistle in its entirety now:

"MY DEAR LORD MURAVEN,

"What you said this evening has decided me to write to you on a subject which has given me much anxiety of late. It is very painful to me to have to allude to it before you; but I believe it to be my duty. You have taken a great interest in the child called Tommy Brown, and you say that, should I discover who is his father, I should be bound to let him know of the boy's existence.

"What will you say if I tell you that I firmly believe he is your own child? Do not think I have condemned you without proof. The papers in my possession contain your letters to Myra Cray, his mother—your photograph, and a lock of your hair—so that I cannot believe that I am mistaken. I love the dear child as my own; indeed, to all intents and purposes he is my own, and it would break my heart now to part with him; so that you may think how much it costs me to make this known to you. But, since it belongs to you, I feel you have the better right to him. In the old days I told——"

He arrives at the finish, where Irene's mind came to the conclusion that she could write something better, and induced her to break off and tear her letter into the halves that lie, side by side, before him now. He has read it all, and sees the groundlessness of the suspicion he has entertained against her fair fame, and is ready to sink into the earth with shame to think he has been base enough to suspect her at all. And he dares not speak to her, even to entreat her pardon, but lets the paper slip from beneath his trembling fingers, and sits there, humiliated even to the dust.

"When I told you that I had never met Lord Muraven before," rings out through the awful stillness Irene's clear, cold voice, "I said what I believed to be the truth. I had met Eric Keir; but I did not know at that time that he had inherited his brother's title. When I saw him at the ball, and learnt my mistake, I tried all I could to dissuade you from asking him to Fen Court. I did not wish to see or meet him again. But when he came, and I saw him and Myra's child together, and heard his opinion on the subject, I thought it would be but just to let him know I had discovered that he was Tommy's father; and I wrote more than one letter to him, but destroyed them all. How that fragment came into your possession I do not know; but of one thing I am certain," continues Irene with disdain, "that I have never deceived you wittingly, and that when I kept back the knowledge I had gained respecting the child's parentage, it was more from a wish to spare your feelings and my own, than not to repose confidence in you. And when I took the boy under my protection, I had no idea whose child he was. I learnt it from some letters which his mother left behind her, and which Mrs. Cray brought to me, weeks after he had come to the Court."

She finishes her confession, as she began it, with an air of conscious virtue mixed with pride; and then she waits to hear what her husband may have to say in reply.

But all the answer she obtains is from the sound of one or two quick, gasping sobs. The man is weeping.

"Oh, my poor love!" she cries as she flies to fold him in her arms. "How you must have suffered under this cruel doubt! Forgive me for being even the ulterior cause of it. But how could you have thought it of me, Philip—of your poor Irene, who has never been otherwise than true to you?"

"My angel!" is all he can murmur, as they mingle their tears and kisses together.

"Why did you never tell me?" continues Irene. "Why did you keep this miserable secret to yourself for so many weary months?"

"How could I tell you, my child? What I come boldly and accuse your innocence of that which I blush now to think I could associate with you, even in thought? Irene! can you forgive?"

"Not the doubt—the silence—the want of faith," she answers; but then, perceiving how his poor face falls again, quickly follows up the new wound with a remedy. "Oh yes, my dearest, I can forgive you all, for the sake of the love that prompted it."

"I have loved you," he says simply; and she answers that she knows it well, and that she had no right to place herself in a position to raise his inquiry. And then they bury themselves anew in one another's arms, and peace is forever cemented between them.

"Let me tell you everything—from the very beginning," says Irene, as she dries her eyes and seats herself at her husband's knees.

"Nothing that will give you pain, my darling. I am a brute to have mistrusted you for a moment. Henceforward you may do just as you like."

"But I owe it to myself, Philip, and to—to—Lord Muraven. With respect, then, to having met him before: it is the truth. We knew each other when my mother was alive."

"And you loved each other, Irene," suggests her husband, impatient to be contradicted.

"Yes, we loved each other," she answers quietly. After the excitement she has just gone through, even this avowal has not the power to disturb her.

Colonel Mordaunt sighs deeply.

"Oh, Philip; do not sigh like that, or I shall not have the courage to be frank with you."

"I was wrong, Irene; for let me tell you that this portion of your story I have already heard from your mother."

"She told you all?"

"She told me that some one (whom I now conclude to have been this man Muraven) paid his addresses to you; and, on being asked what were his intentions, veered off in the most scoundrelly manner, and said he had none."

She has not blushed for herself, but she blushes now rosy red for him.

"Poor mamma was mistaken, Philip. She thought too much of me and my happiness. She could make no allowances for him. And then it was partly her own fault. I always had my own way with her, and she left us so much together."

"You want to excuse his conduct?"

"In so far that I am sure he had no intention of injuring me. What he said at the time was true. It was out of his power to marry me—or any one. Had he been able to adduce his reasons, it would have saved both my mother and myself much pain; but he could not. He was thoughtless—so were we. I exonerate him from any greater crime."

"He has made you believe this since coming here, Irene."

"Don't say 'made' me believe him; Philip. He only told me the truth; and it was an explanation he owed both to me and himself. Had I thought my listening to it would impugn your honor, I would not have done so."

He squeezes the hand he holds, and she goes on:

"I had no idea that Tommy was his child until I read some papers that Myra Cray had left behind her, and which contained, amongst other things, his photograph. The discovery shocked me greatly, and I had no wish to meet him afterwards. You may remember how earnestly I begged you not to invite him to stay at the Court."

Colonel Mordaunt nods his head, then stoops and kisses her.

When Lord Muraven came, he seemed to take a great interest in Tommy, and expressed himself so strongly on the subject of my not keeping the boy's birth a secret from his father, should I ever meet him, that it induced me to write the letter you have before you. I love the child dearly; but I felt that, after what had happened, it was a kind of fraud to keep you in ignorance of his parentage, and therefore I had every intention of making him over to his rightful owner—and should have done so before now, only that Lord Muraven is in India."

"I wish you had told me from the first, Irene. I can trust you to tell me the truth." Do you love this man still?"

She grows crimson, but she does not flinch.

"Yes," she says in a low voice. Colonel Mordaunt groans, and turns his face away.

"Oh, my dear husband, why did you ask me such a question? I love Muraven—yes! It was the first romance of my life—and mine! not a nature to forget easily. But I love you also. Have I not been a dutiful and affectionate wife to you? Have I ever disregarded your wishes, or shown aversion to your company? You have been good and loving to me, and I have been faithful to you in thought, word, and deed. Philip, Philip—answer me. You married me, knowing that the old wound was unhealed; you have made me as happy, as it was possible for me to be. I say that I have not been ungrateful—that I have not left utterly unrequited your patience and long suffering."

He opens his arms, and takes her into his embrace, and soothes her as one would soothe a weeping child.

"No!—no, my darling! You have been all that is dearest and truest and best to me. You are right. I knew that the treasure of your heart was not mine. I said that I would accept the smallest crumbs of love you had to spare for me with gratitude; and I yet I have been base enough to consider myself wronged, because I find that I do not possess the whole. It is I who should ask your pardon, Irene—as I do, my darling—with my whole heart I say, forgive me for all the pain I have caused you, and let us thank God together that we have fallen into each other's hands. It might have been worse, my dearest, might it not?"

"It might indeed, dear Philip; and henceforward, I trust, it may be much better than it has been. You know everything now, and from this evening we will register a vow never to keep a secret from one another again. If you suspect me of anything, you must come at once and tell me, and I will do the same to you. And, to show you I am in earnest, I will give up—for your sake, Philip—I will give up—with a short sob—" Tommy!"

He does not refuse to accept this sacrifice on her part, although he longs to do so. Man-like, he decides on nothing in a hurry.

"I do not know what to say to your proposal, Irene. It is best left for future consideration. Meanwhile, I am determined on one point—Mrs. Quekett leaves my service as soon as ever I can get rid of her."

"Oh! I am so glad; everything will go right now. It is she, then, who brought you this letter?"

"As she has brought me endless tales and insinuations against yourself, which, whilst my reason and faith rejected, my memory could not help retaining. That woman is mixed up with

all the misery of my youth, and she would have poisoned the happiness of my later years. She grudges me even to die in peace."

"She can never harm us again," says Irene soothingly.

"She has tried to harm you, poor darling, more than you have any idea of. Her hints and repetitions, and shameful innuendoes worked so upon my evil nature that they corrupted all my sense of justice, and turned my blood to gall. Do you remember my going up to town for a couple of days in the beginning of August, Irene?"

"Yes, Philip."

"Do you know what I left home for?"

"I have not the least idea. Business, was it not?"

"The devil's business, dear. I went to consult my lawyer about drawing up a new will, and leaving everything I possess, away from you, to Oliver Ralston."

"Did you?" she says, a little startled.

"I thought to myself," continues Colonel Mordaunt, "that, as soon as ever I was dead, you would go and marry Muraven on my money, and instal him here."

"Oh, Philip!"

"Don't interrupt me, darling, and don't curse me; remember I was mad with jealousy and love of you; so I did it. Yes, Irene; had I died before this explanation took place between us, you would have been left (but for your own little portion) penniless. My will, as it now stands, leaves you nothing but a dishonored name. Thank God, who has given me the opportunity to undo this great wrong!"

"I should not have cursed you, dearest," she says softly.

"But He would. Yet not now—not now. There are two things for me to do to-morrow. One is to dismiss Quekett, and the other to go up to town and see Selwyn again."

"You can't go to-morrow, Philip; it is cub-hunting day."

"Bother the cub-hunting! I must go! I shall not rest until this matter is put right."

"But what will every one say? It will look so strange. The first meet of the season, and the Master absent! Indeed, dear Philip, you must put off your visit to town; one day cannot make much difference."

"It may make all the difference in the world, Irene."

"Nonsense!" she says playfully, for she knows it will be an immense concession on his part to go. "Now, take my advice; wait till the day after to-morrow to accomplish both these changes. When the house is full of company is not the time to choose for dismissing servants or altering wills. Let us spend to-morrow as we intended. You will be hunting all day, you know, and the day after you shall have your own way."

"My sweetest! That I should have done you such an injury. How can I ever forgive myself? What can I do to show my penitence and make amends? I, too, have a story to tell you, Irene—a confession to make, that, but for my cowardice should have been yours from the very first; but I feared so greatly to lose your esteem. The past life of a man of my age cannot be expected to prove an unwritten page. Yet I believe that even your purity will be able to make some excuse for me."

"Do not tell it me to-night, Philip; you are looking overtired as it is. Come to bed, and leave all these vexing questions alone for the present. Why, it is past one, and the breakfast is to be laid at seven. Come, dear Philip, you will be fit for nothing without a good night's rest."

Still he lingers and is doubtful.

"I ought to be as frank to you as you have been to me."

"You shall, at a more fitting moment, dearest. You shall tell me everything, and I will pardon you before I hear it. But this is not the time; think how much you have to go through to-morrow."

"Irene! I ought to go to town to-morrow; something tells me so."

"And something tells me that the whole county will be talking about it if you do. Why, my dearest Philip, just think of the general dismay when the members of the hunt arrive to find you going or gone. What on earth should I say to them? They would declare you were out of your mind. Indeed, you must think of it."

"Well, I suppose I mustn't; but the first thing on Friday morning I am off. Oh! my child, how different the world looks to me to what it did an hour ago. What a load you have lifted off my heart! And you love me a little still, don't you?"

"I love you a very great deal, Philip; nor would I change your love now for that of any man living. Oh, how wrong it was of you to suspect me, dearest! How thin and hazy it has made you! I believe even you are weaker than you were."

"Turned me into quite an old fogey; hasn't it, my child? Who would think, looking on you now for the first time, that we were man and wife? Though my rose is not so blooming as she used to be either; and it has been all my fault. Never mind; we are happy again once more, and it shall be my endeavor to preserve our peace undisturbed. I shall look on my five-and-twenty by the end of next month, Irene."

"I like you best as you are," she whispers softly, and, encircled by each other's arms, they wind up the staircase to their bed-chamber, though Colonel Mordaunt cannot resist leaving hold of his wife for one instant to shake his fist at Mrs. Quekett's door.

"You go out of this as soon as ever I have

the time to kick you," he says defiantly; "and I never more shall you darken the threshold of mine. She has an annuity under my father's will," he continues to rene, "and she may make the most of it. We shall have one month's less to feed, and one room the more to live in on her departure, my dear."

"And an incalculably less amount of mischief, Philip. I don't mind telling you now, dear, that she has been the bane of my married life, and I wish to Heaven I had never seen her."

"Amen! But she has done her worst, my darling, and she shall never harm you more. God forgive me for having let her do so at all."

So they pass into their own room, and lie down and sleep the restful sleep that comes when souls are satisfied, and hearts are open and content.

The next morning Fen Court is a scene of unusual bustle and confusion. By the time Irene is dressed, the rattling of knives and forks and the popping of corks is over, the heavy breakfast has come to a close, and the lawn is covered with horsemen and dogs, and the crisp September air is filled with the sound of voices, the yelping of hounds, and the restless stamping of horses, impatient to be off.

She does not leave her room until they have all ridden away; but she watches the gay cavalcade through the open window. Whilst she is contemplating it, in rushes her husband, arrayed in pink, looking very excited, very happy, and full of spirits.

"We're off, my own darling," he says; "one kiss before I go," and then he holds her from him and regards her steadfastly. "God bless you, my Irene! God reward you for all your goodness to me! I shall be back by seven."

She embraces him eagerly in return.

"And I shall count the hours till you come home, Philip. What is that noise, dear?" as a considerable disturbance is heard upon the gravel outside.

Colonel Mordaunt looks through the window-blind.

"Only that brute of a horse of mine; he hasn't enough exercise lately. What a mess he's made of the drive. I'll take it out of the beast."

"Be careful, Philip."

"What! are you going to coddle me in my old age?" he says, delighted at her caution. "Yes; I'll be careful, darling. God bless you once more!" and with a final kiss, he tears himself away and runs downstairs. In another minute he has mounted his rebellious animal, and, in company with some of the principal members of the hunt, taken his way down the drive, followed by the remainder of the horsemen and the dogs. Irene's eyes follow him as long as he is in sight, and she sighs to observe how loosely his coat hangs about him, and how much more he stoops on horseback than he used to do.

"But, please God, we will remedy all that," she thinks, as the last man turns out of the gates, and she quits her post of observation. "As soon as we have settled what is to be done about Quekett and Tommy, I will persuade Philip to take a little change to the seaside with me, or, perhaps, to run over to Paris for a month."

At the thought of her adopted child, and the fear that she may have to part with him, the tears well up into her eyes, but she brushes them away.

