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this number.



"FORGIVE ME," HE SAYS BARNES. LY, "FOR ALL THAT I HAVE BROUGHT UPON YOU!"

"NO INTENTIONS."

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT.

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

CHAPTER X.

"Oh! why did you ever come here?" is the first wailing reproach with which she receives his words.

"Because I could not help it! Much as I have suffered since we parted, I would not, knowing how lame any explanation I can make to you must be, have sought you wilfully; but when the opportunity was pressed upon me I could not resist it, and I am here, and you must listen whilst I speak."

"I need no explanation!" she said proudly.

"Then you are not the woman that I took you for. You are not the woman who once vowed to be my friend and counsellor. Friends do not condemn their friends unheard, Irene."

"You must not call me by that name," she falters.

"I must, and will! for as we stand together now, I know you by no other. But do not be afraid that I shall say one word that you need blame me for. It is not a man who speaks to you! It is a fellow-soul calling on you for God's sake to lay aside for one moment all the hard thoughts you may have cherished of him, and let him say what he can say for himself!"

"Go on," she whispers; but she turns her face away, and, stooping to gather sundry flowers that grow near, weaves them, with trembling fingers, into a little sort of tuft.

It is after breakfast, and they are standing in front of Fea Court watching Tommy play upon the lawn. As the last words leave Irene's lips, Colonel Mordaunt, mounted on his favorite hunter, comes riding towards them from the stables.

"Holloa, Muiraven! I thought you were going over to Chester Farm with me this morning to see that greyhound litter. My man thinks we shall be able to spare you a couple, if you take a fancy to the pups."

"You're very good, Colonel! I should like to go by all means, but won't you give me half an hour's grace after breakfast? If I had a quarter your constitution, I wouldn't ask for it."

The Colonel pretends to laugh at the idea, but he secretly enjoys it.

"And you a bachelor, without a care to interfere with your digestion. Wait till you're married, my Lord!"

"That's complimentary to me," says Irene, who is plucking up spirit with the want of notice accorded to her. And then she turns round suddenly, and goes up to her husband's side and fastens the little bouquet she has made into his buttonhole.

The small attention pleases him: he feels as though the sun had suddenly come out from behind a cloud, and with his disengaged hand he squeezes the fingers basted with his adoration.

"Thank you, my darling!" he says fervently.

At that Irene does, what she so seldom does before another, puts up her lips to kiss her husband.

"Don't be away long!" she says, as she embraces him.

Muiraven hears the sentence with a sigh, and watches the action with a frown; he knows so well what they are intended to convey—that, whatever this woman may still think or feel, he must be loyal to her husband, or she will not listen to him.

"I shall be back within the hour, dear," replies Colonel Mordaunt. "I have only to ride down to the Long Close and see about the draining there, and then perhaps you will be ready to accompany me to Chester Farm, Muiraven."

"I shall be ready by that time," replies the guest with careless brevity, as he switches off a bunch of lilac with his cane.

He never intended to say more to Irene than it would be right for her to hear: there was no need of that kiss to remind him of his duty—it has galled him; and as soon as Colonel Mordaunt's back is turned he lets her know it.

She is watching the retreating horse and rider, more from nervousness at the coming explanation than regret at her husband's departure, when Muiraven's voice sounds in her ear again.

"If you can spare one moment from your matrimonial rhapsodies, Mrs. Mordaunt, perhaps you will fulfil the promise you made just now, and listen to what I have to say."

The sarcastic tone, so unseemly in their relative positions, rouses her to a sense of her own dignity and makes her brave.

"Lord Muiraven, you took me so much by surprise that I hardly knew what to answer. I



cannot believe that any explanation can alter matters as they now stand between you and me, nor do I see the necessity of one. But if you are still desirous of speaking to me, I am ready, as I said before, to listen to you. Shall we go indoors, or remain here?"

"Come into the shrubbery," he says earnestly; and into the shrubbery they go.

When they arrive there, they pace up and down the winding pathway more than once, in utter silence.

"Please say what you have to say," she pleads at last.

"I will! Irene, when your mother spoke to me that day in the library at Brook Street, I felt as though a thunderbolt had fallen at my feet!"

"Oh, why allude to that? It is all passed and done with. Who cared about it?"

"You did—and so did I. It nearly broke my heart, and yet I was powerless to act in any other manner."

"Then why speak about it? I wish that you would not."

"I must speak about it, even at the risk of tearing open my own wounds and yours. You see how coolly I take it for granted that you cared for me, Irene."

"Your wounds?"

"Yes, mine! Good God, do you suppose that any obstacle short of insuperable would have made me act as I was forced to do? Do you believe that I didn't love you with all my heart and soul, Irene?"

She does not answer him, but draws a deep, long sigh of gratitude. Some of the black cloud that has darkened her existence is cleared away already. Eric Keir loved her.

"If I had but known it!" she says at length.

"Would it have made you happier?"

"I could have borne what followed by myself," she answers simply.

Then a light breaks in upon Muiraven, and he sees what he has done. He understands that this girl has entered upon marriage to save her from the apathy that succeeds despair.

"God forgive me!" he cries aloud. "Oh, Irene! I dared not tell you—I dared not tell it to myself until your mother crushed me with her inquiries, and I had no alternative but to preserve a houndish silence and to leave the house that held everything that was dearest to me in the world. My crime—my madness was to linger near you for so long—when I knew a barrier was raised between us that even time itself might never have the power to pull down. But I did not know my danger, Irene, far less could I guess yours: exonerate me so far, if you can. I was so lonely at that period of my life—so much in need of sympathy and counsel—and the friendship you accorded to me was so sweet, I was wicked enough never to stop to consider what the consequences of the intercourse might be to both of us. Oh, Irene! I will never again insult you by asking you to be my friend, but say that you will try to forgive me for the wrong I did you, and to think less hardly of me than you do."

"The barrier!" she murmurs. Her voice is full of tears, and she dares not trust herself to say another word.

"I will tell you all I can. I will tell you more than I have ever told to any other human creature on the subject. When I was very young—long before I met you—I got myself into a dreadful scrape; so great a scrape that I did not care—and never have dared yet—to tell my father of it; and this scrape involved consequences that utterly precluded—and preclude still—my ever thinking of marriage."

"But—but I thought I heard—a rumor reached us two years ago that you were engaged to a Miss Robertson."

"Nothing but rumor, Irene. Your informant must have meant my brother Cecil, who is to marry Harriet Robertson next month. But to return to ourselves. I know my explanation is a very unsatisfactory one, and that I am presumptuous to hope you may accept it. But I cannot help making it. Will you trust me so far as to believe that I speak the truth?"

"I do believe it!"

"Thank you, a thousand times. Oh, if you knew the load your words have lifted off my breast! Had I followed the dictates of prudence, and of what the world calls propriety, I should have sneaked away whenever I heard your name mentioned, and died, as I have lived, under the ban of your contempt. But I was determined, as soon as ever Fate sent me the opportunity, to try and clear myself in your eyes. It is very little I can say. I can only throw myself on your compassion, and ask you to believe me, when I swear that I never loved any woman as I loved you; and that had had it been in my power to marry you, I should have spared no pains to make you love me in return."

"I do believe you," she repeats again.

He stops, and she stops, and he confronts her on the shrubbery path.

"You believe—as surely as though I were yourself—that there exists a fatal and insurmountable obstacle to my marrying any one?"

"I do—since you assure me it is so!"

"And that, had that obstacle not existed I would have sought you, so long as you were single, through all the world, in order to persuade you to become my wife?"

"Since you affirm it—yes!"

"And that when I asked for your friendship and affection, it was with no base intention to deceive or trifle with your love, but because my own yearning to be associated with you was so deep that I gratefully gathered up the least

crumb of consolation without considering what the issue might bring to us?"

"I do!"

"Oh, Irene, if I had but known all this before!"

"It was impossible that you could know it. It is an adverse Fate that has divided us. Be content to learn it now."

"I am content—and deeply grateful for your trust. But with your trust, shall I regain your friendship?"

She hardly knows what to answer to this question. She is glowing with the excitement of his revelations, but sober enough to be aware that such a friendship as they once promised one another, can never exist between them in their new relations.

"Lord Muiraven!"—she commences—

"Oh! I do not call me by that name. Freshly as it brings back to me my brother's death, it is hateful upon all occasions, and more than ever from your lips."

"I must not call you otherwise," she answers quickly. "You have been very frank with me, and I will be the same with you. I will acknowledge that your conduct—your supposed indifference—"

"My indifference—oh! Irene!"

"—has been the cause, at times, of great pain to me, and that to hear you clear yourself is comfort; and if I were still single, I might say, let us renew the friendship which was so rudely broken; but I am married, Lord Muiraven, and what we promised to be to one another in those old days we can never be now!"

Lord Muiraven receives this announcement with a deep groan.

"I am sure you will see the justice of my remark," she goes on presently. "The counsel and advice and sympathy which were to form that bond, and which, more often than not, involve fidelity, might not be pleasant to my husband, and—I promised to be frank with you—I love my husband, Lord Muiraven."

"You do?" he says incredulously.

"I do indeed! Not in the way, perhaps, you think of love, but, any way, too much to engage in anything that might distress or wrong him. And you know that a man of his age might well be unhappy and suspicious at his wife having a young and close friend like yourself. So that anything more than good companionship is utterly denied to us."

"The devil!" says Muiraven under his breath.

"Hush! don't speak of it so lightly. You know well what I mean. My husband married me when most people would hardly have thought I should have made a pleasant wife, and—"

"Oh! say you love me still," he interposes eagerly, guessing at the reason of her doubt.

She turns her calm sad eyes on him in silence, and the rebuke is sufficient; he permits her to proceed.

"—through all my indifference and depression, and often, I am afraid, my ill-temper (for I have not been half grateful to him for his kindness), he has been so patient and attentive and affectionate, that I never could forget it—if I would. And therefore it is that I cannot give you back my friendship, Lord Muiraven. My sympathy will be always yours; but friendship includes confidence, and I am sure that confidence between me and any other man would give my husband pain."

"Is a married woman never to have any friends, then?" he says discontentedly.

"I am not called upon to decide for other women. Some, unfortunately, have no friends in their husbands, and they must judge for themselves; but my husband was my best friend when—when I really seemed to be without one in the world, and I feel bound to return his goodness where I can."

"All right, then I conclude everything's over between us. I am sorry I spoke—in a voice of the direst offense."

"Oh, Eric! don't break my heart!" she cries involuntarily.

"Break your heart, when I would lay down my life to save you from a moment's pain! Irene! I am the most miserable man on God's earth. By one fatal mistake I wrecked all my hopes of happiness; and now you consider me unworthy even of the notice you accord to the commonest of your acquaintances."

"I never said that. I shall always think of you, and treat you as a friend; but, under the circumstances, don't you agree with me that there might be danger in a closer intimacy?"

"Would there be danger?" he says joyfully.

Alas for the weakness of human nature! He has just declared he could lay down his life to save her from a moment's pain; and yet it thrills him through with happiness to find that she fears lest nearer intercourse might bring wretchedness for both of them; and he would consent to the nearer intercourse, and the prospect of wretchedness, with the greatest alacrity, and believe firmly that he loves her through it all!

Alas for human nature! Blind, weak, wavering, and selfish. From the crown of its head to the sole of its foot, there is no whole part in it!

"I think I will go in now," says Irene, without taking any apparent notice of his last remark. "I have said all that I can say to you, Lord Muiraven; and further conversation on the subject would be useless. You have made me much happier by what you have told me to-day, for I have had a hard battle sometimes since we parted to reconcile your conduct with the notion I had formed of you. I only wish you had spoken as frankly to my poor mother as you have done to me."

"I should, had Mrs. St. John only given me the opportunity."