"I will not cry about it until I am sure. Somehow I fancy, now Philip knows how attached I am to the boy, he will hit on some plan by which I may keep him; and, if not—well, I must do my duty, that's all."

She will not let her thoughts dwell on the subject, but orders the carriage and takes Tommy and Phoebe on a shopping expedition to Gtottonbury. She is anxious to keep away from the Court as much as possible until Philip comes back again, for fear she should encounter Mrs. Quekett, and not be able to restrain herself from saying what she thinks concerning her. So, on her return, she locks herself up in her bed-room with a book, and falls fast asleep, until her maid rouses her with an intimation that it is past her usual time for dressing.

The second gong has gone, ma'am, and the dinner's all ready, and I only waiting for the Colonel to be sent up."

"Why didn't you wake me before, Phoebe?"

"I knocked at the door several times, ma'am, but it was no use, you were that fast. Which dress will you please to wear to-night?"

"Oh, anything that will go on quickest. The old black one, that will do."

The clock on the mantelpiece chimes the half-hour as she enters the drawing-room.

"Philip is very late to-night," she thinks. "It's quite dark. They can't be hunting now. He must have gone home with some of his friends."

At the same time it strikes her as strange that, after their conversation of the night before, and his unwillingness to leave her this morning, he should permit anything to prevent his returning to her side.

The weather has become damp and chilly, and they have come none the less in the evening. She sits down before her now, and shivers slightly.

"I wish I hadn't put on a low dress, it is really growing cold, and this house is draughty. I wonder where Isabella is, I haven't seen her all day."

Then she rings the bell.

"Where is Miss Mordaunt?"

"In her room, I believe, ma'am."

"I wish you'd send word to her to come down. Say dinner is ready."

"Is dinner to be served, ma'am?"

"No, of course not," rather sharply, and with another shiver. "Wait for the Colonel. Only tell Miss Mordaunt I am feeling lonely, and wish that she would join me."

The servant withdraws to do her bidding, and she still crouches by the fire, in her black dress, shivering.

The door opens. Miss Mordaunt appears. "It is very late, Isabella. What can have come to Philip?"

"I'm sure I can't say, Miss Mordaunt—that is, of course, Philip is his own master—but still, what do you think?"

"How can I tell?" rather facetiously; "it is what I asked you."

Miss Mordaunt, rebuked, retires in silence to the farther end of the drawing-room, whilst Irene sits by the fire and fears—she knows not not what.

Eight o'clock strikes—half-past eight—a quarter to nine—and they are still alone.

"What can have happened?" exclaims Irene suddenly, as she springs up from her position, and turns a burning face towards her companion.

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Mordaunt, what can have? but you quite alarm me. Hadn't we better—but, doubtless, you know best."

"Hush!" says Irene in a voice of authority, as she stands upright to listen.

For there is a noise as of many voices, each trying to hush down the other, in the hall.

(To be continued.)

THE KISS.

Ah! sweetly sang the meadow lark,
And brightly rose the morning sun,
For the heart of the cow-boy feeding his cows
And the heart of the milkmaid beat as one.

Merrily into the empty pail
The tiny streamlets beat and rung,
And gladly beat their hearts as well,
For they loved each other, and they were young.

Slowly, steadily, all the while,
The bucket filled to the shining brim,
And slowly, steadily, just the same,
Her heart was filling with love for him.

And as above the shining brim
The milky foam rose white as snow,
So love rose up in the cow-boy's heart,
And came at last to an overflow.

And as she left her milking stool,
He took the bucket, and gave—a kiss!
Ah! sweetly, merrily sang the lark,
But theirs were happier hearts than his.

AUNT JUDITH.

BY C. C.

CHAPTER I.

Within the house all was silent. Excepting an occasional short and angry growl from the bull-terrier which lay upon the terrace, when the flies tormented him more than usual, there was no sound to break the drowsy stillness of the July noon. Even the birds seemed too languid to sing, though in the grounds of Mellicote House their numbers were legion. These grounds stretched far and wide to the west of the house, an avenue of horse-chestnut trees making a noble road to the entrance of the mansion. If the visitor followed the footpath branching away from the avenue on the left, he came upon a pleasant miniature glade carpeted with cool moss, overhung with a lattice-work of branches; and in the centre of this glade lay a deep pool that reflected the shadows of the trees bending above it. On its margin grew long-stalked flowers and cool grasses. An old tree-stump, gnarled and gray, formed a convenient seat. A pleasant spot was this wherein to dream away a summer morning; for here on the hottest of noons it was cool and quiet—quiet always, save for the melodies of the birds, or the buzzing of a stray bee, or the sudden splash of a tiny fish in the pool.

In the drawing-room sat Miss Judith Tredegar, mistress and owner of Mellicote. Her white fingers were busily sorting Berlin wools of divers colors, which she was laying in neat piles upon a table at her side.

Any one looking at the deep-set but brilliant eyes, at the waxen whiteness at her skin, at the low white brow, from which rippled away abundant waves of silvery hair, could guess how beautiful this woman must have been in her youth. After the first glance of admiration, the gazer would feel an undefined disappointment in the mouth; cruel, resolute, stern, and haughty it was, lending a certain power to the face, which it robbed of half its beauty.

Opposite Miss Tredegar a young man was seated—a pleasant-faced, pleasant-voiced personage, whose clerical black dress and snowy tie bespoke his calling. Now and then he would cast a furtive glance at the open French window, or at the door of the apartment. These glances did not escape the keen eyes of the lady.

"This comes of having pretty girls about one's house," she thought, noting the five-and-twentieth glance. "At one time Austin Kinglake

thought one visit a month sufficient for me; now two a week are not enough."

But, though Miss Tredegar was aware of the reason of this remarkable difference, she preserved a rigid silence as to the whereabouts of the girls.

At the present moment they were in the glade, Juliet pillowing her amber-crowned head on a hoary limb of a fallen tree, Lenore, a pretty girl of eighteen, reading aloud from the *Bride of Lammermoor*; and standing with her back against a larch tree, through the boughs of which little sunbeams fell upon her curly head, was Audrey, who was two years older than Lenore, and three younger than Juliet.

Years ago, Miss Tredegar's niece, Effie Tredegar, had led a happy life at Mellicote until she incurred that lady's displeasure by her marriage. Miss Judith never forgave—her mouth gave warning of that—and through all the troubles that followed poor Effie Woodville in her married life, Miss Tredegar utterly ignored her existence.

In time Effie's husband died, and one year ago Effie herself died also, leaving these three girls penniless and alone. Then Miss Tredegar went to the rescue. She brought the three girls away from their wretched London lodging to her own beautiful home. To the girls this was like awakening from a horrible dream to a blissful reality.

"Now you are mine," Miss Judith had said—"my daughters from this day; and all I have is yours too, for I want you to be happy. But, understand me once for all, whenever you marry I have done with you. Mind, I do not forbid you to marry—I shall not shut my doors to mankind on your account. On the contrary, I wish you to please yourselves. If any of you choose to marry, I will provide the wedding-breakfast and the wedding-dress in the orthodox style—for you shall have no excuse for eloping. I don't approve of that style of thing. But, remember, from that day my connection with the one who marries entirely ceases. It may be that you will never need my aid or friendship. So much the better. It will absolve me from the painful necessity of refusing it; for I never break my word—your mother knew that."

The sisters listened in wonder. The dry, decisive tone, the set of the inexorable lips, silenced all but Audrey, who, in her quaint, fearless way, asked Miss Judith whether she had any reason for telling them that. The faintest flush rose in Miss Tredegar's waxen cheeks.

"Yes," she replied, after a momentary hesitation. "I have a reason. Come with me, and I will tell it you."

She led the sisters to a closed door at the end of an upper gallery. Taking a bunch of keys from her pocket, she fitted one into the lock, and opened the door. The girl looked on in wonder, little guessing how bitter a task she was performing—a task that required all her iron will to accomplish. They entered the chamber, in which reigned a sombre twilight. The three young hearts beat faster as their eyes fell upon what the room contained. Upon the old-fashioned bed lay spread out, as if for immediate use, a bridal dress of satin that had once been white, but now was yellow, a veil of rich lace, satin shoes, gloves, and something that might have been a bouquet, but was now a few dried stalks tied up with ribbon.

The room smelt musty, with the odor of a dead and gone-by day. It seemed as if only the ghost of a bride was wanting to complete the weird fascination of the room. Involuntarily the girls drew nearer to each other.

"Do you understand?" asked Miss Judith, pointing towards the things. Her voice was hard, her lips more cruel than ever. "This was my bridal dress. It was laid out so on a morning more than forty years ago, but my lover played me false on my wedding-day. I had loved him very deeply, but from that hour I have hated all men."

They understood now. It was the one weakness in the strong, self-reliant character.

"If I have pained you by my question, I am sorry, aunt," said Audrey.

"It is better you should know, child, that there may be no mistakes."

"That there may be no mistakes," whispered Juliet Woodville to herself that night, as, looking at the moonlit landscape from her chamber window, her thoughts reverted to a day, five years ago, when, on a chilly December morning, on board of an outward-bound ship, she had taken leave of a young lover who was going over the seas in search of a fortune, with his brave heart full of hope, though he had but a five-pound note in his pocket, and willing to do or dare aught in the world if perchance in the days to come he could make a home for his darling.

Very long Juliet knelt by the window, thinking of that day; and, as Miss Judith's words recurred to her, there came a stern expression into the beautiful face—an expression somewhat like Miss Tredegar's—that after that night never quite vanished from it. And the letter, that Juliet Woodville had written that very morning to go out by the next Californian mail, containing a full and glowing description of her new home, with many fond expressions of unchanged affection for her far-away lover, was never posted.

One year had passed since that night, and now, in the sultry stillness of the July noon, the girls were in the glade.

"Audrey," exclaimed Juliet, "are you really crying over a hero in fiction? I thought that rôle was generally reserved for Lenore."

"I was not thinking of the story," answered Audrey, gravely.

"Of what, then?"

"I was thinking," replied the girl, reluctantly, "of mamma, and of those old summers before papa died. Oh, Juliet, don't you remember?"

The little hot hands were clasping and unclasping nervously, the gray eyes were full of unshed tears.

"Remember?" echoed Juliet, in a sharp pained tone. "As if I could forget! Why do you bring up those bitter memories, Audrey?"

Audrey went on, heedless of Juliet's remonstrance, the shadows gathering in her deep eyes.

"Do you remember how white our father's hair turned after he lost his voice, and that flush on his dear, tired face, and our mother's patient endurance—and—"

"And the debt and poverty and want!" cried Juliet, bitterly. "Oh, Audrey, I cannot think of those days yet!"

"But, Juliet," said Lenore, "if it happened that you had to choose between this life and one like mamma's, with some one you loved, as she loved our father, how would you decide?"

The answer came in quick decisive tones.

"I would choose this one. I would crush the love out of my very heart if the acceptance of it must bring me such intense suffering. I will never voluntarily face poverty again."

She spoke fiercely. Lenore's voice sounded strangely gentle by contrast.

"But don't you think that a strong, lasting love, even with poverty, is sweeter than a loveless life of wealth?"

"No; the love might be a very good thing in its way—as I suppose it would be—but it could not compensate for the pain and bitter suffering of a life such as ours was," said Juliet, earnestly.

"I think it would," opposed Audrey. "If I loved a poor man, I would marry him, and face worse things than poverty for his sake."

Afterwards both her words and the scene returned to the recollection of the other two. The sisters talked on, little dreaming how soon this peaceful life was to be stirred into a vigorous vitality.

CHAPTER II.

It had been a fair voyage—in duration something less than a fortnight since the ship sailed from New York—and now the white cliffs of England were gleaming against the horizon.

"We shall run into dock to-morrow at sunrise, if all goes well," said an old sailor to one of the passengers, a tall, fair man, with a long, light moustache, a sun-browned skin, and a slight stoop in his shoulders. His heart gave a great throb under his pilot coat, and his lips trembled as the words fell on his ear.

"The sunshines on my home-coming—is that a good omen?" he mused, leaning over the bulwarks. "It is so long since she sent me a message—twelve weary months—and without her love neither life nor anything else is worth aught to me. My queen, my sweet love! I wonder whether any kind spirit whispers to her that I am so near—that the weariness and the waiting are over."

The man's grave lips softened; his blue eyes were looking beyond the cliffs.

"I wonder what happy fate brought that paper in my way; but for that I should not be here now. I should still be leading that hard, hopeless life, with nothing but the memory of her face to keep me from despair—with only the far-off, faint hope of one day calling her mine to make life tolerable."

The green waves curled about the bows, the fresh salt breeze whistled in the rigging, and the ship sped on steadily homewards.

"There is some one waiting to see you, ma'am," said a maid, entering Miss Woodville's dressing-room. Juliet was dressed to dine out. Her white train lay crisp and spotless on the crimson carpet. Bands of black velvet encircled her full white throat and rounded arms, and a black velvet snood confined the amber braids on her small head.

"Who is it?" she inquired, sharply. "I cannot see any one now."

"It is a gentleman, ma'am," was the answer, with a little hesitation. He would not give his name.

Audrey entered as the maid spoke. She was not going out, and she wore a simple high dress of black gauze. Juliet turned to her.

"Will you go down for me, Audrey?" said Juliet, explaining. "And, Ellen, go and see whether my aunt and Miss Lenore are ready."

With quiet footsteps Audrey entered the long cool drawing-room. Some one stood in the bay window. Audrey had a glimpse of a broad back clad in a pea-jacket, a fair head, the outline of a thin, clear-cut cheek, and a blue cloth cap, such as naval officers wear, lying upon a chair.

"A stranger," was the quick thought, and following it came a sudden sense of familiarity.

The slight bend of the tawny head, the whole attitude of the stranger struck some chord of her memory. He turned at the sound of a step. Audrey never forgot the light that came into the bronzed face, the outstretched hands, and then the doubt that made him pause when his eyes fell upon her.

The two confronted each other for a minute, and then a sparkle of amusement stole into Audrey's eyes.

"Miss Woodville?" he began in eager manner but hesitating tones.

"I am Audrey," corrected the young girl; "and you are—"

"Philip Bayard."

"Well, who is it?" asked Juliet, carelessly looking up from her glove-fastening and meeting Audrey's glad, astonished eyes.

"Juliet, it is Philip."

The color faded from Juliet's face. She sank upon an ottoman.

"Philip!" she gasped.

"Yes. Oh, Juliet, go down to him—he is waiting."

Just then Miss Tredegar's voice was heard on the landing. Juliet rose quickly from her seat and made her exit, leaving Audrey to explain to her aunt, who entered the room a moment later in a rich dress of gray silk, and with a costly lace shawl about her shoulders. She was accompanied by Lenore, who was going with Miss Tredegar and Juliet in Audrey's place, that young lady having a decided dislike to dinner-parties.