"Never mind! It is a thing of the past, and perhaps she sees the reason of it now more clearly than I do. Thank you for telling me as much as you have. But we will not allude, please, to the subject again."

"Must I never speak to you of my troubles?"

"It is better not; and you need not fear I shall forget you or them. I have always prayed for you—I shall do so still."

"God bless you, Irene!" he says beneath his breath; and at the entrance of the shrubbery they part, he to go towards the stables, she towards the house.

But she has not left his side one minute before a thought flashes across her mind—a thought which never once presented itself throughout the interview.

"The Child! What of the Child!"

What of the child, indeed! Is she to restore him to the man who has reinstated himself in her good opinion; or does not the mere fact of his existence render much that Lord Muiraven has said to her in the shrubbery null and void? Is the word of the betrayer of Myra Cray a word to be trusted; or is it certain that Eric Keir was that betrayer? Between excitement and expectation and doubt and uncertainty, Irene becomes quite confused, and the first thing she does on re-entering Fen Court is to take out the packet of letters, the ivory-backed prayer-book, and the photograph, and to examine them carefully again. Somehow they do not seem so thoroughly convincing to her as they did before. Lord Muiraven's proper name is certainly "Eric Hamilton," but the notes are only signed "E. H." and the name of Hamilton is very common. The initials may stand for Edward Hamilton or Ernest Hamilton. It is rather poor evidence to condemn a man upon a couple of initials. The handwriting she could never positively swear to, because she has never seen that of Lord Muiraven's, except in answer to invitations, and these notes have evidently been written hurriedly. They might be the letters of anybody; she will think no more about them.

But the photograph, faded as it is, is a more startling witness to his identity. It is not flattering; *coram-de-visite* seldom are: it is too dark, and he is frowning, and his nose and chin are out of focus. Still, as she twists it about in the clear morning light, she cannot deny that it is like him—or like what he may have been some years ago. Yet it seems hard to accuse a man of so serious a fault upon the evidence of a bit of cardboard! Irene would have twisted that photograph up and down and round about until she had convinced herself that it was not the least like Lord Muiraven, nor ever could have been; but at this moment the door opens to admit Tommy. Here comes the living witness of his father's frailty to put to shame all the inanimate mementoes by which she is trying to delude herself into the notion that Lord Muiraven is an injured man. Here come the dark wavy locks, the deep blue eyes, the pointed nose, already showing evidence of the possession of a bridge; the deep chest and sturdy limbs that Tommy's progenitor must certainly have displayed when at the same age as himself. Irene is almost cross with the little fellow for looking so abominably like his father.

"Oh! he must have been the man! It is quite impossible I can be mistaken," she inwardly ejaculates as she throws herself into a chair. "Come here, Tommy! What on earth does Phoebe mean by parting your hair in the middle, just as if you were a girl—it makes you look quite absurd."

"Gentleman has got his hair parted in the middle!" says Tommy, alluding to Lord Muiraven.

"That's no reason you should have it too," replies Irene, quite sharply, as she divides his curls with her fingers, and effects a general disturbance thereof, of which her *protégé* disapproves. "Sit still, can't you? What a dreadful fidget you are!"

"You hurt!" says Tommy, at last, as the tears well up into his eyes at her roughness. At that sight her mood changes.

"Oh, my blessed boy! my own little darling! do you want to go away from your poor mamma, who loves you so?"

"I won't go, mamma," replies Tommy stoutly. "I will always live with my mamma, and take great care of her, I will."

"My precious! what should I do without you? He would never be so cruel as to take you away. And yet, were he to know the truth, how could he do otherwise? How could I keep you? Oh, what shall I do?"

"I will not give him up in a hurry," she ruminates presently, as Tommy, having had enough embraces, wriggles off her lap again and runs away to play. "If I am to part with the child, it shall only be upon the most convincing proofs of the relationship between them"—forgetting that only on the most convincing proofs would Muiraven be likely to acknowledge the responsibility. Brooding on this resolution, however, Irene grows cunning, and, bent on ascertaining the truth, lays little traps wherewith to catch her guest, inwardly triumphing every time they fail. She has many opportunities of laying them, for her spirits are lighter and brighter after the shrubbery *été-à-été*, and Muiraven enters more freely into conversation with her. But it puzzles him considerably at this period to discover what motive she can have for continually speaking in parables to him; or why she should drag in subjects irrelevant to the matter in hand, by the head and shoulders, as she is so fond of doing.

"What a beautiful evening," he remarks

casually as the whole party seat themselves after dinner on chairs on the lawn. "I consider the evening by far the most enjoyable part of the day at this season of the year."

"If one has a clear conscience," says his hostess pointedly; "but I think, if I had wronged any one very much in my lifetime, I should never be able to enjoy a summer's evening again. Everything seems so pure and calm then—one feels so near heaven."

"I am afraid, if every one felt the same as you do, Mrs. Mordaunt, we should have to shut up summer at once. We have all wronged, or been wronged, I suppose, during our lifetime."

"But I mean a real wrong!—such as ruining the happiness of another. Don't you think it is the very wickedest thing a person can do, Lord Muiraven?"

"I am not competent to judge. I think I have wronged myself more than anybody else in the world; at all events, intentionally," he adds, with a sigh.

"Have you had your photograph taken lately," she goes on in the wildest manner.

"My photograph! No! My dear old father insisted upon my sitting for a portrait in oils last autumn. That was bad enough, but nothing to being photographed. Why do you ask?"

"Irene is ambitious to fill that pretentious-looking album that lies on the drawing-room table as quickly as possible," says Colonel Mordaunt laughing.

"Indeed I am not! I call that album my menagerie. It contains such a set of gorillas. So few people take well. Do you?" addressing Muiraven again.

"I can hardly tell you. It is so long since I was immortalised by the photographic art. Not since—let me see—"

"Since when?" she interposes eagerly.

"The year before last, I think. The London Stereoscopic Company had the honor of taking me just before I left town, and I never even asked for a proof of the photograph."

"You must have had something very engrossing on your mind just then, Muiraven," remarks the Colonel.

"I had indeed."

"What made you sit to them at all?"

"I sat because I hoped the result of my sitting might be acceptable to a friend whom I had at that time, and I neglected to send for the photographs because I found they would not be so; and all interest in them departed with the knowledge."

"A woman, of course, Muiraven? Nothing but a woman, or the wind, could change in so short a time."

"I did not say she changed, Colonel."

"Then perhaps it was yourself. He looks fickle—doesn't he, Irene?"

"Then he looks what he is not," rejoins Muiraven. "Can I fetch anything for you, Mrs. Mordaunt?" as she rises from her chair.

"No, thank you!"

In another minute she is back again with the ivory-bound prayer-book in her hand. She is going to make her first grand experiment with that.

"What have you there, Irene?" says her husband.

"Only a prayer-book. A pretty little thing, isn't it, Lord Muiraven?" holding it out for his inspection: he examines it without the slightest change of countenance.

"Well, if you want my candid opinion, Mrs. Mordaunt, you must allow me to say, that I do not agree with you. I suppose it is quite a lady's idea of "pretty"; but it looks very useless to me. Is it a real prayer-book or a hoax?"

"Open it, and see. It is anything but a hoax."

"So I perceive. I thought it might prove to be a *bombonnière*, or a powder puff-box, or some other little feminine secret. So it is really and truly a prayer-book?"

"Of course! Have you never seen one like that before?"

"Yes; but not so small, I think. What a surprising print! I should have no eyes in a twelvemonth if I used a book like this."

"And you have really never seen an ivory-backed prayer-book before, or bought one!"

"Haven't I! I had to fork out five guineas for a church service for my sister-in-law that is to be, the other day. She took a fancy to it, and Cecil was so stingy, he wouldn't buy it for her, so I was compelled to. It was a very fat one, quite appetitic, in fact, and bound in ivory and silver. She said she should consider it as a wedding present; but I know I shall have to give her another, all the same."

"Well! I can't understand it," says Irene. "My being generous for once in a way? Oh, Mrs. Mordaunt!"

"Give me back that little prayer-book, please. I am sure you must have seen plenty like it before. They're as common as possible."

"I daresay I have, but—please forgive my country manners, Mrs. Mordaunt—I really don't seem to care if I never see one like it again. It's a most shockingly attenuated little book: it looks as though it had been reared on water-gruel, and reminds me only of a pale, shrivelled-up, sickly old maid. It jars most terribly upon my feelings."

"I don't believe you have any," she answers quickly; and her husband thinks she is in fun, and laughs at the accusation, in which Muiraven joins him. At this moment Colonel Mordaunt is called away to hold an interview with his bailiff, and in the quickly-falling dusk, alone with their guest (Isabella having crept away some time before), Irene feels bold enough to make another attempt at discovery of the truth.

"I hope you are not annoyed at the disrespectful manner in which I spoke of your exceedingly pretty little prayer-book," says Muiraven, breaking the ice for her.

"It is not mine," she answers briefly; "it belonged to Tommy's mother. I am keeping it for him."

"Indeed! that makes it interesting. Is it long since she died?"

"Nearly a twelvemonth. I have several of her little possessions—a photograph amongst the number."

"What, of—the child's father?"

"I conclude so."

"You must take great care of it. It may prove of the utmost use some day in tracing his parentage."

"So I think. His poor mother had been so utterly deserted that the only clue she could give me was the name (which she had discovered to be false) by which the man who betrayed her called himself. I wonder, if I ever meet that man or discover his identity, whether I should be bound to give up the child to him. What is your opinion, Lord Muiraven?"

"You set me rather a difficult task, Mrs. Mordaunt. It so entirely depends upon whether the father will be anxious to assume his guardianship or not. He could claim the boy, of course, if he could prove his right to do so; but the greater probability is, that he would deny the relationship. Had he had any intention of acting the part of a parent to his child, he would never have abandoned the mother."

"You think so—it is your real opinion?" she demands eagerly.

"I think every one must think so. Poor little Tommy is most fortunate to have fallen into your hands. You may depend upon it, you will never be troubled by a gratuitous application for him."

"How hard-hearted some men are!" she sighs.

"They are brutes!" replies her companion determinately; and Irene is more puzzled than before.

"Lord Muiraven——" she commences again.

"I am all attention, Mrs. Mordaunt."

"If I were to arrive accidentally, at the knowledge of who is the child's father, and found he was not aware of the fact of his existence, ought I to make it known to him?"

"Certainly!"

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure!—unless you wish to injure both parent and child. However kind and good you may be to him, no one can care for a boy, or advance his interests in life, as a father can; and life, under the most favorable circumstances will be a serious thing for poor little Tommy. If you are to keep him, I am sorry he is not a girl. I am afraid you will find him troublesome by-and-by."

"I have no fear of that—only of his being taken away from me. Still—if you consider it would be right——"

"Do you know who his father is, then?"

"I think I do; but, please, don't mention it again: it is quite a secret."

"Well, if I were in that man's place I should think that you were wronging me: but it is a matter of opinion. Tommy's father may—and probably will—be only too glad to leave him in your hands."

"But if it were you?"

"If it were me, I should prefer to look after my own child: I should not feel justified in delegating the duty to another. I should consider it the only reparation that lay in my power to make him; and any one who deprived me of it, would rob me of the means of exhibiting my penitence."

This burst of eloquence decides her. Sorely as she will mourn his loss, she dares not keep Tommy's parentage a secret any longer. If he belongs to Lord Muiraven, to Lord Muiraven he must go. But she hardly dares to think what Pen Court will look like when both of them are lost to view again.

"How you have been crying!" remarks her husband the next day, as she issues from her morning-room, and unexpectedly confronts him.

"It is no matter," she answers evasively as she tries to pass him to go upstairs. She is vexed he has commented on her appearance, for the housekeeper is standing in the hall at the same time.