On the staircase Juliet paused for a minute to deliberate. When at length she passed on, there was a settled purpose in her mind. Philip Bayard went forward to meet the white-robed figure that came all too slowly towards him. The sun's last beams fell upon her face. Never afterwards did Philip Bayard feel such a thrill of agony as the sight of that face gave him. He had thought of it, and longed for it as a thirsty Arab longs for cool water, and now the sight of it stabbed him to the heart.

It was Juliet who stood before him, one of her gloved hands lying in both of his. He was very sure of that. He had not been so sure of Audrey's identity, whom he remembered as a little school-girl, his playmate in many a romp. But Juliet was unchanged, save that she was lovelier than ever—and yet she was not quite the same Juliet he had held in his arms on that winter morning five years ago; indeed, he wondered whether he ever could have kissed that pale, proud face. He did not kiss it now—he felt he could not dare. He was ill at ease, too, in the presence of the statey woman in her lace and velvet. He was roughly clad and roughly shod, and brown; and the cold gloved hand lying so passively in his own was vastly unlike the warm clasp of the hands that clung about his neck when he first won the heart of the poor curate's daughter, whose richest dress was of coarse merino, and who never wore lace like this, or satin shoes. All this flashed through Philip Bayard's mind in less than an instant. And in that moment something died in his heart, leaving a sort of hopeless dreariness in the place of the deep and warm passionate love that for so long had nestled there.

Juliet's eyes had fallen before his. An undefined sense of shame prevented her meeting the honest gaze of Philip's eyes. That same feeling made her draw her hand away. She had already noted the rough dress—such a contrast to her own!—and, noting it, the one hope she had cherished—that Philip had been successful very successful, so that she might give him whatever he asked, and that in spite of twenty aunts Judiths—died then and there.

"You are come home again, Philip," she said, trying hard to keep her lips from quivering, as she felt how cold and despicable and aimless the words were, but saying them for all that, because she felt that she must say something, and was fearful of saying too much.

"Yes, I have come back," he returned slowly, with a dim consciousness that a barrier was between them that he was powerless to throw down.

Then there was silence.

"She is proud and cold; I will not bend to her," he thought, bitterly.

"He is poor. I will crush the love I bear him out of my heart and out of my life," she decided.

So the barrier grew yet higher.

It was a relief when Miss Tredegar entered. Juliet introduced Philip Bayard to her aunt, and that lady begged that Mr. Bayard would remain at Mellicote House for that night, explaining that, although unfortunately she was engaged with Juliet and Lenore to dine out, Audrey would be at home. To which Philip replied, gravely, that he had secured a room at the inn where he had left his valise.

Miss Tredegar was very hospitable. This Philip Bayard had travelled some miles to see her niece, whom he had known in past days. There had been, she knew, some sort of a tie between him and Juliet, so she felt in some measure bound to honor this guest. She pressed him to partake of some refreshment, and after to-morrow she must insist upon his taking up his quarters at Mellicote for the remainder of his stay. Then she shook hands with him, and Lenore, in vaporous blue gauze and smiling shyly, did the same; lastly, Juliet gave him her cold hand again, and he was alone.

"This is the end of it!" he thought sorely; but he was prevented from falling into bitter reflection by Audrey's entrance, and soon after came the summons to dinner; whereupon Philip, looking doubtfully at his attire, begged to be excused, but Audrey laughingly took his arm, and in a pretty, imperious manner led him to the dining-room. Finally she dismissed the servant and presided at table herself, bewildering Philip with her charming frankness, and wondering to herself meanwhile at the change in Philip's face since she saw it half an hour ago.

"Juliet has been cruel to him," she thought, with womanly pity; and Audrey who was ever ready to do battle for the injured, was doubly kind.

Afterwards they went into the garden. The twilight was gathering, and the air was faint with delicious odors from the flower-beds.

"It is so long since I was in an English garden," said Philip, sighing.

"How long is it since you returned to England?" she asked.

"Only yesterday."

"Then of course you have not been to see your relations in Cumberland?"

"I have none now," he answered, with a look on his face that would have puzzled Audrey had she seen it. "They are dead—all dead; I have neither kith nor kin in the world."

This he said somewhat bitterly; so Audrey, with delicate tact, changed the subject. She was a dangerously pleasant companion for this man whose sore heart was craving for human sympathy. Their old acquaintance warranted freedom of speech, just such freedom as exists between brother and sister. So it came to pass that, walking by Audrey's side in the twilight, Philip poured out the history of the last five years.

"I have not been successful abroad—far from it," he said, with a dark cloud on his face; "indeed few are, as far as my experience goes." At these words Audrey's heart sank for his sake. "Good-bye," he said at length, holding her hands in his.

"Good night, not good-bye," laughed Audrey, giving him a spray of stephanotis—"we shall see you to-morrow, you know."

"What a dear little thing she has grown!" he thought, as he tramped moodily to the inn. Then his thoughts turned to Juliet. "Oh, Juliet, if I had known what was in store for me, I would never have seen your face again!"

CHAPTER III.

"You are changed, Juliet."

A week had elapsed since Philip's arrival at Mellicote, and this evening he found himself, for the first time during his visit, alone with Juliet. Miss Tredegar had given Philip a cordial invitation to remain until he had settled the business arrangements which he had told her brought him to England.

"If there is anything to settle between him and Juliet, they shall have the opportunity to do it," she said to herself. "I will not have it said that I stood in the way of their happiness."

But all the week Juliet had avoided Philip, and he—quick to feel the slight—read the meaning of her cold avoidance of his society all too plainly. Audrey read it too. To-night, however, by some accident, Juliet and Philip were left alone in the drawing-room, and the latter had spoken.

"You are changed, Juliet."

"The years change us all," she returned, calmly. "We see things differently—more clearly, I think—the older we get."

He looked at the still face that once had blushed beneath his gaze, at the level eyelashes that once had drooped each time he spoke her name, and he understood her words.

"It seems," he remarked, sadly; "but I doubt whether we are the better for our clearer vision."

She made no reply.

"Juliet, have you forgotten what you said five years ago?" he asked.

"I have forgotten nothing," was the quiet answer.

"Then you mean me to understand that you think differently now?"

The girl's face grew ashy-white.

"Yes, I mean that," she replied, looking full at him.

"In plain words, you reject me?" he said, proudly.

"Yes," returned Juliet.

Philip turned, and walked slowly away.

"I have done it," thought the girl, dreadingly.

"I am glad it is over."

That evening Mr. Bayard signified to Miss Tredegar his intention of leaving Mellicote on the following day. That lady sat before her escritoire which was covered with papers; she looked keenly at the half-averted face, Audrey, who sat at the piano, ceased playing.

"Do you return to London?" asked Miss Tredegar.

"Yes, business there for the present; afterwards I shall go to Cumberland."

"I wish you would manage a little affair of mine while you are in London. It would save me a journey to town," said Miss Judith thoughtfully.

Philip signified his willingness to oblige his hostess, and Miss Tredegar entered into a brief explanation.

"And when you have concluded the affair, will you write me the result?"

"I will bring my report in person; my time is now my own," said Philip, with a swift glance at Audrey's profile, which had suddenly become scarlet.

The Sunday evening service was over, and Audrey and Lenore, walking home through the fields, were overtaken by the young curate, Austin Kinglake.

"He is come to talk to Lenore," thought Audrey—for of late there had come a new warmth into the selfish little heart that made her quick to see Lenore's blush and the glow in Austin Kinglake's fine eyes; whereupon Audrey was seized with a desire to overtake some lady friends just ahead, and sped off accordingly, regardless of the heat, leaving the two alone.

The grasshoppers sang in the grass, the nightingale warbled in the hazel copse, the scent of dog-rose and honey-suckle came in sweet gusts from the hedge. Lenore's shy eyes dared not meet the impassioned gaze bent upon her.

"I called upon your aunt, yesterday," said the young curate. "I had something to tell her, Lenore." He turned and faced her, placing

himself in the path before her. "I told her that I loved you, Lenore, and I asked her to give you to me."

Austin Kinglake paused for an answer. None came. He went on speaking triumphantly; he was the king, the conqueror; she was the trembling captive.

"Miss Judith said neither 'Yes' nor 'No.' She said it was for you to decide. Lenore, look at me—speak to me—I am waiting."

In the stillness of the night Audrey lay awake. The moon cast her pale beams across the chamber floor. There was no sign of weariness in the wide-open gray eyes; but in these quiet night-watches, or when she was alone, they were apt to darken with some unspoken pain, though of late none had been more gay than Audrey in the sight and hearing of others.

"I must certainly ask aunt Judith to prescribe a sleeping potion for me," she mused. "I would count a hundred, or say the alphabet backwards, but I have proved such spells to be of no avail. I wonder," thought Audrey, going off at a tangent, "how long it takes to get as old as aunt Judith. I don't mean how many years, but—"

Audrey's musing came to an abrupt termination. A hushed sob from the adjoining apartment fell upon her ear. In a moment Audrey had risen and hurried on her dressing-gown. It was light enough to see without a candle. Audrey opened her door noiselessly and entered Lenore's sleeping-room.

"Are you awake, dear?"

"Yes; it is so hot I cannot sleep," faltered Lenore.

"Another wakeful heart," thought Audrey. She closed the door, and coming to the bedside, bent over the fair head on the pillow.

"Why are you crying, dear?" she questioned, tenderly.

"I would rather not talk," said the younger girl, in a choked voice.

"Lenore, are you unhappy about something?" asked Audrey, gravely.

"Yes, but it will not be for long—not very long, Audrey; and I can bear it quite well—I can indeed," sobbed Lenore.

"But why should you have anything to bear at all?"

"Sloop down, and I will whisper it to you," said Lenore.

Audrey obeyed, her eyes darkening as she caught the low-spoken confession.

"And you are willing to have it so—quite willing?" Audrey asked, in a singularly quiet tone.

"Oh, yes," said Lenore, dreadingly. "Juliet says it is better to suffer a little now—because all women have these things to bear—than to have a lifetime of sorrow and privation afterwards—like—like poor mamma, you know, Audrey; and I think so, too—at least I shall after a time—only just now it is hard to forget him."

The brave voice was drowned in tears.

"Try to sleep, my darling; we will talk of this in the morning," and with a tender kiss Audrey left the room.

Not to rest, but to lie meditating till the morning, when, finding that Lenore was suffering from a racking headache, Audrey bade her not get up, and then repaired to Juliet. She found that young lady in the conservatory, scissors in hand, busy snipping the dead leaves off her geraniums.

"What have you said to Austin Kinglake about Lenore?" she asked.

"Why do you wish to know?" inquired Miss Woodville, pausing in her work.

"Because—Oh, Juliet, for Heaven's sake pause before you wreck that child's happiness! Remember you now stand in our mother's place."

"You are very eloquent, Audrey," was the calm reply; "but, if you call it wrecking Lenore's happiness to prevent her marrying a man who has nothing but a hundred and fifty pounds a year, I call it doing her and him too the greatest possible kindness. They are both madly in love just now, but a little later they will see that the arrangement was for the best. It would be downright folly for Lenore to exchange a home like this for such a one as—ours, for instance. Have you forgotten mamma's embittered life?"

"My poor Lenore," said Audrey, sadly, her eyes filling with tears.

Juliet's face grew hard and stern.

"She is but a child—she will soon get over it; and, after all, Lenore is bearing only what thousands of women have to bear."

She turned again to her work, and the other did not see her tightly-compressed lips as she bent above the plants.

"Only what thousands of women have to bear," thought Audrey. "My poor little sister, must you too be numbered with that sorrowful army? Who is to judge what is right? Would it be cruel kindness to give you to that poor fellow who loves you? Or are we applying the surgeon's knife for your benefit and his? And oh, my little Lenore, will you thank us for this in the days to come, or are we not spoiling your life?" The dark eyes grew darker, weariness gathered on the fair young brow. On all about Audrey a gloom seemed to have fallen, darkening the full glory of the summer morning.

CHAPTER IV.

At the end of a month Philip Bayard, having finished Miss Tredegar's business commission, returned to Mellicote, and accepted that lady's invitation to stay there for a couple of weeks. His own plans for the future seemed very indefinite. "I am obliged to wait for a short time

before I can enter upon any settled plan of action," he observed.

During his late absence he had effected several remarkable changes in his appearance. The thickly clustering curls were gone, and Philip's shapely head was trimmed according to the modern fashion. The rough garb given place to civilised garments. Philip wore neither rings nor studs; but the sunbrowned hands were white enough now.

Audrey grew shy of Philip. On the first evening of his return she had been quite at home with him. He was the Philip who had known them all in former years—with whom she had romped and laughed; as such she had held out sisterly hands in welcome. But, strange to record, the more she saw of this Philip, the more the Philip of former days vanished from her recollection. Audrey thought perhaps the change was in herself.

"Philip, am I much changed since you went abroad?" asked Audrey, contemplative'y, one day.

Mr. Bayard put down his newspaper, and, leaning back in his easy-chair, looked quizzically at his questioner.

"Do you wish me to answer with a compliment?" he inquired.

"No; I should have thought that from want of practice you had forgotten how to pay a compliment. I want you to answer honestly."

"I thought you were changed beyond recognition when I first saw you, but on further acquaintance I find you exactly resemble the Audrey of old times."

As this was the reverse of her own experience concerning Philip, Audrey was forced to the conclusion that the change must be in him. Looking up thoughtfully from her embroidery to ascertain whether the change was in his outward self, she encountered Philip's blue eyes fixed upon her face with an expression that startled her. The color rushed to her face. Her eyes fell.

"I am afraid the problem is too deep for you to solve just yet, my little Audrey," he said half-gaily, half-pathetically, as Audrey gathered up her work and left the room precipitately.

Philip took up his paper again, but somehow the reading did not progress.

Philip's visit drew to a close. Juliet, as she sat reading in the bay-window, heard him announce to Miss Tredegar that he must leave Mellicote the next day. Audrey, who was holding a skein of wool for Miss Judith to wind, flushed red and then turned white under the full gaze of Philip's eyes.

"I am glad he is going, for then I may be at peace," thought Juliet.

In the full light her face looked old and haggard. Her pride was strong—her will, too, was strong; but the love she sought to "crush out of her heart" was stronger. She knew it now—ah, too well!—knew how vain was the boast—knew now that it was too late, that Philip's love was the one thing precious that the world contained for her.

"He is going to-morrow," mused brown-haired Audrey as she leaned against her favorite larch in the glade, her hands clasped at the back of her head—"going for good. He will not come here any more—our paths are separate from this time—we are only old friends, what is his going to me, any more than to aunt Juliet, or Juliet, or Lenore? Nothing, of course. Oh, Philip, yes, it is—though you will never know it—never, never!"

But that this was spoken mutely, Mr. Bayard might have heard, for he was very near. The next moment he had entered the glade from the opposite side, catching a momentary glimpse of the graceful, indolent figure, the rounded arms from which the loose sleeves had fallen back, and the upturned face. At the first sign of his presence Audrey's arms were dropped, her hands were decorously clasped before her, her head poised in a dignified attitude, and beneath this faultless exterior her heart began to throb wildly.

"I am come to say good-bye. I had a fancy to take leave of you after my own fashion," explained Philip.

"Yes," said Audrey, with down-dropt eyes.

"This is a pleasant spot," remarked Philip, irrelevantly.

"Yes," assented Audrey, meekly.

Philip folded his arms and leaned against the tree she had vacated. Audrey, in desperation, cast about for something to say that might divert Mr. Bayard's attention from her countenance, but finding nothing suitable, she raised her eyes slowly and met Philip's steady gaze.

"Yes, I love you," he said, quietly, as if in answer to her look.

Audrey fell back a pace.

"Two months ago, I should have conceived it impossible that such a thing could have taken place," he went on, calmly. "The love I bore Juliet she herself killed. As you have seen, I have been thrown over because I am poor." Philip's tone was bitter now. "You know what I am, Audrey—in years, ten or twelve beyond you; in the bitter, worldly experience that ages a man I am Heaven only knows how far beyond you. I told you I had been unsuccessful abroad. I have not a relative in the world, and saving yourself, hardly a friend. I am scarcely worth any woman's acceptance, am I, Audrey? And it is not doing you much honor to lay a battered heart at your feet. But, Audrey, it is yours—just as honestly and faithfully yours as if it were as young and as fresh as your own; and, if you will accept me, Audrey, I will love you just as fervently as I love you now, till I die."

Audrey stood silent, one hand shielding her

face on the side nearest to him. A feeling of delirious joy had robbed her of the power to speak.

"You are not angry, dear Audrey?" he whispered, eagerly, and bending forward to take her other hand in his. "You will forgive me if I have been presumptuous, thinking of the old times when we were friends—always friends, Audrey, even till this moment—friends still, if nothing nearer?"

The throb of pain in his passionate tones roused her. She lifted her face, her lips were parted to speak, when footsteps sounded near, and Lenore's white dress shewed through the trees.

She came forward with her slow, languid step, a look of weary indifference on her face. Miss Judith had sent her for Audrey. The three quitted the glade together. Audrey left the others behind as they crossed the lawn. Miss Tredegar was in the library, Lenore said. Presently, when Audrey returned to the drawing-room, Philip repaired to Miss Judith, and soon after Audrey received a second summons to the library. She thought Miss Judith wanted her, as before, on some trivial matter. She started to find Philip Bayard in close conference with her aunt.

"Do you want me, aunt Judith?" she asked nervously.

"No—Mr. Bayard wants to marry you," said Miss Judith, grimly. "I have sent for you to answer him. I have explained to Mr. Bayard that you are at liberty to please yourself, and he is also aware that whatever claim upon or connection with me you now have will cease entirely with your marriage. In short, you have to choose between him and me."

Audrey was silent. She was deeply agitated; her lips trembled nervously. Miss Tredegar surveyed her face a moment, and then turned to Philip.

"I presume you have explained your position and prospects clearly to my niece?" she asked abruptly.

"Audrey is aware that I have been unsuccessful abroad; but, if I could not maintain my wife, I should never have asked Audrey to marry me," he replied, haughtily; and then he fixed his eyes, full of eagerness, upon the girl.

The interval seemed an age. At last, with a shy but exquisite grace, Audrey went forward, and placed her hands in Philip's.

The action was sufficient. Philip stooped and kissed her with tremulous lips. Perhaps Miss Judith had expected this. She rose from her chair, and began to gather her papers together, Audrey sprang towards her, bursting into tears, and clasping her hands with passionate gesture.

"Oh, aunt Judith," she cried, you have been so good to us all, and I am very, very grateful indeed; but I do love Philip so much, and—don't be angry—but I would rather be poor with Philip than rich without him."

The words and tone went to Miss Judith's heart. It was not her way to be tender, or she might have yielded to the impulse that stirred her, and taken the agitated girl in her arms, as a mother. As it was, she said in a tone that was, if possible, a trifle more cold than usual—

"Very well, my dear—just as you please;" and, taking up her papers, she left the lovers together. But outside the door the stern woman paused, one jeweled hand covering her eyes, as her thoughts went back to a chapter in her own life which forty years ago had been enacted in this very room.

And Audrey—frightened, blushing, happy Audrey—was wrapped in the strong and tender arms of her lover; and, leaning on his breast while he pressed warm kisses on her lips, she knew the meaning of the rapturous silence, broken only by Philip's long and tremulous sigh.

CHAPTER V., AND LAST.

One month later the sun shone on Audrey's wedding-day. Miss Judith had fulfilled her promise of giving the wedding-breakfast and a wedding-dress, which latter—by Audrey's especial wish—was of the plainest and simplest kind. "It would only hurt Philip's feelings to see me in satin and lace, knowing that he will not be able to give me such costly things," she thought; for of her future life she knew literally nothing, save that it was to be spent with Philip, which was all Audrey cared to know.

During the past four weeks Philip had been absent on business of his own, and on his return—on the eve of his marriage—he was struck by the change in Lenore—the lily-white face, the languid voice, the listless step, above all the transparent skin, pained Philip inexpressibly. He spoke to Audrey about this change, and Audrey forthwith fell upon his breast, weeping passionately; but Philip failed to draw a syllable from his betrothed relative to the change in her sister. Perhaps had Philip Bayard seen the look that Lenore exchanged with Austin Kinglake on the following morning, while the latter read the marriage service, and noted the quivering lip of the one and the expression of almost bitter resignation on the face of the other, he might have read the secret of poor Lenore's altered looks.

Upon their return from church, Philip Bayard took his wife to the library, and seated her on the sofa.

"Stay here for a few minutes, Audrey," he said, kissing her gravely; and then he left the room, returning in a short time with Miss Tredegar, followed by Juliet and Lenore.

Never had Philip Bayard looked so handsome as at this moment. His blue eyes were lit with happiness, his thin aristocratic face was slightly

finished, his attitude at once easy and commanding. Miss Judith, regarding him beneath her bent brows, thought so; Juliet, whose yellow-crowned head was held a trifle higher, thought so too, with a sore bitterness at her heart.

Philip took up his position beside his wife. "I want to beg your attention for a few minutes," he said, easily, "for I have a little matter to explain before leaving you. Miss Tredegar, I have been acting under false colors; I have led you to believe that I am a friendless and penniless wanderer. That I am friendless, as far as ties of kindred are concerned, is really true; but I am penniless is not. But, though I am wealthy, it is not due to my success abroad. I owe my wealth to the death of my father's elder brother, Sir Geoffrey Bayard. As my uncle has outlived his children, as my own father is dead, I find myself heir to the title and estates. I learned my good fortune quite by accident. Happening to take up a newspaper in a eating-house in New York, I found an advertisement headed by my own name, in which the advertiser requested my immediate return to England on matters of business: Finding the name of the family lawyer appended to the advertisement, I returned, and am happy to say that I found the inquiry was genuine. I owe this explanation to you, Miss Tredegar, and I apologise for keeping you in wilful ignorance, but—there was a long pause, and then Philip continued, in lower tones, "I wished to win my wife for myself alone. Audrey, my darling"—he bent over the white veiled figure as he spoke—"it is to no lowly home—to no bitter struggle for daily bread—that I am taking you, though, thank Heaven, if it had been so, you were willing to share it with me. Audrey, my sweetest wife, look up. Let me be the first to call you by the name you are to bear from this glad and happy day—Lady Bayard."

"Audrey," said Philip, his eyes dancing with irrepressible mirth as he leaned back in a first class carriage opposite his wife on their way to the beautiful Cumberland home that was his and hers now—"Audrey, how little I once thought I should ever play the 'Lord of Bureleigh,' and Audrey, whatever would my feelings be if you took it into your head to enact the 'Lady of Bureleigh'?"

"I never should," was the demure reply, "because, Philip, if I ever found the burden of my honor too heavy, I should shift it on to your shoulders."

On the library couch lay Lenore. Miss Judith had found her there after the guests were gone, in a fainting fit. She was better now, but her dress was scarcely whiter than her face.

"She must have a change," said the doctor to Miss Judith. "Take her to the Isle of Wight. She is suffering from debility, and needs tone."

When he was gone Miss Tredegar went to Juliet's room and repeated his words to her niece. Juliet heard in silence, and then, lifting her eyes looked full in her aunt's face—

"Aunt Judith," she said, steadily—and something in the sad white face riveted Miss Judith's attention—"that will not cure my sister. You and I know what has robbed her young life of its sunshine and made her what she is to-night. It is I who am to blame, for I urged her—a weak, confiding child—to be false to her own heart. But oh, I have done very wrong all through; yet, if it were only myself who had to suffer, I would not complain."

She covered her eyes, and a convulsive sob shook her frame.

"I can see now," she went on, sadly, "how wrong I have been. Let Lenore marry the man she loves, and, if the years bring trouble for them, let them bear it together; it will be light enough with love to bear them up. There was trouble enough in our home—sickness, poverty, debt; yet in the darkest days I never saw a look on my mother's face like that which Lenore's has worn lately. And"—the girl's voice was full of unutterable woe—"amid all I had to suffer in those days, my heart never knew a pain so bitter as that which filled it when I stood by to-day and saw the man I love, and who once loved me, married to another."

She spoke truly—the pride was crushed at last. She stood, a sorrowful, suffering woman, but nobler in this hour than she had ever been before.

Miss Tredegar knew it. Juliet's words in their bare, pathetic truth, touched a chord in the stern heart that for so long had been petrified. Something of this she had felt when Audrey had said, "I would rather be poor with Philip than rich without him." The floodgates of her tears were unlocked. After long years once more the stern woman wept.

"Child, child, you are right! Heaven forgive me if I have spoilt your life too!"

"I alone am to blame, aunt Judith. I valued riches and position more than truth and honesty," said Juliet, with a sad smile. "But, thank Heaven, it is not too late to save Lenore from such a fate. It was I who came between her and Austin Kinglake; it shall be my task to repair the wrong."

She kept her word. It was Juliet's delicate tact that brought the young curate back to Lenore's side; it was Juliet's tender care and devotion that helped to restore the glowing color to the childish face, and the light of happiness to the young eyes.

There came a day at last when Lenore, restored now to perfect health, went out from Miss Tredegar's house a happy bride; and not even Juliet or Audrey—who had come from Cumberland with Philip to be present at the wedding—

kissed the sweet face of the girl-bride more lovingly than did aunt Judith.

At Mellicote House now Miss Judith lives with her niece, Juliet Woodville; but very often—especially in the summer—the old corridors and glades echo to the voices of happy children—Audrey's children and Lenore's.

Both of the married sisters live in Cumberland, for Sir Philip Bayard has presented Austin Kinglake with a lucrative living, which he owns near his own estate; but every year the children of both houses pay a long summer visit to aunt Judith, whom they dearly love, while they perfectly adore their younger aunt, Juliet, whose praises they never weary of singing.

THE OPICLEIDE PLAYER.

CHAPTER I.

Pacing the little jetty of the Suffolk fishing village of Seaborne were two persons deeply engaged in conversation.

The evening was calm and cool, the sea still as a pond, with scarcely a ripple on its surface. The men, who were walking on the pier were brothers. The elder, Reuben Twyford, was a tall, thin man of about thirty, dressed in a suit of black which had about it something of a clerical appearance. Benjamin Twyford, the younger, was about the middle height, broadly built, with a large, open, bronzed countenance that beamed with good humor. He was attired in the usual style of the better class of fishermen; and as he strode along, his hands thrust into his pockets, the roll in his walk told he was more used to the sea than the land.

"I tell you, Ben," said the elder, "you are wrong to remain a fisherman. Think what our father would have said to it? Although your education is not so good as I could wish, it is far above that of the men with whom you mix."

"Look here, Reub," replied Ben; "there is a great difference between you and me. I was not made for books; I don't like them. You might send me to college, but you'd never make me learn. You can—you take after father."

"Yes," said Reub, somewhat bitterly; "I do take after father; he was a gentleman."

For a moment, Ben stood still, and gazed into Reuben's face as if overcome with astonishment; then placing his hand gently on his brother's arm, he said, in a kindly, but reproachful, voice, "Yes, Reub. You take after father; I after our mother. Don't forget that, Reub."

"No, no; of course not," said Reuben hurriedly. "But, still, you know that our father was a gentleman, and—"

"Our mother was the daughter of a fisherman: that's what you mean, Reub; so say it out, like a man. It's true, our grandfather had several smacks; still, he was only a fisherman. I know you are more clever than I am. You've not only taken after father, but have got his place as schoolmaster. I say, Reub, it must be a grand thing to have all the boys touch their hats as you pass, eh?"

"I see you will not speak in earnest," said Reub, "and, therefore, I will not press the matter now. And so, good night; unless you are coming up town."

"Not yet," replied Ben; "I must go down to the boat first; and after that, I shall have to play with the band by the parsonage."

"The idea of wasting your time and breath blowing on that wretched opicleide!" urged Reub, with contempt. "Come with me; I'm going to uncle's to give Jenny her lessons, and you had better join us."

"No; I must keep my word with the lads, for they can't get on without me. Much as you may jeer at my opicleide, the ladies and gentlemen from London, who were staying at the parson's last summer, said I was the best player they had ever heard."

"No doubt you are. But what pleasure can the harmony of empty sounds give when contrasted with the beauty of language, wherein sound and sense are combined? In literature, man's busy life, his manifold actions, his good and evil passions, are illustrated, and, therefore, grand lessons are thought by it; but what good does music do?"

"Perhaps you are right," sighed Ben, as he leaned over the side of the pier, and gazed into the water. "I don't understand these things; still, when I take up my dear old opicleide, I seem a different man. A hundred little voices whisper to me what the music is describing. My brother, sometimes, when I have been playing a melancholy piece, the composer's meaning seem to have been borne in upon me so strongly, that I have cried like a child."

Reuben Twyford gazed in astonishment at his brother, but remained silent.

"You see, Reub," continued Ben, after a pause, "I am nought but a fool, with strange fancies; you are a genius; and when your great book comes out in London, you will most likely make your fortune, and will leave Seaborne; while I shall remain here, a poor fisherman, truly, but a contented, happy man."

"If ever I succeed as an author, and a few days must show, trust me, Ben, I will never forget you."