"But it does signify," he continues pertinaciously. "What is the reason of it? Are you ill?"

"Not in the least; but I have been turning over old letters and papers this morning—and it is never a pleasant task to undertake. I shall be all right again by luncheon time." And she escapes to the shelter of her bedroom.

"Lor, Colonel! how inconsiderate you are, questioning Madam about the whys and wherefores of everything!" ejaculates Mrs. Quekett. "As if a lady could turn over her stock of treasures—her little tokens and bits of hair and old love-letters, without bringing the tears to her eyes. You've no knowledge at all of women, Colonel, and it seems to me you've quite forgotten you ever were young yourself."

"But to see her eyes so red as that!" exclaims Colonel Mordaunt.

"Bless you! do you think when you marry a woman, you walk at once into all her troubles and secrets, past, and present, and to come? Colonel, you've the least discrimination of any man I ever knew. She might just as well expect you to turn out the bundle of your past life—and there'd be a pretty kettle of fish if you did—that I know!"

"You have the most extraordinary habit,

of talking of one's private affairs in public places. I wish you'd remember where you are."

"Very well, Colonel; that's a hint for me to go. But I couldn't help putting in a word for Mrs. Mordaunt. You mustn't expect too much of her. She's yours—be content with that. Wiser men than you have found it best, before now, to keep their eyes half shut." And with that, Mrs. Quekett, picking up a thread here and a scrap of paper there, disappears quite naturally into the morning-room. Irene, meanwhile, is bathing her eyes in cold water. She has really been only occupied in turning over old papers—the papers that concern Tommy—and trying to write a letter to Lord Muiraven on the subject, which shall tell all she wishes him to know, in language not to plain. But she has found the task more difficult than she anticipated; ugly things look so much more ugly when they are written down in black and white. She has made five or six attempts, and they are all in the waste-paper basket. As she comes downstairs to luncheon, looking quite herself again, and passes through the morning-room, her eyes catch sight of these same fragmentary records lying lightly one upon the other, and she thinks how foolish it was of her to leave them for any one to read who passed that way. The gong is sounding in the hall, and the gentlemen's voices are heard from the dining-room; so she gathers the torn sheets of paper hastily together, and thrusting them into a drawer of her davenport, turns the key upon them until she shall have an opportunity of destroying them more thoroughly. But she cannot imagine what makes her husband so silent and constrained, during lunch that day—and concludes something must be going wrong with the farm, and trusts Philip is not going to break through his general rule of keeping outdoor worries for out-door consideration; or that Philip is not going to develop a new talent for indulging in the sulks—which appears to be the likeliest solution of the change at present.

The next day is the one fixed for Lord Muiraven's departure, and the Colonel no longer presses him to stay.

As breakfast is concluded and the carriage is ordered round to convey him and his portmanteau to the station, Irene remembers her attempted letter of the day before, and feels sorry that it proved a failure. She foresees a greater difficulty in writing to him through the post, and does not even know where to address him. Colonel Mordaunt has edged off to the stables to worry the grooms into harnessing the horses at least ten minutes before the time that they were ordered to be ready; and (except for Tommy, who interrupts the conversation at every second word) she is left alone with their guest. "Do you know," she commences timidly, "I wanted to speak to you, Lord Muiraven, before you went—that is to say, I have something rather particular to tell you."

"Have you? Oh, tell it now!" he exclaims eagerly, his hopes rising at the idea that she has plucked up courage to allude to the past.

"I could not—it would take too much time; besides, it is a subject on which I would much rather write to you."

"Will you write to me?"

"I did write yesterday—only I tore up the letter."

"What a shame! Whatever it was, why did you not let me have it?"

"I could not satisfy myself: it was too hard a task. Only—should I be able to do so—where may I address to you?"

"To the St. James's Club, or Berwick Castle. My letters will always be forwarded from either place."

"Forwarded! Are you not going to London, then?"

"Only for a day or two. I leave England next week for India."

"India! What should take you there?"

"Hopelessness, Irene!"

"Hush!"

"Mamma, why did gentleman call you Reny?" interposes Tommy from the folds of her dress.

"Forgive me," he murmurs, "I am very careless. What takes me to India, Mrs. Mordaunt, is idleness and love of change. Last autumn I spent in the United States; this I hope to do pig-sticking in Bengal; and the next will probably find me in Tasmania. What would you have me do? I am independent, restless and in need of excitement; and there is nothing to keep me at home."

"Your father, Lord Muiraven!"

"My father knows that I am never so little discontented as when I am travelling, and so he consents to it. And he has my brother. And I have—no one."

"But India! such an unhealthy climate. I thought nobody went there for choice."

"On the contrary, to go there for choice is the only way to enjoy the country. I can return whenever I like, you know. And as to the climate, it cannot be worse than that of New York, where the hot weather sweeps off its sixty head a day."

"And you will return—when?"

"In about six months, I hope, that is when the hot season recommences. I do not go alone. A cousin of my own, and a very jolly fellow of the name of Stratford, go with me. I shall come back so brown, you won't know me. What shall I bring you home from India, Tommy. A big elephant?"

"Yes, yes! bring a lum-a-lum. Mamma, gentleman going to bring Tommy a big large lum-a-lum!"

"And you will really be away six months,"

she says dreamily. She is thinking that here is a respite from divulging the secret of her adopted child's parentage, for if Lord Muiraven's arrangements for leaving the country are all completed, he would hardly thank her for thrusting so onerous a change upon him as the guardianship of a little child on the very eve of his departure. But he misinterprets the subdued and dreamy tone; he reads in it, or thinks he reads, a tender regret for his contemplated absence, and is ready to relinquish every plan which he has made upon the spot.

"I thought of being so, Mrs. Mordaunt," he replies quickly, "but if there were any chance—any hope—if I believed that any one here—oh! you know what I mean so much better than I can express it; if you wish me not to go, Irene, say the word, and I will remain in England for ever."

"Gentleman say Reny again," remarks Tommy as he pulls his adopted mother's skirts and looks up in her face for an explanation of the novelty.

"Both that child!" exclaims Muiraven angrily.

"Be quiet, Tommy! Go and play," replies Irene. "Lord Muiraven, you quite mistake my meaning. I think it is a very good thing for you to go about and travel; and am glad that you should be able to enjoy yourself. I was only thinking of—my letter."

"Send it me. Pray send it to my club. I shall be there to-morrow!"

"I do not think I shall. It was only about—this child," in a lower voice. "Do you remember what you said once about being a friend to him if he lost me?"

"Perfectly; and I am ready to redeem my word!"

"Should anything happen whilst you are absent, Lord Muiraven, will you take care of him on your return? The letter I spoke of—and which will contain everything I know about his parentage—I will leave behind me, sealed and addressed to you. Will you promise me to ask for it, and to follow up any clue it may give you as faithfully as may be in your power?"

"I promise. But why speak of your death, unless you wish to torture me?"

"Is it so great a misfortune, then, to pass beyond all the trouble of this world, and be safely landed on the other shore?"

"For you—no!—but for myself—I am too selfish to be able even to contemplate such a contingency with composure. If I thought it probable, or even possible, nothing should take me from England! You are not ill?"

"Not in the least! I only spoke of death coming to me as it might come to you, or any one. I do not desire it. I am content to live, or—

or—"

Her voice breaks.

"Or—what? For Heaven's sake, speak!"

"I was so before we met again!"

"Good God!" he utters; "why did I not put a bullet through my brains before I was mad enough to come here?"

He walks up to the mantelpiece as though he could not bear to meet her gaze, and she catches up the child and sets him on the embrasured window-still before her, and looks into his eyes with her own brimming over with tears.

Each has spoken to the other: the pent-up cry of their burdened heart has broken forth at length; and they stand silent and ashamed and overwhelmed in the presence of Nature. Tommy is the first to recall them to a sense of their equivocal position.

"Mamma is crying," he observes pointedly. "Naughty gentleman."

His shrill little voice attracts the attention of Mrs. Quekett, who is loitering in the hall (a favorite occupation of hers during that season of the year when the sitting-room doors stand open), and she immediately commences, noiselessly, to rearrange the pieces of old china that ornament the shelves of a carved oak buffet outside the dining-room.

At the sound of the child's words, Muiraven quits his place, and advancing to Irene, takes her hand.

"Forgive me," he says earnestly, "for all that I have brought upon you. Say that you forgive me!"

Mrs. Quekett pricks up her ear like a hunter when the dogs give tongue.

"You wrong me by the request," Irene answers. "I cannot think how I forgot myself so far as to say what I did; but I trust you never to take advantage of my words."

"Except in letting their memory lighten my existence, I never will. And I thank you so much for permitting me to feel we have a mutual interest in this child. I see that he is very dear to you."

"He is indeed! I don't think any mother could love a child more than I do him."

"And you will let me love him too. He shall be the link between us; the common ground on which we may meet—the memory left, to whichever goes first, of the affection of the other. Henceforward Tommy shall have a father as well as a mother."

"I will be sure and leave the letter that I spoke of."

"And you will not write to me—not one line to cheer me in any way."

"I must not; and it would be impossible if I could. When you return—perhaps——"

"If you say that I shall return to-morrow."

At this moment the carriage-wheels are heard grating on the gravel drive.

"Here is the Colonel, Mrs. Mordaunt!"

Irene starts—flushes—and withdraws her hand quickly from that of Lord Muiraven.

Mrs. Quekett, duster in hand, is looking in at the open door.

"The Colonel!" cries Muiraven, looking at his watch to cover their confusion; "how time flies! It is nearly eleven. Well, good-bye, Mrs. Mordaunt. I shall have shot a real Bengal tiger before we meet again."

"Tiger will eat you," interposes Tommy, sentimentally.

"Oh, take care of yourself," says Irene, with quick alarm.

"I will—believe me! since you ask it! How big is the lum-a-lum to be, Tommy? Top feet high?"

"As tall as the house," replies Tommy.

"Are your traps brought downstairs yet, Muiraven?" demands Colonel Mordaunt, as he enters the room. "We haven't much time to spare, if you're to catch the one o'clock train. That fellow William is shirking his work again, Irene; I found the grey filly with her roller off. I declare there's no getting one's servants to do anything unless one is constantly at their heels."

"Look what gentleman given me!" says Tommy, who has been occupied with Lord Muiraven at the window.

"Your watch and chain!" exclaims Irene. "Oh, no, Lord Muiraven, indeed you must not. Think how young the child is. You are too generous."

"Generous!" says the Colonel; "it's d—d foolish, Muiraven, if you'll excuse my saying so. The boy will never be in a position to use it, and it will be smashed in an hour."

"No! that it shall not be, Philip. I will take care Lord Muiraven's kindness is not abused—only a toy would have been so much better."

"Pray let him keep it, Mrs. Mordaunt. It will be rather a relief to get rid of it. I so much prefer to wear dear old Bob's, that was sent home to me last autumn."

"You certainly must have more watches than you know what to do with," gumbles the Colonel. "Put Lord Muiraven's portmanteaus in the carriage, James:—wait a minute. Let me speak to the coachman."

Irene has taken the watch from the child's hand, and is holding it in her own.

"It is so kind of you," she murmurs.

"Not at all; it is a pleasure to me. Keep it as a pledge of what I have promised in respect of him. And if I thought you sometimes wore it, Irene, in remembrance of our friendship, it would make me so happy."

"I will."

"Thanks—God bless you!" and with one long look and pressure, he is gone.

Irene takes an opportunity during the succeeding day to examine her behavior and its motives very searchingly, but she thinks that, on the whole, she has acted right. What could Muiraven have done with a young child just as he was starting for a place like India? He could not have taken Tommy with him; he would have been compelled to leave him in England under the care of strangers; who, in the event of his father dying abroad, would have had him reared and educated without any reference to herself. Yes! she believes she has done what is best for all parties. When Muiraven returns she will tell him the truth, and let him do as he thinks fit; but until that event occurs, she shall keep the child to herself. And as the blankness of the knowledge of his departure returns upon her every now and then during that afternoon, she catches up Tommy in her arms and smothers him with kisses, as she reflects with secret joy that she has something of Muiraven left her still. How surprised she would be to compare her present feelings with those with which she first learned the news of the boy's paternity.

The sin and shame of that past folly are not less shocking to her than they were; but the sting has been withdrawn from them. Eric loves her. He was not base and cruel and deceitful; it was Fate that kept them separate; and on the strength of his own word, he is forgiven for everything—past, present, and to come! What is there Woman will not forgive to the man she loves?

Irene almost believes this afternoon, that if she is but permitted to bring up Tommy to be worthy of his father, so that when he is a man, and Eric is still lonely and unmarried, she may present them to each other and say, "Here is a son to bless and comfort your old age," she will desire nothing more to make life happy. And feeling more light-hearted and content than she has done for many a day—although Muiraven has put miles between them—goes singing about the garden in the evening, like a blithe-some bird. Her carolling rather disturbs Colonel Mordaunt, who (with his study window open) is busy with his farm accounts; and making small way as it is, with Mrs. Quekett standing at his right hand, and putting in her oar at every second figure.

"Not oats, Colonel; it was barley Clayton brought in last week; and if an eye's anything to go by, ten sacks short, as I'm a living woman."

"How can you tell, Quekett?" replies the Colonel fretfully; "did you see them counted?"

"Counted! Is it my business to watch your stable-men do their work?"

"Of course not; but I suppose Barnes was there; he is generally sharp enough upon Clayton."

"Well there it is in the granary—easy enough to look at it. It seems short enough measure to me. Perhaps some has been taken since it was unloaded."

"It's very unpleasant to have those doubts. I hate suspecting any one, especially my own

servants. Why should they rob me? They have everything they want."

"Bless you, Colonel! as if that made any difference. Of course they have everything they want; and it's generally those who are closest to us who play us the dirtiest tricks. A man would get through life easy enough if it weren't for his friends. That's a handsome watch his Lordship gave to that brat of Cray's (I hope your lady isn't within earshot), isn't now?"

"It must have cost fifty pounds if it cost five. I can't imagine any one being so simple as to part with his property in that lavish manner, Quekett!"

"Nor I — if he don't know to whom he's parting with it. But Lord Muiraven knows, as sure as my name's Rebecca. He's not such a fool as he looks."

"You are so mysterious, Quekett, with your hints and innuendoes," replies her master peevishly. "Why can't you speak out, if you have anything to say?"

"Would you be any the better pleased if I were to speak out?"

"Muiraven's private affairs cannot affect me much, either one way or the other."

"I don't know that, Colonel. You wouldn't care to keep the child hanging about if you thought it was his, I reckon."

"Of course not; but what proofs have you that it belongs to him?"

"Well, he's stamped his signature pretty plainly on the boy's face. All the world can see that; and whether the child is his own or not, he's safe."

"A very uncertain proof, Quekett. I should have thought you had had too much experience to accept it. Now look at the matter sensibly. Is it likely Lord Muiraven could have been to Priestley and courted Myra Cray without our hearing of it?"

"Myra Cray has not always lived at Priestley, Colonel. But putting that aside, how can we be sure the child did belong to Cray?"

"But — I have always understood so," exclaims Colonel Mordaunt as he pushes his chair away from the table and confronts the house-keeper.

"Ay, perhaps you have; but that's no proof either. Mrs. Cray always said the boy was a nurse-child of hers; and it was not until Myra's death that Mrs. Mordaunt told you she was his mother."

"Mrs. Mordaunt repeated what the dying woman confided to her."

"Perhaps so," remarks Mrs. Quekett drily, "but the fact remains, Colonel. And your lady took so kindly to the child from the very first, that I always suspected she knew more of his history than we did."

"Do you mean to insinuate that my wife took this boy under her protection, knowing him to be a son of Lord Muiraven?"

"I don't wish to insinuate—I mean to say I believe it; and if you'll take the trouble to put two and two together, Colonel, you'll believe it too."

"Good God! it is impossible. I tell you Mrs. Mordaunt never saw Lord Muiraven till she met him at the Glottonbury ball."

"I think there must be a mistake somewhere, Colonel; for they've been seen together at Lady Baldwin's parties more than once; I had it from her own lips."

"I can't understand it. I am sure Irene told me she did not know him."

"Some things are best kept to ourselves, Colonel. Perhaps your lady did it to save you. But if they'd never met before, they got very intimate with one another whilst he was here."

"How do you mean?"

"In arranging plans for the child's future, and so forth. I heard Mrs. Mordaunt tell his Lordship this very morning, just as he was going away, that she should write to him concerning it. And his giving the child that watch looks so very much, to my mind, as though he took a special interest in him."

Colonel Mordaunt frowns and turns away from her.

"I cannot believe it; and if it's true I wish to God you had never told me, Quekett. Go on with the accounts!—Where's the baker's memorandum for flour? Didn't I order it to be sent in every week?"

"There it is, Colonel, right on the top of the others. One would think you had lost your head."

"Lost my head: and isn't it enough to make a man lose his head to hear all the scandal you retail to me? Do you want to make me believe that there is a secret understanding between my wife and Muiraven concerning that child?"

"I don't want you to believe any further than you can see for yourself. If you like to be blind, be blind! It's no matter of mine."

"Is it likely," continues the Colonel, shooting beyond the mark in his anxiety to ascertain the truth, "that had she been pre-acquainted with that man, and preferred his company to mine, she would have been so distant in her manner towards him and so low-spirited during his visit here?"

"I am sure I can't say, Colonel; women are riddles to me, as to most. Perhaps your lady didn't care to have his Lordship located here for fear of something coming out. Any way, she seems light-hearted enough now he's gone," as the sound of Irene's voice comes gaily through the open casement.

"I don't believe a word of it, Quekett," says the Colonel loyally, though he wipes the perspiration off his brow as he speaks; "you are hatching up lies for some infernal purpose of your own. This is no business of yours, and I'll

listen to no more of it. Go back to your own room, and leave me to settle my accounts by myself."

"Thank you, Colonel! Those are rather hard words to use to an old friend who has served you and yours faithfully for the last thirty years; and you can hardly suppose I shall stand them quietly. I may have means of revenging myself, and I may not, but no one offended met yet without repenting of it, and you should know that as well as most. I wish you a very good night, Colonel."

"Stop, Quekett. If I have been hasty, you must forgive me. Think how wretched the doubt you have instilled in my breast will make me. I love my wife better than myself. I would lay down my life to preserve her integrity. And the idea that she may have deceived me is utter misery. I shall brood over it until it eats my heart way. I would rather know the worst at once."

While he is speaking, the house-keeper has drawn a torn sheet of paper from the leather bag she carries on her arm, and is smoothing it carefully between her palms.

"Well, Colonel, you had better know the worst," she replies as she lays the paper on the desk before him: "you will believe your own eyes, perhaps, if you won't believe me; and you may live to be sorry for the words you've spoken. But you shall be deceived no longer, if I can help it."

"Quekett! what is this?"

"Read it, and judge for yourself! It came downstairs in your lady's waste-paper basket, which she ain't half so careful of as she needs to be. And when you have read it, you'll understand, perhaps, why I've taken upon myself to speak as I have done."

He glances at the first few characters and turns as white as a sheet.

"Leave me, Quekett," he utters in a faint voice.

"Keep up, Colonel," she says encouragingly as she retreats. "There's as good fish in the sea, remember, as ever came out of it."

But his only answer is to thrust her quietly from the door and turn the key upon her exit.

The air is full of all the sweet scents and sounds of early summer. A humble bee, attracted by the honeysuckle that clusters round the window-frame, is singing a drowsy song amongst its blossoms: the cows in the meadow beyond the lawn, restored to their calves after the evening milking, are lowing with maternal satisfaction: the nestlings, making, beneath their mother's guidance, the first trial of their half-grown wings, are chirping plaintively amongst the lilac bushes; and above all is heard Irene's cheerful voice as she chases Tommy round and round the garden flower-beds.

Everything seems happy and at peace, as he sits down to scan the words which are destined to blot all peace and happiness from his life for evermore. He glances rapidly at the familiar writing, reads it once—twice—three times, and then falls forward on the study table with a groan.

(To be continued.)

OH! THINK OF ME.

Oh, think of me! when fair Aurora gleams
Her lovely heralding of coming day;
When you, perchance, awake from pleasant
dreams,
And longing, watch for Phoebus' joyous ray.

Oh, think of me! at noon of summer's day,
As you recline, in contemplative mood,
On fragrant bank, bedecked with flowers gay,
Or steeped in solitude of quiet wood.

Oh, think of me! when evening's shadows fall,
And silvery stars gleam from their azure
home;
When loving birds have ceased their wooing
call,
As dies the day, you by the brooklet roam.

Oh, think of me! at witching hour of night,
When others sleep, beloved, think of me;
When the scene's hallowed by the moon's
chaste light,
And you indulged in blissful reverie.

THE WHITE CAT.

(Conclusion.)

V.

The courtyard opened upon the high road, the high road led to the village, where everybody was up, and awake and excited. For hours past the church bells had been jangling, and a gun had been going off at intervals. It woke up Hugh, Gourlay at the same minute as M. le Maire, and old Mademoiselle de Latouche in her warm bed. In the Presbytery the children were jumping about in great excitement. It was pretty to see the little cluster in the courtyard—the babies in front, the little elder girls, in their broad hats, peeping at M. le Curé and his assistant, as they passed and re-passed through the gateway. H., who never can resist the children's voices, was also there, with a lace veil over her head. Madame Valentin was discoursing to the tobacconist out of her bedroom window as usual. He had stepped into the court in wooden shoes to borrow an um-

brella. "Ah! you will all want umbrellas," says Madame Valentin sagely. "My son started an hour ago. He is not in the procession; he goes to receive the Archbishop with the other gentlemen."

All this time a procession had been forming, rain and mud notwithstanding—talkative, excited. French people certainly have a special art for holding umbrellas, tidily defying the elements; their starch keeps stiff, their garments are dry, their spirits undamped, at times when an English temper would be drenched. Perhaps in the long run the English temper might best withstand the onslaught of adverse circumstances; but certainly for brief adversities we have little patience. The procession started at last, to the peal of bells, to the barking of dogs—windows opened, the church porch was crowded, people joining in from every doorway, late recruits following as fast as they could go. The women wore clean white shirts and starched white caps with satin ribbons; the men were dressed in their usual Sunday best—flagbearers had the additional glory of a green rosette. Monsieur le Curé and Monsieur le Vicaire were both there, encouraging and marshalling their troops. They had their breviaries under their arms, they wore their beautiful muslin stoles, their octagonal caps. The choristers were also in full dress, and the church beadle, in his long flapping gown, came away from the bell which he had been ringing uninterruptedly since four o'clock in the morning.

A few cap-strings joined still hot from the ironing-board where Madame Wachtel had been standing uninterruptedly labouring for twenty-four hours. Poor woman, she now sank down exhausted. She had counted upon going herself; there was her own jupe all ready, but she was too tired to move—tired! she was broken, there was no other word. Ah! there goes Mademoiselle de Latouche; is it possible that she walks on foot when she might drive in her aunt's carriage?

Hugh, who had dressed and come out to see what was going on, now appeared in the marketplace. He had seen Blanche pass his window, which was just about four feet from the ground, and on a level with people's heads. Mathilde, of the night before, was following with a waterproof, and expostulating as she went. "You will catch cold," he heard her say; "your aunt—the carriage——" and then Blanche's sweet shrill "Do you suppose that in the convent?" . . . and so they passed on.