"I do trust you, Reub, and would do anything to please you; even learn if I could, but I can't."

"You must try. Have you any message for Jenny?"

"No; I may call there later on; so good-bye for the present."

The brothers shook hands, and Reub walked in the direction of the village, Ben gazing after him.

"There goes one of the cleverest lads alive," he said. "His book is a wonder; but he's paid a pretty penny to get it published, and says it will make his fortune, so that's all right. Yet I wish he didn't seem so fond of Jenny. It would break my heart to see that girl marry any one but myself. Perhaps he only fancies her as a cousin should."

Consoling himself with these thoughts Benjamin Twyford bent his steps towards the village, where, with some of his companions, he intended practising his music.

CHAPTER II.

Reuben Twyford soon arrived at his uncle's cottage, and finding Jenny alone, asked her to commence her lessons for, like a true schoolmaster, he loved to be teaching.

Jenny Shelton, a plump, merry girl of about eighteen, was one of those strange mixtures of wisdom and frivolity seldom found except in only daughters, who at an early age have had the charge of the house in consequence of their mother's death. In all domestic matters Jenny was as sage as any matron; but she was as ready for an innocent flirtation or quiet piece of mischief as any girl in the village.

Demurely she got her books, and sat herself down by her cousin, listening to his explanation with seeming, if not real, attention. Now and then her pretty little hand would wander up to her rosy lips to hide a yawn; which, when noticed by Reuben, caused him to close his book pettishly, saying, "I see you are tired, Jenny, so I will not proceed. I can't tell how one can wish to be ignorant."

"I am sure I try to learn, Reuben," said Jenny, timidly.

"You could if you liked; but you let your mind wander too much. Only the other day when I was showing you how to conjugate a verb, you confessed to thinking about the bread in the oven."

"Well, the verb could not spoil, but the bread could," answered the pupil, archly.

"I fear you will never be the scholar I wish."

"No!" replied Jenny, with a faint sigh. Then added, with a malicious smile, "Why don't you teach Ben?"

"He won't learn, as he has that wretched opicleide to play."

"Ah, but how beautiful he manages it!" cried Jenny, clapping her hands.

"Yes, and what good is it when all is done?"

"I don't know yet; I hate lessons," said Jenny, petulantly.

"I must speak to you seriously. I feel that it is my duty to read you a lecture."

"Better lectures, and books, too—I detest them! I have tried to learn your stupid, dry, old stuff, but find a good love-story worth all your useful knowledge put together! I hate people who are a head and no heart!"

As she concluded, Jenny rose abruptly from her seat, and opening the front door, stepped into the little garden, where leaning against the wall, she gazed at the rising moon, in pretty sulkiness.

Reuben looked after his cousin in a half-startled manner, for he had never seen her so cross before. He slowly placed the books together, then walked out and stood by her side.

"Jenny," he said in a grave voice, "I am sorry to see this temper."

"It is enough to make any one cross to be talked to as I am!" answered Jenny pouting.

"But it is the only way you can be taught."

"I don't want to be taught! I am no longer a child, to be treated in this manner!"

"Your conduct to-night is excessively childish!"

"If you do not like it, you can go!" replied Jenny, who was really getting cross.

Reuben remained silent for a moment, and in the stillness of the night the band could be heard distinctly.

"I suppose you are listening to the music?" he said, contemptuously.

"Yes, I am; and wish I were close to it."

"I will take you there, if you like."

"And lecture me the while away. No I would sooner be alone!"

"It strikes me you do not know what you want!" said Reub, angrily; "so I will leave you until you are in a better temper."

Reuben Twyford bowed coldly to his cousin, and then strode rapidly away in the contrary direction to that from which the strains came.

Jenny watched him as he passed down the street, and her heart smote her for having been unkind. She knew, with all his faults, he was thoroughly good-hearted, and would do anything for her; so she stood sorrowfully gazing at him until a turn of the road hid him from her view.

While she was looking after Reuben, her cousin Ben approached unperceived in the opposite direction, and touching her lightly on the shoulder, exclaimed, "A penny for your thoughts, Jenny!"

The young girl started, and turned round in anger; but his merry face made her smile, in spite of herself.

"They're not worth the money, Ben," she laughed, "because they were about you."

"Indeed!—and what have I done to merit such consideration?"

"I was thinking how silly you are to waste your time blowing that foolish old opicleide."

"Come, come, Jenny," interrupted Ben; "I see you and Reub have been talking about me. But you don't dislike my playing, do you?"

"No, Ben; I think all innocent amusements good and right; and you don't bother people with you?"

"I suppose you mean that rub for Reub?" laughed Ben. "He's been giving you a lesson, eh?"

"Yes. Have you come to do the same thing?"

"Not to-night, Jenny," replied Ben, gaily. Then, suddenly changing his manner to one of eager earnestness, he added, "And yet there is one thing I should like to teach you, or learn myself."

"Gracious me! What a puzzle, Ben! You must have learned that from Reuben; it can't be your own!"

"I learned it from my heart, Jenny," replied Ben. "I should like to teach you to love me more, or learn to love you less. If you knew how a smile from you has made me happy for days—how I have dreamed of you whilst at sea, and prayed for you both night and day, I do think you would have pity on me."

"Why, Ben, you have become quite a poet!" laughed Jenny. "You will be writing a book, like Reub, soon."

"Not much chance of that, Jenny. But I would not care what I did, so that you were by me. I'll do anything if you will only love me."

Jenny gazed into her cousin's face, and saw poor Ben was in terrible earnest.

"Why, Ben, what is the cause of this sudden change?" she asked.

"You see, Jenny, I—I'm going away," said Ben, in a low voice. "It isn't for long; but the shortest hour seems a month to me when I'm not by you. So how I shall pass a week or two at a distance, I don't know."

"Why, where are you going?" she asked, showing more anxiety than she intended. "Surely you have not been foolish enough to take old Robertson's offer to command his collier?"

"Do you think I would do that when you told me not to?" was the reproachful reply. "No, Jenny; I have only to go as far as London. You see, we want some new instruments for our band, and the parson and one or two more gentlemen have subscribed for them. Some one must go to buy them, and the choice has fallen on me. They say I play better, and know more of music, than any of them. I'm to start by the first train from Lowestoft to-morrow. I must away to-night, to get over there in time; but I wouldn't leave without saying good-bye to you and endeavoring to learn my fate."

"Learn your fate?" she mused, turning the sand with her foot, and looking down. "I don't understand you."

"Not understand me, Jenny? I mean I can't go until I know if you love me. I know I'm only a rough fellow, without fine words; but I love you with all my heart and soul; and if you'll give me your hand, I will make you a faithful, fond, tender husband."

As he spoke, he held out his large brown hand to Jenny, who still, with looks cast down and flushed face, stood silently before him.

For a moment, the strong man trembled, as he stood, with outstretched palm, waiting for her decision; but the next minute, she flipped her pretty fingers into his hand. He grasped them, and drew her to his breast.

Who can describe the first hour of transport that all feel when they love, and know they are beloved?

So, when Ben recovered from his excess of joy, and was about to part from Jenny, he found it was so late he would only have time to pack up a few things, and start at once. He therefore asked his cousin to inform his brother of the commission he had to execute in London and was rather pleased than otherwise at having an excuse for not seeing him, since he was pretty certain to inveigh against a journey taken for such an object.

Having completed these arrangements, he kissed Jenny, and, with a light heart, hastened towards his own cottage.

CHAPTER III.

A month passed away, and still Ben remained in London. He wrote one or two short letters to Jenny and Reub, telling them he was engaged to play at several concerts, and hinting at some wondrous good fortune which had happened to him.

At length, Jenny received a very short note, informing her of Ben's immediate return, and his intention of calling on her directly.

With beating heart, she awaited in the little garden the coming of her lover.

But so absorbed was Jenny in the beauty of the scene, over which the moon cast its calm, silvery light, and her own thoughts, that she was not aware of Ben's approach until he stood before her.

"Lor, Ben, how you did frighten me, she exclaimed, with a start.

"Frighten you! Am I so ugly, then I thought you would have been waiting to me."

"And whom else do you think I was waiting to meet?" demanded Jenny, with a sly smile.

"Bless you, darling!" Ben snatched a kiss, and then sat quickly, "How is my brother? He never wrote to me."

A slight shade of sorrow passed over Jenny's face as she replied.

"I don't know how to answer you, Ben! Reub seems changed since you left. A few days ago he came as usual in the evening, and sat down by my side, but never spoke. I asked him if he

was unwell; or if I had offended him; he only answered 'No;' but still remained gloomy and sullen. Thinking to distract his attention and please him, I took down my books, and brought them to him for a lesson. With a scornful laugh, he darted across the room, and hastily left the cottage."

"He must be ill!" said Ben, anxiously. "I will go to him at once!"

"You will come in and see my father first," said Jenny; "besides, you have not told us the good news you hinted at in your letters!"

"Not told you!" exclaimed Ben. "Well, I never could write a letter properly; but I did not think I was as bad as all that! Never mind, it won't take long to tell; and while I am doing it, I can let uncle know that we are engaged, and that we must be married soon. One kiss before we go in, though, Jenny—just to give me courage."

After this, the lovers, hand-in-hand, entered the cottage, where they found the parent enjoying his evening pipe and a glass of grog.

"Why, Ben, lad! come back at last, have you?" was the greeting of old Shelton, shaking hands warmly with his nephew. "I'm glad to see you again; but what kept you so long in that dirty, smoky place, London, eh, lad?"

"London's not so dirty as you think, uncle. It's a fine place, and a noisy one; but folk soon get used to it; and then there are such sights to be seen, such buildings, such horses and carriages; and oh! such beautiful ladies!"

"Ben!" said Jenny, archly, and her lover paused.

"But what have you been doing there, lad?" inquired Shelton. "I know it's a fine place to spend money in, but I did not think you were the lad to waste your cash, and get your head turned with such like vanities?"

"You're right there, uncle!" replied Ben. "I stopped in London to make money, not to spend it!"

"You must have been a sharp lad indeed if you did that," rejoined old Shelton.

"All I can say is, I have made money, and a good sum too!"

"Well, light your pipe, fill your glass, and tell us all about it!" said old Shelton.

Ben, obeying his uncle's command, entered into the minutest particulars about his stay in the metropolis, stating that when he got there, he went to the shop in Regent Street where he was to purchase the musical instruments, and soon made his outlay in the goods he required. But just as he was about to leave the shop, he happened to see an ophicleide which was in the window. It was such a beauty, he could not resist the temptation of trying it. He preferred his request for permission, which was readily granted by the shopman. Never before had he touched such an instrument; he could do anything with it, and played away without thinking, when, suddenly a side-door opened, and a little gentleman—his face lathered ready for shaving—popped his head in the shop, and asked who was playing. The query surprised him, and recalled him to his senses. Ben was about to apologize, when he was asked politely to follow the speaker upstairs, and take the instrument with him.

He was ushered into a handsomely furnished sitting-room, out of which led a bed-room, in which the little gentleman—who was a foreigner—finished his toilet, asking Ben his name, business, and a hundred other questions. He then made him sit down to breakfast, and during the meal talked of nothing but music. Ben, of course, felt quite at home.

When they had finished the repast, Ben was desired to play over several pieces of music selected by his entertainer. Though he had never seen them before, he was able to please the listener so very much, that he told him he was the great Lafond, the composer and leader, and asked him to play at a concert that day week, for which he promised him five pounds.

The offer was refused, on the ground that he was anxious to return to Seabourne.

The little man was not so easily put off. He pointed out to Ben it was unwise to decline, as his forte was music, and fortune was within his reach.

The astonished fisherman laughed incredulously; but an offer of six guineas a-week, for two years, to play when and where required, with travelling expenses, made him hesitate; not at the smallness of the salary, but with utter amazement at the liberality of the professor. Assured, however, of its genuineness, Ben gleefully accepted, and an engagement, in accordance with these stipulations, was drawn up and duly signed.

"His duties commenced immediately, and he played almost nightly, with increasing success, at concerts given for the most part by Mr. Lafond, to the great satisfaction of that gentleman, and his own pecuniary profit.

The first two "off-nights," as they call them, he hurried down to Seabourne, to tell the news, and to ask consent to marry Jenny directly.

When Ben concluded his startling narrative, the old man shook him warmly by the hand.

"Holy, toity!" said he; "this is a nice finish to your story, indeed! So I'm to be left alone, while you run off with my little Jenny? Who do you think will look after the old man when she is gone?"

"But you will go with us, sir," Ben broke in. "Of course, she would not leave you."

"I suppose I must consent," said old Shelton, rising. "But we must not be in a hurry. You have to return to London in a day or two; we will follow you in a fortnight, and then matters can be arranged. Somehow, I don't like leaving Reub, though."

"You can bring him with you," proposed Ben.

"I know he wishes to be in London; besides, his book must be out by this time, and said he should go to town then."

"I know nothing about his book," said Shelton, gravely. "All I can say is, he seems much altered lately. He won't speak to a soul unless he's obliged to, but keeps himself shut up in the lone school-house, with not a person near him. Do you know, Ben, I think he's not right in his head. There's a strange hollowness in his voice, and he has a wild glance that I don't like. He's changed wonderfully of late."

"I sincerely trust you are mistaken," Ben exclaimed, with some uneasiness. "I have noticed that on many points my brother seemed carried away to an extent that appeared almost ridiculous. Indeed, I fear he studies too much."

"Perhaps you're right, Ben; but he's a very different man to what he was."

Ben was greatly depressed by this intelligence, and soon after he took his leave, and hastened to see his brother.

When he arrived at the school-house he rapped at the door, but not receiving an answer, raised the latch, and entered the room with a quick step, but paused at the sight he beheld.

Seated at one end of the table, on which the upper part of his body rested, was Reuben Twyford, his arms outstretched, and his hands clenched. Before him was a black bottle and a glass; several newspapers were scattered about, and at his feet were two books, their leaves crumpled and torn.

The pale light of the oil lamp fell over this scene, giving it a weird, desolate look. At first, Ben thought his brother was asleep, and approached him gently; but Reuben sprang to his feet, making Ben recoil at the sight of his ghastly face.

"What is the matter, Reuben?" he asked, with an evident distrust at the answer he expected.

"So," cried Reub, with a hollow laugh, "you have come at last to crow over me—to tell me of your success, and laugh at my downfall!"

"I do not understand you, Reub. I came to tell you some good news," was the quiet reply.

"Good news? Oh, I know all about it! Ha, ha, ha! They pay a man to blow a wretched trumpet, whilst genius is left to starve. The papers go into raptures over his performances, whilst they laugh at a work which is the result of years of study and thought."