The whole thing seemed to Hugh like some sort of fantastic continuation of his dreams. Still more so when he found himself, an hour later, steadily plodding in the wake of the retreating procession that was rapidly disappearing beyond the horizon of the sloping field. He had remained a little behind, talking to H., with whom he had stiffly claimed acquaintance as she stood in the gateway, on the strength of the night before; and, as usually happened in such cases, in return for his stiff excuse, she had charmed him by her kind manner and sweetness of greeting. That pale and tremulous H. has a gentle genius quite her own. It is not only sympathy, not only kind-heartedness, it is a peculiar instinct (springing in truth from a kind heart and a quick and delicate intellect), which teaches her to understand the silent language of the people she meets, as well as their spoken words. Some persons can play the piano; others, with a look, can tune a far nobler instrument. I often envy H. her gift, dearly as she pays for it. We can most of us sympathise, but to understand is a subtler quality. Unselfish sympathy, that forgets itself and does not obtrude, is the sweetest and rarest of all. Sometimes as she comes in, in her black dress and mourning garb, I look into H.'s pale face, with its sweet pensive lines; old and worn as it is, it seems to me fairer than many a young and brilliant beauty; its sudden smile is more tender and radiant. Some bright tempers are a little oblivious, carried away by their own excitement; H. is not so; she is hopeful and quietly pleased, because her heart is humble and full of love, and by her example she teaches us to practice this happiness of gentleness and faith, and to believe in it, even though it may not always be for us.

Hugh promised to come and see us again, and then walked off across the field in pursuit of the procession, that was now rapidly disappearing beyond the horizon. In order to save time he had tried another of his short cuts, and wandered into the boggy centre of a turnip-field, and was glad to scramble out of it into the pathway again. The land was monotonous enough, plains on every side, here and there a village crowding, white against the sky overhead mountains and valleys were tossing, and a storm was still impending, although the sun had come out bright for the present, and as it gleamed from the mountainous clouds above to the flat plains below, Hugh could see the little village, and the spire of the castle a couple of miles away.

Sometimes some tune comes haunting one, one knows not why, and to-day a wild Hungarian dance music, that Hugh had once heard by chance, seemed to him to be ringing in his mind, and echoing from across the plains, and from the distant line of breakers. Then carry it into the drifting clouds, and then a light would seem to break out suddenly and a repeat the tune in another key. People have odd waking dreams at times. All this gray under foot, over which the slippery lights were flickering; the sea-birds flying upon the wind; the excitement and strangeness of the scene,

seemed best expressed by this tune that was haunting him, and which he associated ever after with that morning's chase. He caught the procession up at last, and as he did so the tune died away. One or two stragglers had already fallen out of the ranks. There was Madeline Mathieu, the baker's daughter, carefully holding her white petticoats out of the mud, and naturally too much engrossed by this occupation to think of much else. Hugh soon discovered Mademoiselle de Latouche struggling with the flapping tongue of the village flag, to which a piece of ribbon had been tied, and which it was her duty to hold. She was dressed in white, as were the others; she wore a little white bonnet, tied under her chin.

"I fear you are tired, my child," said M. le Curé, coming up. He was walking along the ranks and encouraging his starved flock. "Madeline, if you come here, Mademoiselle will be able to rest."

They had come out from the fields by this time into the high way, which was growing more and more crowded every minute. Mademoiselle de Latouche recognised Hugh as she passed him, and nodded kindly; but she seemed tired, and there was no spirit in her greeting. The sight itself was amusing enough—a quaint scene of genuine country life. Here was a group of peasant-women, proudly striding along side of the soutane, the glory of the family. The brother, the Priest, walked with his thick shoes and flapping skirts, the proud old mother by his side in her old-fashioned Normandy cap and kerchief; the modernised sisters in cheap white satin quilings. Then some little children and some nuns went hurrying by to one of the convents in the town; a little farther some recruits, who had been very tipsy the day before, were still parading in their ribbons; and with it all came an eager cheerful hum and chatter of voices, to which every moment brought additional notes; through every gate of the little town to which the procession was bound, the people were pouring.

The choir of Joyeux rang shrill and loud, the rain had ceased, the hedgegrows and willow-trees were fresh in the narrow field ways, the feet of the many pilgrims had worn a streaming track as they passed, plodding peacefully through the nineteenth century to worship at the shrine of three hundred years before. There goes Femme Roulet, the farmer's wife, in her great-grandmother's earrings; there goes a priest from the seminary, who was born twenty years ago, perhaps, but who is living with St. Benedict and others, the life of their day. The way is long, the path is wet and slippery. Poor little Blanche had stumbled many a time before she finished her long three miles; she was unused to such fatigue, and could scarcely drag her tired feet along; the crowd bewildered her; she clung to her ribbon, and tried to think of the hymn that the country girls were singing as they marched along. This was what she had hoped, to find herself one of a goodly company pressing onward to the true burning shrine of religion; but she was tired; her spirits flagged; her attention wandered from the words of the psalm; she found herself mechanically counting the jerks of the flagstaff as it crossed and recrossed the priest's little black velvet cap. Suddenly, as she clung in her dismay to the green ribbon of the flag, the great prop and mainmast itself seemed to give away—there was a shriek. Something had struck her shoulder. . . .

Barriers had been put up round about the chapel, but just outside the barriers Hugh thought things looked a little uncomfortable. It was all good-nature! enough, and the people were only pushing in fun; but with so many girls and children in the crowd, it was certainly dangerous fun. There was a sudden cry that the bishop's carriage was at hand, a sudden heave, and somehow, before any one knew why, a wave passed through the crowd, some women screamed, a little pale and fainting figure almost fell into Hugh's arms. Madeline, the banner-bearer, slipped and fell: Louise the washerwoman sprawled over her. There might have been a serious accident if M. le Curé, who was a strong man, and Hugh, who was active and ready, had not sprung forward together and made a sort of rampart against the surging crowd. Hugh would not have been greatly concerned for Madeline, who was well able to bear any amount of pushing, or for Louise, who was loudly bewailing herself—but he still held up the almost senseless little lady of the castle; it had been his fate to rescue her; and he was relieved when the pressure subsided, and he found himself in a quiet corner of the great place outside the barrier.

Blanche revived in a minute, smoothed her hair out of her eyes, and sat on a step trembling a little and silent, and biting her lips. She did not even say "Thank you;" that wild see of heads and struggling arms was still about her.

Then she heard Hugh asking if she felt better, and found that she was safe and once more able to breathe; and in one moment she was herself again, shaking out her crumpled lace and smoothing her dress.

"You will have to go home now," said Hugh, in a tone of some satisfaction. "What induced you to come to such a place, mademoiselle? It is all very well for those peasant women, but for you——" The innocent eyes looked up.

"For me? Why should I not do as they do?" said Blanche, turning pale again at the very thought. "Oh, how wet I am! Is it not disagreeable to be wetted? Is that a carriage? Perhaps—Ah! here is Monsieur le Curé."

Monsieur le Curé emerged with Madeline, who was all over mud, and anxious to return.

to a clothes-brush. Hugh had hoped to be allowed to escort his hostess back to the Castle; but this was not according to French etiquette.

"I shall not thank you," said Blanche, as she took leave of Hugh. "You saved my life, but it was scarcely worth the trouble. Remember that my aunt dines at six."

A little carriage happened to be passing (it had been setting down some farmers from Vitry, a couple of miles off), and into the carriage Mademoiselle de Latouche and Mademoiselle were assisted, and they drove off together, mutually conoling, two white women under the green avenue. M. le Curé hurried after his flock; Hugh (who had had no breakfast), made his way into the town; all sorts of refreshments were being prepared for the use of the pilgrims. Such pious excursions should give good appetite.

Hugh felt somewhat remiss as he walked home to dinner that evening. He feared that he had neglected his duties as a guest; but in truth he had been so well amused, that he had forgotten all about the unseen lady, who might probably be expecting him.

A sort of Scriptural gleam was upon the sea, in the air, upon the little village lying on the sea-shore; a sort of Bethlehem-like star was peering from the edifying heights; two women were standing by a well not far from the castle garden talking together as they pulled the iron handle of the crank. They were still in their white dresses and white frilled caps. "It has been the day of Heaven," said one to the other. "We crossed the field singing in choir. Mademoiselle Blanche led the hymn. What a pity that she was so frightened in the crowd! It was nothing coming back. M. le Curé found the driest, nicest way. Look, I am not weary, and yet I have been on my feet since three o'clock this morning. Ah! our Curé is a good man. I would not exchange for him of St. Rambert, though he drove in the Bishop's carriage."

"Well, make haste," said the other in a low, satisfied voice. "Here is the storm again." And, as she spoke once more, the clouds seemed to gather swiftly from every quarter, from the sea, from the plains, heaving dark clouds. The summer storm burst over the village, where there was a great frying and clatter; all the bathers were enjoying their evening meal at open doors and windows; with kitchens in full play, with great talking and discussion. Some had brought their tables out into the street itself, for the heat was excessive, and the lodgings for the most part close and overcrowded. There was a general shriek and flight: children scampered; careful ménagères remained to clear the board; a great peal of thunder shook the air, and a swift whirlwind came eddying up with fierce dust and furious onslaught.

The storm did not last very long, and when it was over the sky cleared as suddenly as it had overclouded; the cloud-banks sank away, and the sunset, which had been tranquilly going on through all the clatter and excitement, came once more blazing gorgeously through the broken clouds and flooding the evening world. The drops of rain on the clematis that overhung the garden door reflected this splendid light; every stone was radiant. The very clapper sounded sweet and most musical in the clear and fragrant calm that followed the crash of angry clouds and storm. If the very wall was beautiful, the garden too was transfigured as Hugh walked in, admitted by Denise with her apron over her head.

"Here you are! What a storm!" says she; "were you caught in it? Mademoiselle has told us how you saved her. We have been frightened. Mademoiselle our mistress has had a nervous attack. That poor Casimir had to go out in all the rain for the doctor. Ah, we poor servants! we are the same as our masters. Thunder disagrees with me just as much as with our mistress. See how I tremble. And as for little Marie, the kitchenmaid, she is in the back cup board. She won't come out."

Hugh might have shown more sympathy if he could have spoken more French; with some satisfaction he gathered, however, that he had not been missed. He nodded, and Denise took it for granted he agreed in all she said. The prince in the fairy tale is conducted from chamber to chamber through jewelled and incandescent halls; my prince was only led under the wine trellis. But what jewelled galleries could be more beautiful than these green and garlanded loggias, through which the burning evening light was shining in clear, invigorating life? As he came from under the vines, he saw a common monthly rose-tree, from every thorn of which a rainbow seemed to break and flash as Denise swept by with her heavy cloth skirt. There was one rose of which the colors seemed to glow beyond light, deeper and dearer, and more splendid than any words. The flower burnt on, and Hugh stopped in admiration; Denise, however, pointed to the stable clock.

"Make haste," she said, "dinner will be ready;" and the young man understood that he was to lose no time. Denise hurried on quickly to her kitchen, past rose perfume and sweet verbena and geranium leaves. Mademoiselle, however, did not come down to dinner, and Blanche again did the honors.

VI.

Mademoiselle de Latouche was reported still indisposed next day. Only Mathilde and Blanche were there when Hugh, who had risen early, walked into the breakfast-room from the garden. He had been down to the village, bathed, reconnoitre the place.

Early as it was, all the bathers were already

out on the sands; and a strange and motley crowd assembled. Roman figures standing draped, enjoying the horizon, reading the paper, and contemplating the sea before casting their long white togas aside and venturing into the water. Ladies in sandalled feet, closely garbed in woollen stuffs, banded and filleted like any Tallias and Cornelias out of a gallery of statues; little noisy boys and girls playing on the shore or capering down from the bathing boxes, our own children piling their castles. It is all present as I write, the heave of the crisp horizon, the flash of brine, the faint sparkle of distant promontories. People talk of being misunderstood; surely they are moments when every grain of sand, every gleam of light, seem to re-pond to the uttermost need of one's being, and to complete and satisfy.

The cheerfulness and clatter of it all struck our friend Hugh; and, for the first time, he understood that besides one's life and one's habits there is such a thing as the state of mind in which people and their neighbors habitually live. It is quite independent of circumstances, and represents the measure from which they start. Whether one state of mind is more desirable than another was not the question he asked himself. He had been used to look with something like scorn upon anything that was good-humored and temporary: a stern realization of the terrors of life, and a heavy proclivity to its pitfalls, had always seemed to him the most reasonable aspect to contemplate. It had been his mother's and his father's, it was his brothers'.

Under all these cheerful influences he came back to the chateau whistling, with his hands in his pockets, and prepared to eat, drink, and be merry; and transacted business; he passed old Pierre with clean straw in his sabots, cracking a cheerful morning whip.

The breakfast was set out on the oil-skin table-cover, a dish of pile-up fruit in the centre, bowls of coffee, and a loaf three feet long, from which Mathilde was cutting liberal hanches. Blanche was breakfasting in the sunshine; she was sitting just where the light fell upon the oak parquet, she was still dressed in white, demurely sipping her bowl of milk. She looked a little pale, even younger than the night before.

"Here is the English gentleman!" said Mathilde, looking up, and she opened the window to let their visitor in. As she did so, all the morning auracle, birds' songs, light fresh and renovating, rushed in. Mathilde shivered, but enjoyed; and, being cold, went off to get a shawl for Blanche, while the young lady answered Hugh's inquiries.

"Here is your aunt's little fur tippet for you, my child," said the kind creature, coming back with some swan-down.

"Thank you, Mathilde," said Blanche; "Mr. Gourlay will not believe that I am no longer frightened; but it gives us something more to eat quickly, for this is a fast-day, and I am hungry. I should like some more cream."

Mademoiselle Mathilde hurriedly offended. Fast-day or feast-day, she never ate anything herself, but her pleasure was to provide for others; and this little Blanche was very near her heart. Who could help loving her? a soft, little willful creature, with sudden spirits flaming up, silent deep suppressions, all following one another so rapidly that it was hard to say which of all these sunshines and tempests was Blanche herself.

Then the little grey woman took some crumbs from the table and scattered them over the garden path that crossed the window. A sparrow immediately appeared ready to grapple with an enormous block of bread.

"Are you fond of birds?" said Blanche; "I am," watching Hugh as he went on with his breakfast. "There are thrushes in the garden of the convent where I was brought up at, and a nightingale sings in June, I watch him under the tree. It is so pretty; one night we tried to steal out to listen to it, but the good mother punished us all next day."

"How glad you must be to be at home!" said Hugh, who had finished his coffee. "Now you will be able to listen to nightingales as long as you like."

Blanche did not answer: she crimsoned up and then became very pale; even her pretty red lips seemed to turn white for a moment. "Don't you know," she began, then faltered. She was always gentle, and generally deliberate in her movements, but on this occasion some sudden impulse made her start from her chair, spring swiftly to the window and out into the garden; the birds in front of the window flew away frightened.

Mathilde started; Blanche had vanished. Hugh Gourlay was a little puzzled; he looked at his companion, wondering what he had said amiss. The diligent little woman was still clearing away the breakfast, and brushing the crumbs of the oilskin cover of the table. She seemed to avoid his glance. When Hugh got up and walked into the garden, he saw Blanche, in her swan-down tippet, sitting in the sunshine as quietly as if nothing had happened.

Bianche alternated with orange trees along the terrace, and Blanche had chosen the sunniest. She sat quite still with her hands linked into her sleeves, in the way she had learnt from the nuns. She was looking intently at the swaying branches of a tree, from which some lilac drooping westerias were hanging. Her shadow never stirred upon the gravel walk. Beyond the terrace, in the great meadow, the cows were standing in their sombre coats; beyond the cows, the old iron gates were closed against the world—"jumping by the highway." It all looked secure and peaceful enough. As Hugh came up, the young Coateleine moved

ever so little and made a place for him on the bench beside her.

"Tell me," she said, suddenly, "why did you come here?"

"I came on business," said Hugh.

"What business?" said Blanche, still looking at the westeria branch, where a little sparrow was swinging and swaying to a tune in his own brain.

"I have to find a particular sort of machine," said Hugh, "for which your father has left a model, I understand, and I have to find a pool for my father. He thinks that is most important of all, but I am very anxious to get the machine."

"A machine! A pool!" said Blanche, looking at him with her wise yet innocent eyes. "Have you come all this way for a pool? I think I can help you; there is a poor woman in the village who has one to dispose of. His name is Bismark. He is a very big dog; I will have him brought here for you. I cannot think how anyone can like dogs. We cannot endure dogs in this house. There are none at the Convent; that is something fine!"

Then he began telling her one dog story after another; he spoke of colleys and terriers and sheep dogs, warning to his subject as he went on; he brought a whole new world into his talk—a world of morals and of liberty, of adventure, a world of nature.

Never in the course of her short existence had little Blanche heard any one speak in such a voice as this or heard such a hymn to natural things. She heard of miracles, of ecstasies, of preserves and embroidery; she had heard of pictures, of incense, of self-indulgence and devotion; bit of winks and life and liberty and labor, free, enticing—she had never heard any one speak in this way before. She tried to realize Hugh's stories as they followed; listening with averted eyes. Once she raised them with a look that made him almost cease to speak, it was so constraining. In its veiled appeal. "Don't tell me any more," it seemed to say.

"I shall never hear such things again," she said at last, in her slow English. "I shall soon be gone from here, I think, but I shall remember it all." Then she sighed and moved uneasily, and then folded her hands once more, but he could see her little tan fingers trembling.

"Are you going to a pretty part of the country?" asked young Gourlay, in his most matter of fact tones.

Hugh scented emotion and avoided it as Blanche avoided puddles, and his tone at once froze her confidence.

"It is pretty enough," she said, dryly, "but that will make little difference to me. The place I am going to is....." she stopped—"would not interest you," she said.

"One can never tell," said Hugh, "what will interest another person, any more than one can tell what may be about to happen to oneself."

"I know very well what is before me," said Mademoiselle de Latouche; and Hugh vaguely smiled at a surmise.

"I could tell you every day of all my life to come as long as I live if I chose," continued the girl, with a sad quiver in her slow voice; "when you go back to your moors, to your dogs, to your free life, I shall be in my convent, at peace and safe from the world and its temptations." She raised her wistful, magnetic eyes, as she spoke, with some wild yet mystical look in them that Hugh never forgot again.

"What do you mean?" he asked, in a different tone.

"I am going to enter the Convent of the Sisters of the Holy Pilgrims," said little Blanche, in a low voice. Then she said no more, but sat smoothing the fluff upon her tippet, mechanically stroking it down with her little fingers.

The bewildered Englishman remained on the bench beside her—watching her in surprise and painful interest. He began presently to question, contrary to her wont, she answered all his questions with the greatest readiness and simplicity. Yes, it was of her own free-will she was going in. Her aunt wished it, and so did M. le Curé, and her father wished it, so they said; and what else could she do? Once she had thought of marrying a young man her father had approved, but he died: she had only seen him twice, but she always wore his portrait, and she pointed to the locket on her arm. He was something like—she stopped again and went on to speak of the convent. She loved the sisters; they were kinder than anybody else except poor Mathilde.

"And it is a beautiful life," said the little thing seriously, "to pray, to sing in the chapel, to be good and loved by all the saints, and to spend one's life for the good of others, praying for them. Perhaps," she said, clasping her hands thoughtfully, "some other girl will profit by my prayers and find happiness—my happiness."

Hugh was too much shocked and frightened to know what to say at the moment, and before he could make up his mind Mathilde came flying out upon the terrace. Mademoiselle desired to see him, she said; would he please come at once?—she did not like waiting. The Curé de St. Rambert was expected, and she was already vexed by his delay.

M. le Curé de St. Rambert took a special interest in the fate of little Blanche. The little thing would probably inherit her aunt's fortune as well as her father's possessions: let them beware of scheming fortune-hunters, ready to devour the poor innocent; let them accept with a good heart the safe protection that the Church extends to those holy women who are filled with noble aspirations, and turn to her for safety and refuge. Blanche had been sent to the convent, by his advice, for her education. She seemed to have a vocation! let them beware how they

discourage it! This was the Curé of St. Rambert's advice.

The Curé de St. Joyeux had nearly been denied the house in disgrace for having shown so little sympathy when his advice was asked concerning Blanche's future. "Merry her, Madame," he had been churlish enough to say; "find some good young fellow to make a home for her. Hers does not seem to me a character matured for a cloister life. She has movements, sublime movements of piety and fervor; but that is a mere passing phase in her young soul. Some people are thus constituted, and I do not say that they are by any means the worst. Now, there is M. le Vicaire, if you ask me; he seems eminently out out for religious life. He is now arranging the details of another procession next Thursday: it will be most striking."

Mademoiselle de Latouche must have been in a capricious mood that day. Mathilde led Hugh into a sort of ante-room, where she begged him to wait while she went in and announced him. The time seemed a little long, and the young man walked to the window and looked out. It was a window which opened on one of the twisted balconies, and from whence he could see the garden, and the terrace, and the orange trees all mapped out before him; and as he looked he saw that M. le Curé de St. Rambert had come up and sat down on the bench where he had been sitting. Little Blanche was still there, listening with averted face to the Curé, who was speaking with unction and much action of the hands. Then she suddenly started away, and set off running along the orange trees, and the Curé crossed towards the house. Mathilde also came out of an adjoining room, looking somewhat confused.

"Well!" said Hugh. Mathilde shook her head. Mademoiselle had changed her mind; she could not receive him that morning.

It afterwards occurred to Hugh that this had been a little ruse of the housekeeper's to get him out of the way before the priest's arrival. Mathilde hurried him down by a different staircase to that by which she had brought him.

VII.

Until he had heard her story, Blanche had seemed to Hugh just a young lady like any other; now, when he looked out into this flower-garden all a-bloom, and watched the little things play and bright antics and heard her sweet voice, some other chord was struck, and there seemed a strange meaning to it all. After that first explanation, little Blanche seemed to trouble herself no more about her fate; but what curious things meanings are! This future was like a shadow creeping over a summer day, so Hugh thought; like the melancholy reverberation of a voice calling gaily across an empty court. The more often Blanche's laugh sounded, the more sadly this echo seemed to sound.....

How quickly people get used to the things that they like! Habits of tranquil intimacy are, perhaps, the most insidious of all. They seem so easy, so harmlessly absorbing, why should they not continue for ever? Great events, wonderful successes, deserving triumphs, those may be for others, but for ourselves we ask but little: the peaceful satisfaction, the person you expect, the hour you love best returning again and again. One is told of the vanity of human wishes, but people do not surely apply so grand a name to anything so unimportant as the opening of a door, the quiet daily entrance of one person or another.....

These two young people were thrown into a strange companionship. Mademoiselle de Latouche for once was really ill, and too much absorbed in her symptoms to trouble herself about what was going on in the house. From what Hugh had said, she had taken it for granted that Mr. Gourlay was an old manufacturer. Mathilde innocently answered all Mademoiselle's questions. He was quiet, gave no trouble, was out most of the day; this was all the account she gave. He was anxious to go as soon as he had been allowed to see the machine.