Growling as if in pain, he threw himself back in his chair, and leant on the table in the same attitude as that in which his brother had discovered him.

"What has happened, Reub?" demanded Ben, kindly, as he drew a chair up to the table. "I've only now come back from London, and therefore have not heard anything of your affairs."

"London!" repeated Reub, with a sneering laugh—"a good, just place that is, where they lead a man into bankruptcy, and then hound him on to madness! Curse it!" he muttered, seizing one of the newspapers. "Look here—that. One will do, for they sing the same song—'trash, presumption, ignorance.' One fellow asks, 'How can a country schoolmaster know good society?' Ha, ha! These critics are very clever!"

"Ben read the part of the paper pointed out to him, and found a critique wherein his brother's book was severely handled, being held up to ridicule as a piece of absurdity. While he was thus engaged, Reub, with feverish anxiety, poured out glass after glass of brandy from the bottle, which he drank rapidly.

"Dear Reub, I am very sorry for this—indeed, I am," observed Ben, sorrowfully, as he laid down the paper. "But you must not despair. You say you have heard of my good luck. Share it with me; I have sufficient for all. We will go to London, and there you will have a greater field open for your talents. You must succeed. I feel certain you will."

A quick flush, as if of hope, passed over Reuben's face, but it was gone in an instant; and, taking his brother's proffered hand, he said, mournfully, "No, lad, no! I have no ambition now, and but one hope left—to live and die in peace and unknown! They have broken my pride—my heart,—Ben. "Oh, if you had known how I loved that book! But it's all over now—all over!" said Reub, and he emptied his glass and refilled it.

"Nonsense, Reub; while there's life there's hope!" replied Ben, gently, preventing his brother drinking again.

"Yes; I, too, have one hope. I have told you that I have given up ambition. Never again will I court the public favor. I am determined to remain down here, to attend to nothing but my school!"

"But you cannot remain alone," urged Ben. "No, Ben; I have no intention of being alone," replied Reub. "You will, of course, go to London, where, I see by these papers, a fortune awaits you. I shall remain here, and take Cousin Jenny as my wife. I had longed to offer her riches and fame; that can never be. But Jenny is a good girl, and loves me, so I will be content."

Ben gazed at his brother. What could he say? What could he do? At length Reub, struck with his silence, looked up; and beheld his changed face.

"Why, Ben, what is the matter? are you not well?" he asked.

"Oh, Reub, Reub, my poor Reub, how can I tell you?" replied Ben. "I must speak, and yet I dare not!"

"What is the meaning of this?" exclaimed Reub, springing to his feet, trembling. "Speak! Do not keep me in suspense! Does what you have to say concern Jenny?"

"It does," was the sad response.

"She is well, is she not?"

"Listen, Reub—hear what I have to say, and bear it like a man. Jenny cannot be your wife; she is engaged to me!"

As if struck by a thunderbolt, Reub fell back into his chair. For some time he remained with his face buried in his hands, sobbing like a child; but when Ben approached him, he sprang to his feet, and turning upon his brother, exclaimed, "So you, my brother, have been in the conspiracy against me; and Jenny, too! She whom I loved with all my soul; she for whom I was ambitious! Oh, how I have longed to tell her my troubles; which she alone could comfort! And now I find her false with the rest! I have no one now to trust and confide in! My love, my brother, my hopes, all turn from me! I am alone in the world!"

"Do not speak in that way," said Ben; "no one has tried to betray you. Trust me—"

"Trust you!" ejaculated Reuben—"you who have deceived me more than all! My dreams of happiness are wrecked by you. I see your wish. You would lock me up in a madhouse, so that your baseness should not be discovered. But all shall know it! I will fling myself at Jenny's feet! She will—she shall save me!"

Springing past his brother, he rushed to the door, but before he could reach it, sank senseless to the ground.

Ben lost no time in fetching some neighbours, and then hurried off for the doctor, with whom he returned in a few minutes, but, alas! too late; Reuben Twyford was dead!

"I suppose, doctor, my poor brother's fit was brought on by worry?" asked Ben.

"Hem; yes, and other causes." Here the doctor looked hard at the brandy-bottle. "Your brother was a very excitable man. The least thing put him out of temper. Drink would have a dreadful effect on his brain; worry and disappointment would aid it. The death was caused by apoplexy. I will forward you a certificate to that effect. What caused the death we must state; what caused the disease no one need know."

In the cemetery of the quaint old fishery of Seabourne repose all that is earthly of Reuben Twyford; his untimely end deeply deplored by the toilers of the sea. Ben, and Jenny, and Uncle Twyford pursue the even tenor of their way: the ophicleide player and his family being in the full enjoyment of the easy affluence which well directed energy places in the path of talent properly applied.

SILWOOD GRANGE.

In a private room of the "Swan Inn," Hamersham, two gentlemen were engaged in no pleasant conversation.

"I am sorry remarked one, addressing the other, considerably his junior, who was pacing the apartment; "but as necessity has no law, I must have the twenty pounds to-morrow, or—"

"Or what?" demanded the second, turning quickly towards him.

"I shall be compelled to place in John Oxley's hand the cheque I hold, forged by his adopted son."

The fair countenance of the listener became dark with rage; his hand clenched; but evidently aware of how useless was such ebullition of feeling, he restrained himself, and slowly said, "If you do that, Tom Chester, you will spoil your own game, and ruin me."

"You bring the ruin on your own head, my dear fellow. Certainly you are cool. You first pay me a just debt with a forged cheque, which I—fortunately for you—discover before presenting it to be rejected. I overlook that, and now you want me to forego twenty pounds more. Why don't you ask John Oxley? You told me once he could refuse you nothing."

"Once!" repeated the other, sullenly. "That time has long passed."

"I suppose," laughed Chester, "you were too generous in asking?"

"Far more so than he is giving," replied Gilbert Burt. "I tell you my adopted father is as great a miser as ever trod in shoe-leather. He loves to hoard his money, to look at, and count it. I am to inherit all at his death; until which, I must not exceed my allowance."

"Board, lodging, and two hundred a year pocket-money. Not bad to one who has no other claim on him but that of being the son of the woman he loved. I fancy the nephew he disinherited for your sake, Burt, would be glad of your place."

"And I'll tell you what," ejaculated the other, resolutely; "say no more. He'll get it. How, I cannot imagine, but some of my doings must have reached John Oxley's ears. He often converses upon the subject, and expresses opinions I feel are levelled at me. And besides, his manner is different."

"More reason, my dear fellow, for you at once to pay this twenty. I'm not rich; I can't afford to lose it, and John Oxley might alter his will."

Gilbert Burt's face changed at the suggestion. He walked thoughtfully to the window.

John Oxley, the owner of Silwood Grange, was sixty-five, and a bachelor. In his youth he had loved devotedly; but the object of his affection,

having bestowed her heart elsewhere, he made a vow of perpetual celibacy—a resolution by no means opposed by his relations.

Ten years later, however, the woman who had won his heart died within a few days of her husband, leaving her only child Gilbert, an orphan. On the intelligence reaching John Oxley, he adopted the boy, and brought him up as his own son.

When, however, the lad grew to manhood he was idle and dissolute to an extent which ill-accorded with his foster-father's notions, and greatly estranged him from one who, for his mother's sake, he would fain have shaped to his own purpose.

But Oxley was forced to the conclusion that Gilbert Burt took more after his father than his mother. The disappointment grieved him more than he cared to say. Nevertheless, hoping for amendment when the wildness of youth was passed, he retained him in favor, keeping a secret watch on his proceedings, which brought anything but a satisfactory result.

Thus a difference had risen between them, and Gilbert Burt was assured if ever John Oxley knew of the forged cheque, his ruin was certain.

He thought of this as he stood by the window, and coned over Tom Chester's words. He shuddered at the idea. Never had it so forcibly presented itself to him, or seemed so probable. He leaned his hot forehead against the glass, and pondered.

"Come, Burt, I want your answer," broke in his friend, who started at the haggard countenance abruptly turned upon him.

"Meet me here at twelve to-morrow, and you shall have the money," said Gilbert; and without another word, he left the room.

On quitting the inn, he struck into the quiet lanes of Hamersham. Maddened, driven to desperation by his position he wandered about till after dusk, when he returned to Silwood Grange.

Entering the hall by a side door, he looked around, then approaching the library door, listened. Not a sound was to be heard, and turning the handle, he entered.

The lamp was lighted ready for John Oxley's coming. The shutters were closed, the curtains drawn.

Swiftly crossing the room, Gilbert Burt unfastened the former, and also undid the window, after which, he re-arranged the draperies, as if guilt were already on his soul. He hastened from the apartment to his own, after one glance at the old bureau, in which reposed John Oxley's will, and well-filled cash box.

The hour was past one when the young man, cautiously descending into the grounds from his bedroom window by a trellis, went round to the library.

He kept in the shade; but once, when he had to pass a patch of light, it might be seen he wore a coat buttoned to the chin, and had a gauze over his face.

He listened. There was profound silence. Noiselessly he opened the library window, and pushed the shutter back. All was dark within. John Oxley had gone to his room. Assured of this, he entered more confidently. There was no one there. The fire gave forth light, and flashed as with directing finger on the old bureau. With beating heart the intruder advanced to it, inserted an iron bar he brought in the lock, and, with an effort, forced it open.

Already was his arm extended towards the cash-box, when a hand, suddenly laid on his, arrested him.

"Thief—burglar!" cried a voice.

Gilbert Burt, turning, beheld John Oxley. Affrighted, he strove to cast off the hold upon him. Impossible!

"No," ejaculated the other; "I am old, but strong. You shall not escape me."

What was the detected thief to do? Stay to be identified and ruined? No. Wait! There was no need. He read recognition already in John Oxley's face before his startled lips pronounced his name—"Gilbert!"

"He still held the iron bar in his hand, which he uplifted.

Suddenly, the firelight gleamed on the upraised weapon. It fell; and, with a heavy thud, John Oxley sank to the floor.

Horried, the would-be assassin stooped over him, when approaching footsteps sounded in the ante-room, and alarmed, he fled.

The next moment, the door was flung wide open, and John Oxley's old, confidential servant rushed in.

On perceiving the scene before him, he began to call loudly for help, when, slightly raising himself, John Oxley exclaimed, "Hush—hush, James! The thief—the slayer! But the villain must not be taken. It is a snake I have warmed in my bosom that has thus felled me. It is Gilbert Burt, my adopted son. Hush! not a word. My moments may be numbered; I have none to lose. Though, for his mother's memory, he shall go free of this crime, yet I have a duty to perform to one I have wronged. Help me."

With difficulty, he approached the bureau, took out the will, and flung it in the fire.

"Now," he exclaimed, as he fell back in his servant's arms, "if I die, I die intestate. My nephew, and not my would-be assassin, will inherit Silwood."

Gilbert Burt was never again seen in Hamersham; and, to the surprise of all but Tom Chester, John Oxley's nephew is now regarded as his uncle's heir, and the future inheritor of Silwood Grange.



“He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom”



in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

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THE FAVORITE

SATURDAY, MAY 30, 1874.

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MATERNAL PATIENCE.

A mother's patience always excites admiration, and sometimes fills one with utter astonishment. Perhaps all mothers are not alike distinguished for this maternal excellence. But when we think how many millions of human beings have been born, nursed, cradled, washed, clothed and fed through the helpless period of infancy, and through the wayward years of childhood, and remember how large a share of the toll, care, and responsibility involved in all this nursery work, has fallen to the lot of mothers, and been performed by them with so few rebellious murmurs at the dispensations of Providence, and with so much apparent cheerfulness and good-will, we are persuaded that maternal patience is an inherent quality in maternal history.

A man can comprehend something of a mother's love. He is not surprised at the deep joy which thrills her bosom at the birth of her first-born. He does not wonder that, when she first clasps to her heart the babe she calls her own, she feels all a mother's pride. Her emotions of deep tenderness towards the little helpless being just committed to her watchful care, may arise in part from beholding a new creation of Providence, and in part from the novelty of the fond relationship which is just begun. But it is more difficult to account for the after-growth of patience which she manifests week after week, month after month, and year after year, and which seems not only to be daily renewed from all weariness, but to be utterly inexhaustible.

While her babe is in early infancy, the mother incessantly attends to its wants. There is not one to whose care she ventures to entrust it long. Hour after hour she does something to promote its comforts. She holds it. She feeds it. She talks to it. She changes its apparel. She folds it to her bosom. She sings the same unwearied lullaby, and continues the same monotonous rocking of the cradle sometimes for a full hour, watching the half-open eyes, and dreamy smile of the little one whom she vainly seeks to lull to healthful and calm repose. And when at length her patience triumphs, and the happy moment comes, and sleep descends on the dewy lids of the child, she hastens to employ her empty arms in the other numerous and varied duties of her household. Yet seldom for a moment does she venture to avert her eye or ear from the cradle, where the babe of her bosom drifts in its balmy slumber.

When unaccountable illness has made her babe more than usually sensitive and fretful, you

have seen her, again and again, after unwearied effort in rocking and singing, lay her babe down to rest in the cradle, and again and again run to its little bed, drawn by its sudden and piercing cry, and take it up and fold it to her bosom, and sit down in her nursery chair to swing to and fro to the music of her maternal lullaby, till gentle sleep comes once more to her relief. And yet her patience is not exhausted; indeed, it seems sometimes that it gains fresh accessions of strength every day. But the nature of that fortitude which enables her to endure with patience, not merely the monotony of woman's lot, but the cares, the anxieties, and the trials of maternity, must be to a man a most impenetrable mystery.

Oh, the patience of a mother is a wonderful endowment! Its value is not yet fully appreciated, its history is yet unwritten. The more it is contemplated the more wonderful it appears. It is a quality resulting from that fortitude which seems peculiar to her sex—a quality so lovely and so amiable as to be equalled by nothing else.

THE STUDIES OF NATURE.

"Stand out of my sunshine!" said Diogenes to Alexander, when the Greek monarch asked what service he could render him. Haughty as the philosopher's reply may sound, it merely expresses the honest independence which every highly-cultivated and well-balanced mind may feel towards those who possess nothing better than the accidental distinctions of rank or fortune. He indeed deserves our pity who needs the condescending smile of the proud, or the heartless flattery of the vain, either to rouse him to exertion or warm him into happiness.

The power of self-excitement is the most desirable of all attainments, and it is the most rare. To love knowledge merely for its usefulness—to form and strengthen virtuous dispositions, with the hope of no other reward than the deep tranquillity they bring—is a task achieved by few; yet it is the only simple and direct road to lasting happiness. He who can find intellectual excitement in the fall of an apple, or the hues of a wild flower, may well say to the officious world, "Stand out of my sunshine!" To him Nature is an open volume, where truths of the loftiest import are plainly written; and the temptations and anxieties of this life have no power to cast a shadow on its broad and beautiful pages. We do not mean that solitude is bliss, even where enjoyment is of the purest kind. An eminence, that places us above the hopes and fears, the joy and sorrows of social life, must indeed be an unenviable one; but that which puts us beyond the reach of the ever-varying tide of circumstance and opinion is surely desirable; and nothing on which the mind can be employed tends so much to produce this state of internal sunshine as the study of Nature in her various forms.

Politics, love of gain, ambition of renown, everything, in short, which can be acted upon by the passions of mankind, have a corroding influence on the human soul. But Nature, ever majestic and serene, moves on with the same stately steps and beaming smile, whether a merchantman is wrecked or an empire overthrown. The evils of man's heart pollute all with which they can be incorporated; but they cannot defile her holy temple. The doors are indeed closed against the restless and the bad; but the radiant goddess is ever at the altar, willing to smile upon all who are pure enough to love her quiet beauty. Ambition may play a mighty game; it may task the sinews of nations, and make the servile multitude automation-dancers to its own stormy music; but sun, and moon, and stars, go forth on their sublime mission independent of its power; and its utmost efforts cannot change the laws which produce the transient glory of the rainbow. Avarice may freeze the genial current of affection, and dry up all the springs of sympathy within the human soul; but it cannot diminish the pomp of summer, or restrain the profligality of autumn. Fame may lead us on in pursuit of glittering phantoms, until the diseased mind loses all relish for substantial good; but it cannot share the eternity of light, or the immortality of the minutest atom. He who has steered his bark ever so skillfully through the sea of politics, rarely, if ever, finds a quiet haven. His vexations and his triumphs have all been of an exciting character; they have depended on outward circumstances, over which he has very limited power; and when the turbulent scene has passed away, he finds, too late, that he has lived on the breath of others, and that happiness has no home within his heart. And what is the experience of him who has existed only for wealth? who has safely moored his richly-freighted vessel in the spacious harbor of successful commerce? Does he find that happiness can, like modern love, be bought with gold? You may see him hurrying about to purchase it in small quantities, wherever the exhibitions of taste and talent offer it for sale; but the article is too ethereal to be baled for future use, and it soon evaporates amid the emptiness of his intellectual warehouse.

He that lives only for fame will find that happiness and renown are scarcely speaking acquaintances. Even if he could catch the rainbow he has so eagerly pursued, he would find its light fluctuating with each changing sunbeam, and fading at the touch of every passing cloud. Nor is he who has wasted the energies of his youth in disentangling the knotty skein of controversy more likely to find the evening of his days serene and tranquil. The demon of

dogmatism or of doubt may have grappled him closely, and converted his early glow of feeling, and elasticity of thought, into rancorous prejudice or shattered faith. But the deep streams of quiet thought and pure philosophy gush forth abundantly from all the hiding-places of Nature; there is no drop of bitterness at the fountain; the clear waters reflect none of the Proteus forms of human pride; and ever, as they flow, their peaceful murmurs speak of heaven. The enjoyment that depends on powerful excitement saps the strength of manhood, and leaves nothing for old age but discontent and desolation. Yet we need amusements in the decline of life, even more than in its infancy; and where shall we find any so safe, satisfactory and dignified, as battery and barometer, telescope and prism?

Electric power may be increased with less danger than man's ambition; it is far safer to weigh the air than a neighbor's motives; it is more disquieting to watch tempests lowering in the political horizon, than it is to gaze at volcanoes in the moon; and it is much easier to separate and unite the colors in a ray of light, than it is to blend the many-coloured hues of truth, turned out of their course by the sharp corners of angry controversy. Finally, he who drinks deeply at the fountain of natural science, will reflect the cheerfulness of his own spirit on all things around. If the sympathy of heart and mind be within his reach, he will enjoy it more keenly than other men; and if solitude be his portion, he can, in the sincerity of a full and plous mind, say to all the temptations of fame and pleasure, "Stand ye out of my sunshine!"

OUT-DOOR RECREATION.

About the manner of employing leisure, there are different opinions. Some think that a young man cannot better employ his evenings than in joining a mutual improvement or mechanics' institute class, there to study drawing, mathematics, chemistry, grammar, and the sciences. Others say he ought to be at home improving his mind by reading good books, and perhaps attending a weekly prayer-meeting. Every one will have his own idea of the proper employment of leisure; but all will be agreed that the very worst use of leisure is to spend it in drinking-places.

What we wish to enforce here, is, that however profitable it may be for young men to cultivate their minds during a portion of their leisure time, it is of quite as great importance that they should employ a still larger share of it in the cultivation of their physical health. We suspect the necessity for this is often overlooked in this country. We are very hard workers. In towns especially, we undergo a tremendous wear and tear of brain. We thus too often exhaust the springs of life at their very source; we become prematurely old, wrinkled and gray; we cease to enjoy life, because we have lost that healthy vigor of the physical system which is necessary for the full enjoyment and use of life; and then we discover that health is a most precious thing, after we have lost it! Our youth has gone,—our vital energy has evaporated. We have fagged at the desk, and pored over ledgers and day-books, until we have, perhaps, become full in purse but diseased in liver. We can buy rich vlands enough, but have no longer teeth with which to eat them. We can purchase music, but are not able now to dance to it. We can travel "first-class express" into the most delicious scenery; but alas! there is a twinge of the great toe, or a "stitch" in the liver, or a miserable dyspeptic green-sickness of mind and heart which makes the loveliest scenes in nature vapid, meaningless, and unwelcome to the prematurely-debilitated man, who has sacrificed his health and strength at the shrine of wealth.

It is all very well to get rich. Whoever confesses an aversion to belong to the class of rich people, is a hypocrite: at heart, he would be rich like other persons. Are not riches a source of power, of honor, of ease, of enjoyment—such as they are? And do not all men—say, and women too—love these? What we do say, however, is, that these must not be bought at too great a price; and to buy them at the cost of our life—of our health, which is our life, and the source of its enjoyment—is certainly to buy wealth and its rewards at far too high a price.

We would therefore recommend the young men who have of late years obtained greater leisure, to apply a considerable portion of the time now disengaged from business to healthy exercises and pleasant relaxations. For a clerk who has been sitting at a desk, or standing behind a counter all day, to stew himself up in a room with hundreds of other breaths is anything but wholesome—is indeed most hurtful, not only to body, but to mind. It is his physical system that wants play and relaxation. His lungs need expansion of fresh air. He requires exercise.

An American gentleman, recently a traveller in Europe has written thus:—"I know of nothing in the habits of foreign nations which struck me at first as so entirely new, as a love for out-door sports. In England, I did not pass through a village without finding the green cricket-ground; and be it remembered, not with boys at play on it, but men—men often of the boat-races, where the whole population were gathered; gentlemen of the highest rank presiding, and the nobleman and student tugging man. In September we were making our foot-trip through the Highlands of Scotland, and we scarcely found an inn so remote which was not

crowded with gentlemen, shooting, riding or pedestrianizing through the mountains, and with the zest and eagerness of boys let out of school. On the Continent, with the exception of Hungary, there is not such a passion for exciting field-sports; but the same love for the open air. In Paris, a pleasant day will fill the Champs Elysées with cheerful parties, sipping their coffee under the shade, or watching the thousand exhibitions going on in open assemblies. And in the provinces, every man who can have a spot six feet by ten in the fresh air, uses it to sip his wine or take his 'potage' therein. In Germany, the country houses seem to be made without reference to in-door living, and people everywhere take their meals or receive their friends in balconies or arbors. Every city has its gardens and promenades, which are constantly full. There are open-air games, too, where old and young take part; and, in summer, the studying-classes, or all who can get leisure, are off on pedestrian tours, through the Harz, or Switzerland, or nearer home. There is throughout Europe a rich animal love of open-air movement, of plays and athletic sports, of which we Americans, as a people, know little."

NEWS NOTES.

Marshal Serrano was received with great enthusiasm on his arrival at Madrid.

General Concha has been appointed General-in-Chief of the Northern Army in Spain.

Railway companies between Chicago and New York have advanced their rates 5c. par 100 lbs.

Measures are already being taken to secure the election of President Grant for the third term.

Minister Washburne is said to have peremptorily declined the Secretaryship of the Treasury.

The question of the reorganization of the Government is the all-absorbing topic at Madrid.

The Spanish Government, after the capture of Bilbao again applied to Germany to recognize the Republic.

The betrothals of Grand Duke Vladimir of Russia and Duchess Marie of Mecklenburg have been arranged.

A Madrid despatch says the Carlists under Don Alfonso have been defeated with heavy loss by the Republicans.

It is rumored as probably that Queen Victoria accompanied by the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, will visit Ireland this fall.

The Carlists are returning in strong force to the north bank of the river Nervion. It is said Gen. Dominguez will be appointed Minister of War.

New York steamship agents estimate a decrease in the numbers of the travelling public for this season of from 30 to 50 per cent. on account of the recent ocean disasters.

A number of Chinese at Shanghai attacked the residents of the French settlements there, and set fire to an and sacked their houses. The police were compelled to fire on the mob to restore order.

In reference to the Geneva Award, it was stated in the United States Senate that the money would be distributed among sufferers from rebel cruisers, and not among insurance companies.

Marshal Serrano says the Carlist movement is only shaken, not entirely destroyed. Don Carlos has issued a proclamation to his followers, expressing his confidence in the ultimate triumph of his cause.

The representatives at Washington of the contesting parties for the Governorship of the State of Arkansas have, after a lengthy sitting forwarded a despatch to Little Rock, advising that the Arkansas Legislature shall be called together to decide the question as to who received the greatest number of votes at the November election in 1872; that the troops on each side be dismissed, excepting a body-guard not exceeding one company, and that, pending the decision of the Assembly, the contestants shall in no way interfere with each other. A Little Rock despatch states that Baxter says that a quorum of the Legislature has assembled under his call, and he refuses to accede to the proposition of the Washington representatives.

CONVERSATION is a sort of grand review of our intellectual powers, and we cannot be too careful how we muster and marshal them. Some men's army seems entirely made up of musketeers: their talk is one burst of fancy and rhapsody; others' all artillery: they "speak in words hard as cannon-balls," however trivial may be the subject of discourse. He is judicious who sets out his army in such a way that the forces—heavy horse or light foot—come up as they are wanted, and retire gracefully when they are no longer required. With the first cry of pain, the pleasant little band of pipers that Good Humor has always in control, should be set to work, and the wounded should be borne from the field without the slightest word of exultation from the victors. In the beginning of the contest, we should follow the example of the French soldiers at Foutinbras, who, with a beautiful politeness, called upon their enemies to fire first.

Whenever I entered this room I felt a chill creep through me, and grew sad. I had noticed that from the first and supposed it to be because the story the old woman had told me had had a strong effect upon me.

The image of Fenella weeping at the window seemed to have impressed itself upon my mind, so that I could almost see her sitting there.

As I lay in my bed, with the communicating door open, and watched the moonlight falling in chequered patches through the vine leaves down upon the floor, I often fancied that if I did but lift my voice and call "Fenella," I should see the trim form, in its pretty peasant bodice, trip across the sill. Often I even imagined the outline of a figure sitting beside the great box, bent forward toward it. It was only a shadow; only a flutter of the leaves; only something in my own eyes, or my own brain; but it proved how much I thought of Fenella.

Here she had lived, here sorrowed; and there are some who believe that the lives of those who have dwelt in any house leave an impress upon it ever after, affecting the after-dwellers very mysteriously. And we all know that there are rooms in which we cannot be comfortable, and others where a certain sense of peace possesses us, without any such tangible reasons as good or bad ventilation, pleasant outlook, or gloomy surroundings.

Once across the still of Fenella's room, I felt instantly oppressed with sadness, even to the point of tears.

At last I awakened one night with a strange chill upon me. It was not the chill that precedes an illness—we all know it very well. A thought given to those mysteries, which all sensible people profess to doubt, will send it creeping through the blood of almost any one existing. I had been thinking of nothing, dreaming of nothing; but I awakened with this chill upon me, and looking through the door of the little room I have spoken of, which I naturally did whenever I opened my eyes, I saw Fenella.

Yes, my maid Fenella, just as she had looked when she lived with me. Her black petticoat, her red bodice, the white sleeves of her chemise were as plain as though they had been tangible garments. Her black braids fell to her knees. Around her neck hung the black velvet ribbon on which I knew she wore her wedding-ring. She was weeping bitterly, and bending as she wept over the box in which grew the vines and flowers which flung their shadow on the moonlit floor, so that she seemed to water them with her tears.

My first thought was that the old woman was mistaken—that Fenella lived and had returned to the villa in the night without thinking that it was inhabited.

"Fenella," I called—"Fenella, it is Miss Pansy; don't be afraid."

But, as I spoke, she was gone—gone without moving from the spot—gone as a bubble bursts and vanishes. I uttered a scream that aroused my husband from his slumbers.

I was advised to believe the whole scene a dream, and tried my best to think so; but before three days had passed, I saw Fenella again.

This time I was not sleeping. I was in the garden, and looked through the window; and what I saw this time was Fenella, kneeling beside the flower-grown box, making the sign of the cross above it. Her face was like the face of death; her hands waxen white, like those of a corpse.

The sight was so terrible that I lost my senses, and was found by Carlos lying in a death-like swoon upon the grass, ten minutes after.

This time it could not be a dream; but still nothing could make my husband believe that I had seen a spirit, nor that I was a believer in ghosts. "Optical illusion" is a good suggestion—we used it. Carlos explained why it should have taken the form of Fenella, and threatened the doctor.

Weeks had passed. I had accepted my husband's version of my vision. I looked upon myself as the victim of optical illusion. I saw Fenella no more. I laughed at myself for having seen her, or for having fancied it. And the time had almost come for our return home, when, one night, we entertained one or two English friends in our little villa; and between the pauses of song and chatter, some curiosity that we had picked up in our travels was spoken of, and I ran into my room to get it.

It was a dark night. No moon flung its radiance through the windows. Only a little swinging lamp illuminated my apartment; but that inner room, once my maid Fenella's, was bright with a strange silvery light that seemed to grow as I looked upon it. And, as I stood motionless, gazing towards it, I saw my vision once again.

Fenella, paler than ever—but this time strangely occupied. She was digging in the earth about the roots of the vines, and heaping the mould into the form of a new-made grave.

"Fenella," I said. She did not vanish. "Fenella," I screamed. She turned toward me. I saw that a new-born babe lay upon her breast. She made the sign of the cross above it and was gone.