But Mademoiselle was firm. No, not until she had seen him and made her bargain would she consent to let Hugh go or carry off the model. Mathilde had the key; let her keep it for the present.

The days went by so peacefully that there was nothing to dwell upon. They used to spend long hours on the terrace, nothing happening except that the cows came crossing the field, or the shadow of the sun-dial travelled across the disc. One night Blanche persuaded Mathilde to come down to the beach. They walked down the great avenue, of which the trees looked so tall in the moonlight. As they reached the gate that led to the road, the two priests were passing along on their way from the church; their buckles gleamed in the moonlight. It was a lovely, vast night; that strange harmony which is not sound, which is not silence, was vibrating everywhere. The moon was slowly winning a silver victory, and conquering realm after realm of sand, and dune, and sea; now the church spire itself is won, the marble step and the open door, through which you see the dim lamp burning at the altar-rail. There within all is still, mysterious, and voiceless; but without, now the sky flashes—what dimmed glory of starlight seems waiting for a signal to burst into life! He was sitting among shadows; the husband and wife were walking slowly along the trellis wall; sometimes a star rose above its leafy line, sometimes a veil seemed to fall gently upon all this mystery. I saw the trio from the castle from my window as they passed on their way to the beach.

The sea lay quite still in the moonlight, and only streaked by some long back lines that came rolling in strangely, with a dull monotony of calm and sound. Hugh had once heard an oratorio given in the town-hall at York, and the night brought it back to his mind. He had forgotten the music, but he could remember the impression that it made, the sense of distance, the harmonious concords breaking through the modulation of vaguer notes. Here was the oratorio again. "It frightens me," said Blanche; "but how beautiful it is!" High overhead rode the pale moon, a pervading melody falling upon the waves, the cliffs darkly enclosing all, the stars shining against their crests.

Mathilde stood gazing at the black lines in the sea. "There will be a storm to-night," she said.

Blanche turned, with a low, soft sigh. "Come, there is a boat putting off. How I should like to row out into the moonlight!"

When one is young, impressions come like beautiful tunes, easy to remember, with melody caressing and entrancing. Each year adds meaning upon meaning to every feeling, accompaniment to every loving tune, and presently it is no longer one exquisite air, but a great concerted movement that carries us away; each note seems complicated and enfolded into others. Hugh and Blanche were young, unaccompanied as yet; they had not six weeks' experience between them, for Blanche in her convent had scarcely seen less of the world than Hugh among his throbbing engines. The music that was sounding in their ears, on this mysterious night, was a very sweet one.

"I think I could remain looking at the waves for years," said Blanche. "Ah! what a pity that the convent windows do not look upon the sea!"

"The convent windows will not show you much worth looking at, I should think," said Hugh, turning crossly away.

"That is the reason of it," said Blanche stopping short. "The convent is a friend who comes to detach us from the things of this world, its vanities, its pleasures, and heartlessness." She spoke with a cold yet passionate earnestness, and waited for him to answer.

"Do you think there are no troubles in life?" said Hugh, with his hands in his pockets, muttering between his teeth. "Real troubles with some heart in them, instead of flimsy metaphors and fancy penances inflicted by old women." Blanche flushed furiously.

"I must never speak to you again, if you speak to me like that," she said. They had walked up to the boats.

At this time a boat was putting out to sea, and the two fishermen to whom it belonged were struggling with ropes and cords and fish-baskets; a boy was leaping in and out, hauling and pushing. The weird moonlight fell upon their faces; a woman with a child in her arms stood silently near, watching their progress.

"We are ready," said the elder man, coming up to where the woman was standing; "good-night, my girl; go home; there is nothing to fear." He gave her a loud kiss, and leapt into the boat; it shoved off with a dull splash, and went rapidly tossing across the back waves. The woman suddenly burst out crying, and kissed her baby again and again.

They found some one expecting them when they reached home. Blanche's poodle was sitting on the door-step. It was a present, she said, laughing. Hugh must accept it; a big white poodle dog, nicely curled and frilled, with a string tied to its muzzle. It had pink eyes, and an innocent black nose like a button. Its wide-spread paws were ornamented with elegant little tufts; its tail ended in a tassel. The old peasant woman who had brought it was gazing wistfully at the foolish blinking eyes that returned her glances with so much truthful affection.

The poodle slept in a corner of Hugh's bedroom all that night; about two o'clock in the morning, to the consternation of the household, he roused the whole place with his howls. Hugh quieted him as best he could, but the consequences were serious. Mademoiselle had been awakened; her indignation was not to be described.

When Hugh came down to breakfast he found Mathilde pale, with red eyes, as red as Bismarck's own. Blanche nervous, uneasy, starting at every sound. No one could describe the scene that Mademoiselle had given them. M. le Curé had been sent for. They had been up all night.

"Oh! sir!" said Mathilde, giving him his coffee with a trembling hand; "how am I to tell you?"

"I will tell him," said little Blanche, coming up. "My aunt is cruel; she says that you must not stay, that you must take Bismarck, and that I am never to see you again," said the girl in a cold, dull voice.

"Nonsense," said Hugh. "Of course I must go if your aunt wishes it. I shall go home with Bismarck: for many reasons it is the best thing I can do. But if you will let me come back," he said, looking at her steadily. "I will come this day week."

Blanche's eyes were cast down: she flushed up, said something unintelligible, and ran out of the room, as the priest entered with blandest politeness. Mademoiselle de Latouche's indisposition was so grave, that she regretted being obliged to inform her friend that she should not be able to transact the business upon which he had come. "The coach leaves at three, I believe," said the Curé.

Hugh got up and bowed very stiffly.

"I had already made up my mind to leave

the chateau," said he. "Perhaps, as you pass the village, you would kindly secure my place."

"With the greatest pleasure," said the Abbé. While Hugh was travelling back to his home, little Blanche was fitting away under the trees towards the meadow; she was pacing restlessly on and on, no longer lingering in the autumnal sunshine, scarcely taking pains to hold up her long white dress as it flowed upon the ground. But the place was so trim and crisply kept that there was but little to soil her skirt. She was not herself somehow, less to-day than she had ever been; its radiance and peaceful completeness seemed a long way from her; some sudden revulsion of feeling had filled her grey eyes with tears; she seemed to belong to the place as she had never belonged to it before, to feel that she had never been conscious enough of all the beautiful things, the memories, the childish hopes which had come to her there. Yes, there in that hollow she had once come with her father, holding his hand, and she could remember him standing in the gateway and calling to her. It was his wish that she was following now. M. le Curé de St. Rambert has told her so. How could she judge? A poor girl who has known nothing of life, who had seen no one, been nowhere; "and yet they might have waited," said little Blanche bitterly to herself. "My aunt is unhappy at parting from me; she is too good to care for mere personal feeling; but it will be terrible for Mathilde when I am gone." Then she began to think about the convent; she could see it all quite plain, and hear the nuns' voices through the rustling of the trees, and the novices' parlor with its two or three books, the altar to the Virgin, the cupboards, the straw chairs, and the window in the passage.

"Good-bye!" sister Marie Alba had said, this morning she came away, in her melancholy voice; "have you seen the good mother and taken leave?"

Then three novices had come in and sister Angelique, with a long flying veil, all saying farewell. "We shall see you again, my beloved, and then you will stay with us," the two nuns had said.

Sister Françoise had been putting linen in the cupboard, great heavy sheets with blue lines, the doors were open with the crosses on the corner panels. Françoise had turned her pale nose ("Will mine look like that?" wondered Blanche): "Before you go, dear angel your eyes are so clear, look at my silver ring, tell me whether it is bent. I showed it to Sister Catherine, but she cannot see anything amiss, and yet, by holding it to the light, does it not appear somewhat flattened, just by the silver heart?"

Blanche had taken the ring and the chain with its mythical symbols of hearts and flames into her hand. "What does it signify whether it is bent or not, Sister Françoise?" she asked.

"It matters—it matters a great deal; why the good mother herself—I shall ask M. le Curé next time he comes. Dear child, you are not going away in the convent dress?"

"She has leave to wear it," said the sister Angelique. "It is a special grace, for her own clothes are no come from the dress-maker's."

So it all came back to her, Blanche thought, with a stinging self-reproach: how familiar and kind whose faces were! Perhaps that was why Mathilde, with her worn looks, seemed more like home to her than her aunt, herself comfortable and handsome in that well-appointed room; and then Blanche thought of a life devoted, of highest impulse on earth leading to glorious reward in heaven, so they told her, so the Curé had told her just now; but would there not still be time in another year? she wanted to wait for the fête next month; she wanted leave to keep a dog in the convent; she wanted—what did she want? She thought of the fisherman's wife the night before, of the sea, of the moonlight: everything seemed to hurt, to tear her in every direction; she need not determine yet, not yet—not yet.

The Curé was still on the terrace, but she brushed past him without speaking.

This much Blanche felt that she must do, she must see him again, to say good-bye to her friend, and give him the thing that he wished for: this much was her right. She had not talked to Hugh all those long hours without being somehow carried away from her old boundaries, never to return to them, never again.

Had Blanche chosen? She knew not what she had chosen. She was in a miserable state of doubt and indecision. She felt herself watched; Denise was for ever in her way; the Curé of St. Rambert was always there.

One day Bismarck's former owner, who had been hovering about the terrace for some time, came up to Blanche as she passed on her way from mass. Denise sharply told her to make way, but Madame Rouillot persisted. The gentleman who had bought the dog was come back, and had he brought good news of poor Bibi?

Blanche had sent a message to our children to come up and walk in the garden of the chateau whenever they liked; they were English—that was enough to make them her friends. One day the whole company straggled up along the dusty road, Albina sitting a-head with her Binnie clinging to her skirts. The Major carried the little one, and Marjery and Anne proudly bore their provisions in their little baskets; the homeliest fare, short bread and rolls, and milk in a stone jug. They found a tea-table, an old leaf-be sprinkled bench among crisp autumnal avenues; they made a centre-piece of daisies in a saucer. A few brown leaves dropped into their cups, but they rendered them all the more intoxicating. Children love open air, they love play, and they love their elders to look on at their gambols. As we all sat round, resting

after our hot toil, we sat a figure advancing along the avenue; it came out of an old shed which had been built against the wall not far from where we were sitting.

"Who is it?" said H. "Is it a nun or a peasant woman?"

It was some one dressed in a coiffe and a long white floating veil over a grey serge dress; this person, whoever it was, advanced a little way, then went back, then came forward again. . . .

The pupils in the convents of the sisters of the Holy Pilgrims wear a very singular and unbecoming dress; it is made of grey merinos, plainly cut, with loose long sleeves falling upon their hands. The young faces are enclosed in white caps with narrow frills, to which are attached black floating veils, which give them somewhat the appearance of nuns themselves. This dress is not becoming, but there are those for whom the quaint sobriety only serves as a foil. Blanche de Latouche was certainly one of these. Neither caps, nor veils, nor prim grey robes could shade her sudden beauty; the soft eyes pierced through quills of any depth, and veils far thicker than the gauze that was floating along the garden pathway. The veiled apparition was not a nun—it was Blanche, in her convent school-girl dress. Some feeling had made her put it on to-day. She knew that Hugh would be coming. This was the day he had promised to come. All day long she had been expecting him; all day long she had been making up her mind quietly, with gentle perversity, that she would help him to get what he wanted; that her farewell gift to him should be this model, upon which he had set his heart. It was hers—her father had left it to her; this much she knew, she had a right to her own as yet. It was for that she had taken the key from the shelf where it lay in Mathilde's cupboards neatly docketed with the others. She had come down to assure herself that all was right—that the lock would turn. She feared she knew not what. She half expected the Archbishop, armed with all the thunders of the Church, to appear, and carry it off under his arm. Suddenly she saw the little conclave looking on with wide, open eyes. She had never spoken to us before, but as she came forward gently towards us, skirting the path as a child might have done—

Albina went to meet her. "I am glad to welcome you," Blanche said prettily in English. "I hope Mr. Gourlay gave you our message. Any time my aunt will be glad to see you at the chateau. Have you enough milk? Can we send you anything from the house? Will not the children like to play upon the terrace?—there is a fine prospect."