I crept back to my guests without having screamed or fainted. I had determined not to be scoffed at as a ghost-seer. I even kept my secret from my husband; but that night a strange thing happened. A tempest swept across the country and took our villa in its way. It demolished a chimney and the deep window of Fenella's room; with it the flower-grown box and the great luxuriant vines.

We sent for workmen to clear away the rubbish, and this is what they found among it, deep down in the mould from which the vines had grown: A little box, in which lay the tini-

est skeleton human eyes ever rested upon, and about its neck a little golden chain, to which hung a heavy, plain gold wedding-ring, with this name engraved within it: FENELLA.

REMEMBRANCES.

I think of thee
When the soft voices of the nightingales,
In sweet and plaintive warblings to the night,
Ring through the vales.

When thinkest thou of me?
I think of thee
By the cool waters of the shaded fountains;
While, in the shimmering rays of twilight glow,
Glisten the mountains.

Where thinkest thou of me?
I think of thee
With many tender hopes and anxious fears,
Passionate longings for the one I love,
And burning tears.

How thinkest thou of me?
O, think of me
Until we meet again some happier day,
Till then, however distantly my feet may roam,
Shall I think and pray
Only of thee—of thee!

THE HAUNTED STUDENT.

In an upper room in one of those great houses which in large German cities are let in flats and rooms to many occupants, sat about midnight of a warm spring day four young German students, who had drunk quite as much as was good for them, and were loudly and absurdly boastful in consequence thereof.

They were afraid of nothing.

They grew loud and angry at last, and might have fought with one another to prove their boasts true, but for a sudden turn that was given to their conversation by the eldest, quietest, and most serious of their number.

"My friends," he said, rising, and leaning across the table, "we are all brave enough where living men are concerned, but there are things—things, that we all dread. We feel them about us in the dark. We are conscious of them in moments of solitude. We deny their existence, but we dread their power. The man who would face an armed band is as liable to these terrors as the meanest coward. Let no man boast that he has no fear until he has defied them."

He paused, and looked slowly around him.

Two of the students sat silent for a moment, the other burst into a loud, derisive laugh.

"You talk like an old woman," he said. "Defy what? Tell me, and I'll do it. I'm neither afraid of ghost nor fiend."

"It is midnight," cried the first speaker, holding to the table for support; for grave as he was, the wine had affected him more than any of the rest. "Yonder in the moonlight, I can see from the window the white crosses of the graveyard. I dare either of you, medical students though you are, to go to that graveyard, open a grave, unscrew the coffin therein, and bring thence something belonging to the dead man, a fragment of his dress, a lock of hair—what I care not—crying as you do so, 'In Satan's name, I bid you come and claim your own again.'"

Once more the younger student burst into a wild laugh.

"Dare it—why not? Save for the city authorities, what would there be in such an act to frighten me, who have no dread of the dissecting-room and do not believe in Satan. Why should I not dare that, Gottlieb?"

"Try it and see, Herman, my friend," said Gottlieb.

"I will," shouted Herman. "I know a little grave, new dug in a quiet place yonder. I know of a place in the wall one may easily scramble over. I go, and I will prove that I have done as I said I would. Adieu, for a while. Stay; I want a spade, a screw-driver, and a knife. Unfasten the closet door, Gustave. Give them to me. Now wait until I come again."

He reeled towards the door as he spoke.

"Go if you dare!" said Gottlieb, in a low tone.

"Go!" yelled Gustave.

"Stay!" shouted Jean, the fourth of the party. "I tell you Gottlieb is right. You will not dare!"

"Not dare?" cried Herman. "Ha! ha! ha!"

He dashed out of the room.

The others rushed to the window and peered over the balustrade of the balcony.

It was a house of four stories.

Under every row of windows ran a quaint carved balcony.

The moonlight sparkled in the narrow street below.

Through it, looking up at them with another wild laugh, they saw Herman run, wrapped in his cloak, which hid the implements he carried with him.

He turned in the direction of the graveyard. The companions returned to the room and sat down around the table.

"He will do it," said Gustave.

"He dare not," said Gottlieb.

Jean drew his watch from his pocket, and laid it before him.

So they sat for an hour.

Gottlieb finally fell asleep, his arms folded upon the table, his long hair falling over them. The moon had set.

The narrow street was enveloped in darkness, save where a few yellow lights glistened from the windows.

All was silent as the grave when the clock in the church-tower dropped one solemn stroke into the night, and as it died away, swift feet sounded on the pavement, then upon the stairs, and paused at the door, which was flung open to reveal the form of Herman Hummel.

He was wrapped in his cloak, as he had been when he left them.

But then his face had been scarlet flushed, and his eyes bright; now he was pale as death, and his eyes dim, cold expressionless, were sunk in his head.

He cast the spade on the floor, flung back his cloak, which dropped to the ground, and, advancing, laid upon the table something which the black cloak had enveloped.

It was a woman's hand, exquisite as Greek sculpture, and white with the waxen hue of death.

It had been severed at the wrist.

"I did as I promised," he said. "Look, here is the proof. And I bade her come for her own in Satan's name. I'm not afraid of Satan. I'm not afraid of her. Though she said—'I will.'"

Then he dropped forward into Gustave's arms insensible.

He came to himself in a few moments, laughed, drank deeper, idled with the dead hand, and finally embalmed it in spirits and placed it on a shelf in a wide jar.

But his manner was unnatural, and as his friends bade him good-night, they felt it to be so.

When all were gone, he abandoned the efforts at cheerfulness, and cast himself upon the lounge which formed his sleeping-place, with a sort of groan.

Wrapping the counterpane about his head, he strove to sleep, but in vain.

Hour after hour passed on, and the grey dawn came, and he had not closed his eyes.

Lifting his head, he looked towards the window.

Something stood outside of it—a woman's figure, slender and small, clad in a long white robe. It seemed to be gazing upon him.

Cold with terror he stared at it.

It lifted its arms slowly and strangely over its head.

Horror of horrors! on the left wrist there was no hand!

"She has come to claim her own!" cried the young student.

And, with a scream, the figure vanished.

The next day Gottlieb Nun was informed that his friend, Herman Hummel, lay ill with a fever, and was quite delirious.

His student friends nursed him well.

The fever vanished in due time, and he should have recovered entirely.

But, contrary to all probabilities, he still remained weak and nerveless.

He took no interest in anything.

He had no hope for anything.

He could not be roused.

Once or twice, having been left alone, he was found trembling with excitement and horror, hiding his face in the pillows, but he always refused to give any explanation of the cause of his emotion.

Indeed, after a few days of apparent convalescence, he took to his bed again, and hour by hour, day by day, seemed to grow weaker and weaker.

The three friends took turns in watching with him at night, and of all his nurses Gottlieb Nun was the most constant.

He blamed himself for the graveyard episode, which he believed had brought this illness upon Herman, and could not do enough to atone for it.

"Herman, my friend," he said one night, "I believe that something I know nothing of disturbs your peace. Will you confide in me? I would help you if I could, believe me."

Herman turned his hollow eyes upon him.

"No man can help me," he said; "I committed sacrilege. I disturbed and I mutilated the dead and I did it in Satan's name. Gottlieb, retribution fell swiftly upon me. She came to me that night; she stood at the window, she lifted her arms, and I saw the wrist from which I severed that beautiful hand. I cried out, and she vanished."

"It was the fever," said Gottlieb; "it was a dream."

"I have no fever now," said Herman; "and she came to me again last night. She has come many times before, always on moonlight evenings. I was awake, I swear. She stood there at the window in her shroud, and looked in."

"You have dwelt upon the thought until your mind is disordered," said Gottlieb. "Nay, why do you keep the token of that night before your eyes?"

"I will destroy it—or, better, tell me how to find the grave whence you took it, and it shall be reinterred; that, I know, will lay the ghost, Herman, for my sake, cast off the unhappy fancy. It is I who caused you to go to the graveyard that night. We had all been drinking too much; we were fools—you no worse than the rest."

But he spoke in vain.

Herman only shook his head.

Gottlieb sat quietly beside him until he slumbered.

Then, lowering the light, so as to leave the room in obscurity, he proceeded to put into execution the plan he had already formed.

He took the jar containing the hand from the shelf where it had stood, and, making his way

down into the little garden behind the house, dug a hole, and buried it.

Then, with a hopeful heart, he ascended the stairs again.

To his horror, as he ascended the stairs, he heard his friend's voice uttering wild moans and cries for help.

Dashing the door open, he rushed in.

Herman was sitting up in bed, staring towards a corner of the room, and pointing at something which stood there with one thin finger.

"For Heaven's sake!" Gottlieb began, but he said no more.

His blood curdled in his veins.

He felt powerless to move another step forward.

In the faint light that fell through the open window, he saw a figure standing just within the room.

The figure of a fair young woman, dressed in white, who stretched her arms before her as one who groped her way.

One of these arms ended in a beautiful little hand, from the other the hand was gone.

"Can such things be?" said Gottlieb to himself.

"Nay, I will not stand staring here. I will know what that is. It is no shadow—it is substance. What the eyes can see the hands can surely feel."

He forced himself to move.

He rushed forward.

The object stood perfectly still.

He stretched out his hand and caught folds of muslin in his fingers.

"Herman," he cried, "this is no ghost, it is a living woman. Can you turn the light a little higher?"

In a moment more the yellow lamp-light filled the room, and the two young men looked upon a strange sight.

A young and beautiful girl in a somnambulist's slumber; her eyes were open, but saw nothing; her dress was only a night-robe, her feet were bare.

She had certainly lost a hand, but she was no ghost.

"Who is she?—what is she?—where does she come from?" cried Gottlieb.

But at that instant a voice was heard on the balcony, and an old woman, wrapped hastily in a cloak, hurried in.

"I am frightened to death," she cried. "I thought she had leapt the balcony. Pardon my poor child, gentlemen—she walks in her sleep. It is a habit she has always had since the accident in which she lost her hand. Sometimes I sleep, and she escapes me. I am the Widow Henrich. I live in the next room. If she awakes here she will die of shame. Let me lead her away. I never awaken her."

Gottlieb politely bowed and stood aside.

The old woman led the young sleep-walker away, and he closed the window behind them.

From that moment Herman Hummel recovered rapidly, and soon there was no need of watching with him.

Circumstances soon parted him from Gottlieb Nun, and they did not meet for twelve long months.

At the end of that time they once more encountered each other.

"Herman," said Gottlieb, when the first interchange of courtesies was over, "have you ever seen that pretty sleep-walker again?"

"Yes," said Herman, "I have met her very often. I sought her out and made her case my special care, and I have cured her of sleep-walking. She is the sweetest girl in Germany; and, save for the loss of that dear little hand which makes one tenderer of her, you know, the prettiest also."

"I see," said Gottlieb, shrugging his shoulders. "You are in love with her?"

"Yes," said Herman. "I marry her to-morrow."

GERMAINE WILDE.

"It is positively shameful!" ejaculated Lyle Curtis.

"What?" asked Miss Germaine Wilde, looking up from her embroidery.

"As if you did not know, Germaine!"

"I know? How should I?"

"Surely, how should you? What have we been talking about for the last half-hour?"

"Of the weather, the latest style of visiting-cards, Miss Payson's charity-school, and Kate Kershaw."

"Kate Kershaw. There you have it! She is beautiful and fascinating, and flirts with charming science; and I say it's a shame."

"A shame that she flirts? Cousin Lyle, one would think you had been wounded."

"Not I. I am all right. But I have known Henry Ridgeway from boyhood, and he is the most glorious old fellow in the world—worthy of a queen. And it makes me growl to think he should waste himself on Kate Kershaw."

Miss Wilde arched her handsome eyebrows.

"Do you think her unworthy?"

"I do. She has no soul. And Henry is all soul."

"Ah! fortunate fellow! How much he must save in tailor's bills."

"Pshaw! Germaine, you are in a sarcastic mood, and I do not like you then. What is the matter? Was Lawrence inattentive last night?"

"Lawrence? Really, I do not remember."

"Do not remember! And yet engaged to marry George Lawrence! Only hear the woman! Wouldn't George feel flattered?"



"SMALL BY DEGREES."

Suffolk Farmer. "TWO SHILL'N'S A WEEK MORE!! NEVER! THAT 'LL NEVER DO!—OUT O' THE QUESTION!"
Suffolk Ploughman. "YOU'RE RIGHT THERE, MAS'E WUZZLES, SART'N SURE! IT 'ON'T DEW. OUR SAL RAHY THERE 'LL BE EIGHT SHILL'N' AND THREEPENCE FOR BREAD, THREE-AND-SIXPENCE FOR RENT AND COAL, AND HALF-A-CROWN FOR CLUB, CLOTHES, BOTES, AND SHOES FOR THE OWD 'CMAN, FIVE KIDS, AND ME. NO, THAT 'ON'T DEW—THAT, THAT 'ON'T, B'UM BY. BUT IT 'LL BE ENOW TO BEGIN WITH!!"



"TIME BY THE FORELOCK!"

Dodger. "HULLO, HOW ARE YOU! CAN'T STOP, THOUGH, OR I SHAN'T MISS MY TRAIN!"
Codger. "CATCH IT, YOU MEAN."
Dodger. "NO, I DON'T. I ALWAYS USED TO MISS MY RIGHT TRAIN, SO NOW I ALWAYS MISS THE ONE BEFORE IT, AND GET HOME IN TIME FOR DINNER! TA, TA!"



ILLI ROBUR, ET ÆS TRIPLEX....!

"WEY, COOK, I DECLARE! HERE COMES THE LONG-LOST TORTOISE UNCLE PHILIP GAVE US LAST YEAR! AND OUT OF THE COAL-CELLAR, OF ALL PLACES IN THE WORLD!"
 "LOU, MISS GRACE, IS THAT THE TORTOISE! WEY, I'VE BEEN A-USIN' OF 'IM ALL THROUGH THE WINTER TO BREAK THE COALS WITH!"



ANOTHER SAD CASE.

Lady A. BUT IF YOU REALLY WEARY YOURSELF SO MUCH AT THE OPERA, WHY DO YOU COME!
Lady B. BUT, IF I DO NOT COME, WHAT ON EARTH AM I TO DO AFTER DINNER TILL IT IS TIME TO GO SOMEWHERE!



METAMORPHOSES, BY A MANIAO.

This illustration, which is not intended for the amusement of serious and sensible subscribers, represents the awful end of a young man who stretched himself so long over difficult strokes, that the Marker, coming to look for him at the end of the game, took him for a Cue, and chucked him.



THE PASSION FOR OLD CHINA.

Husband. "I THINK YOU MIGHT LET ME NURSE THAT TRAPOT A LITTLE FOW, MARGERY! YOU'VE RAD IT TO YOURSELF ALL THE MORNING, YOU KNOW!"