She said it all so kindly, and with such cordial grace, that we could not refuse; and so it happened that when Hugh Gourlay came walking up from the inn to the chateau after his week's absence, he found us all comfortably installed in the meadow in front of the house. The children were playing a game—Marjory, Anne, Dodo, and Binnie—at their four corners of the world. Blanche stood in the centre, gleeful, clapping her hands as she darted from one side to another. The children laughed, and dived with all their hearts in the game, holding hands, capering here and there.

They were all in the midst of their play when Hugh came up. I saw him look very strange, and hurry suddenly across the grass; the children began to shout and to cry out that he must join them.

"Blanche is puss! Blanche is puss! Take care!" cried little Dodo, tumbling across his path. Some spirit seemed to set them all flying and capering across the meadow, and Blanche suddenly darted ahead, in and out, and round from tree to tree, from bush to bush. The light figure flew; the children followed in the hottest happiest excitement.

Mathilde appeared upon the terrace. I saw Mademoiselle herself, with one of her priests, was looking out of her tower windows.

As Blanche started off she passed close to Hugh. "I want you," she said; then Hugh, with a child on his shoulder, set off running too, and the whole party vanished under the nut trees. We could hear their voices ringing on long after they had disappeared.

Blanche led the way by the covered path towards the shed; there she suddenly stopped short, and all the children surrounded her, calling out that she caught.

She turned to Hugh, panting, and blushing, and breathless; "I knew you would come. Here," she said, "take this key—it is the key of this shed, where the model is kept; I want you to have it. It is farewell gift from a friend—a true, true friend. You can bring two men to-night and carry the machine away. It is mine; I may still give it to you."

"Still give it!" said Hugh, very pale. "What does this mean? What is this veil? Blanche" . . . he could scarcely speak the words.

"It is my old school dress," said Blanche, smiling, and still breathless. I am not yet a nun. I have asked for delay. The Curé of Joyeux posted my letters. My aunt's director will be angry, but that I cannot help."

Once more she would have started off shyly. "Ah! I am caught!" she cried. A straggling thorny rose hung over the roof of the shed; her long flying veil was twisted in the branch. She was a prisoner, for her veil was securely fastened to her cap and her thick coils of hair.

Hugh tried in vain to disentangle it. All his fingers were trembling still; he had feared he had come too late.

"If Mathilde were here, she could untie the string," said Blanche.

"Make haste! make haste!" "Here is the

Curé running after us," cried the children excitedly.

"Cut it!" cried Blanche, impatiently; "cut the string; it fastens the cap and the veil too."

Hugh pulled out his big knife, and in an instant had snipped the cap-string, and with the string the veil gave way, and Blanche, springing free once more, shook all her beautiful sunshine of hair in a glistening mist over her shoulders; then she turned, laughing and blushing, to thank him. The cap lay on the ground in the sunshine.

"Mademoiselle Bla-an-an-che," sang Mathilde in the distance, calling, "your aunt wants you."

"O, she is a fairy princess," sang Binnie, dancing about madly, and clapping his hands.

The two looked at each other. They had forgotten the children's presence. "O, think well of it!" he was saying. "Leave all this behind. Come with me—come home to your home in England. I will take care of you." He spoke in a voice that seemed to carry Blanche away by its reality—by its natural might of tender protection. "Do you hear me? You frightened me dreadfully," said Hugh. "Speak, Blanche. Give me your hand."

As if in a dream, she put her hand in his. The children had begun a new song and set of dancing along the avenue; the two, still hand-in-hand, walked on, following unconsciously. Little Marjory dropped all the daisies out of her nose-gay in their path as she ran; little Dodo picked up a pretty golden leaf and threw it at Blanche's white skirt. They all turned down a side alley. The Curé de St. Rambert, coming up to the place where they had been standing, only found the cap lying in the sunshine, and the long veil still floating from a branch.

In those days marriages between Catholics and Protestants were not so strictly forbidden as now. Hugh had a battle to fight, but we all know what happened when the Prince drew his sword.

My hero won his bride. Blanche married him as soon as she came of age. Old Mr. Gourlay was enchanted. Ben and Bathurst both married also, soon after Hugh.

Blanche is very happy at Gilwick. She is far the sweetest of the three brides. She is a great favorite with her father-in-law, and since her coming Bismarck has ceased to regret Normandy.

AH, LITTLE MAIDEN!

Ah, little maiden, frank and fair,
With rosy lips apart,
With sunbeams glinting in your hair,
And sunshine at your heart!
Glad sounds about your senses rise,
That have no voice for me;
Blithe visions dance before your eyes,
That mine may never see.
And are the flowers so rare, love?
And is the day so bright?
For me the boughs are bare, love,
And chill descends the night.

Ah, me! I mind me of a time,
Deep in the buried past,
When I, too, dwelt in that sweet clime,
Wherein your lot is cast;
When fragrance floated on the breeze,
When heaven bent blue above,
And every wild bird in the trees.
Sang still of hope and love.
Dead are those flowers so rare, love,
And dimmed that day so bright.
For me the boughs are bare, love,
And chill descends the night.

Grim clouds came up, and overspread
The heaven with sullen grey;
The roses drooped, the fragrance fled,
The breezes died away.
And now, of all the happy throng,
One bird is left alone,
To sing a broken-hearted song
Of joys for ever flown.
Dead are those flowers so rare, love,
And dimmed that day so bright.
For me the boughs are bare, love,
And chill descends the night.

SAVED BY LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

"I tell you, Squire, I can't pay. When first I took the little farm from you, I laid out my money in improvements on the land—mostly by your suggestion, and with an understanding that I should have a long lease; but at the end of my term, Farmer Crowther offers a larger rent for the farm, and you turn me and my wife and child out on the world, penniless!"

The speaker was a tall, dark man, with thick, bushy whiskers, and a bronzed face, and was, in appearance, every inch an English yeoman.

Seated opposite to him, in a comfortable easy chair, was Squire Wolfhurst—a short, spare man of about sixty, dressed in a suit of black. He was very bald, which gave his sloping forehead a look of height that it really did not possess. As he listened to Grayling's pleading, he leant back in his chair, nodding his head in time to the rising and falling of the man's voice.

"My dear Mr. Grayling, what has all this to do with me?" he asked, in silvery tones. "It

is a waste of your time to remind me of what I already know. I should indeed have been a fool to refuse a larger rent than you could afford."

"Yes; when I had paid for all the improvements. Was that just?"

"Just? Well, I don't know; I'm certain it was legal. You forget, I am a lawyer."

"Forget! You take care that none of your dependants should ever do that."

Squire Wolfhurst shrugged his shoulders, and smiled.

"You may smile, Squire; but you know what I say is true."

"Pardon me; I do not. When Mr. Raeburn died, I was obliged to take his estates in payment of large sums of money I had advanced to him. I was his legal adviser, you know."

"Yes; and heavily he paid for the advice," muttered Grayling.

"Well, at his death, his son Ernest was left penniless. It was no fault of mine, and I could not have been blamed if I had left him to his fate. Now what did I do? I took the boy, had him educated, and have given him a lucrative post under this roof, which must be a comfort to him considering the place was once his father's."

"A great comfort, I should think, to be a servant were you were once young master," said Grayling, bitterly.

"Better than starvation, my friend. Why don't you ask Farmer Crowther to take you into his service? Because you're too proud. Well, pride, like other things, costs a price; in this case it is absolute want; and, if you like to purchase such expensive luxuries, don't ask me to pay for them!"

"I have asked, and been refused!"

"That is a pity. You see, all are not as kind-hearted as I am. Ernest is fortunate."

"Very," said Grayling, his face flushing with passion at these taunts; "but, if report speaks correctly, Mr. Ernest may, one day, claim his rights, your title here would not be too good, if certain papers, which are missing, could be found."

"That is enough, my friend," put in Mr. Wolfhurst, in bland tones. "To-morrow, unless you pay the money, I put you into prison—turn your wife and child out into the streets to starve or live as best they can. You hear my determination? Now go!"

"Have you no mercy?"

"None; for the words you have spoken do not deserve it!"

At that moment a loud knocking was heard at the door.

"Just in time," muttered Mr. Wolfhurst. "Come in," he cried; and the next moment a servant entered the room, and announced the arrival of a Mr. Chalkey. "Chalkey!" said Mr. Wolfhurst; "what can he want? Tell him to wait. Yet, stay; on consideration, you may show him in, and take this man away."

Grayling suffered himself to be led from the room, merely glancing at Mr. Chalkey, a thin-faced, ferret-looking man, who seemed to have followed the servant right up to the Squire's door.

"I suppose the Squire has been hard on ye Master Grayling? Don't look so downcast upon it, man; the Squire's hard upon all of us. He treats Master Ernest very badly, only the young fellow loves his niece, and so puts up with it. Then there's the niece, Miss Isabel, always being told that she was taken out of the gutter by him. Ay, and that her mother died there, too. It's a lively place, the Hall's become, under him. But—"

The man paused to listen to the violent ringing of a bell.

"That's the Squire's bell. Wait here; I won't be a minute."

He disappeared, leaving Grayling standing close by the kitchen; but returned in a short time, with an amazed look on his face.

"I'm blest if I ever saw the like of that!" said the man. "There's that fellow Chalkey seated in the Squire's chair, and there's master trembling and shaking, a-leaning up agin the mantel-piece. Brandy! Brandy!" says the Squire. 'Ay! brandy!' calls Chalkey, as cool as a cucumber. Well, I get the brandy, and Chalkey fills his glass, winks at Squire, and drinks it off. The Squire, he fills half a tumbler and drinks that off, and then, seeing me, shouts 'Begone!' for all the world like the fellow in the show at the fair. Come and have a glass of ale; it'll do you good, Master Grayling."

"No, thank you, my good fellow," replied the farmer. "I cannot drink in this house; the ale would choke me. If you would do me a service let me out by the side door, leading across the park. I do not care for the servants to see me in this state."

The good-natured fellow looked at Grayling's troubled countenance, and led the way to the side door, where he wished the broken-hearted farmer a friendly good night.

CHAPTER II.

Taking a short cut across the lawn, Grayling made towards a thicket, which nearly surrounded the Hall, and through which ran a road leading to the village.

He had not proceeded far before he heard his name called, and turning round, he beheld a couple hurrying towards him.

"I knew it was Grayling," said one of the new comers, holding out his hand. "How are you, and how did you get on at the Hall?"

"Badly will answer both questions, Master Ernest," replied Grayling.

"I am sorry to hear you say so," sighed the

girl. "Oh, how I do wish my uncle would be kinder!"

"It's not in his nature, miss," said Grayling. "I often wonder how you can be related to him."

"We are only connected by marriage," replied Isabel, blushing. "That makes it all the kinder his taking care of me."

"Care!" cried Ernest, passionately. "Nice care he has taken of you! Do you think I, who love you, don't see your heart is ready to break? Look here, Grayling; I want Isabel to run away with me. I am sure I can make my way in the world, and we should be so happy, and—"

"Have a care, Master Ernest; no good comes of doing things on the sly. Ask the Squire's consent. Should he refuse, then take your wife openly."

Excusing himself on the ground that he must hasten home to tell the Squire's determination, he bade them good night, and hurried away.

Grayling soon slackened his speed, for he had not courage to face home, and tell his wife the news. His pace grew slower and slower, until, at length, he stopped, and leaning against a tree, gazed at the moon, which was just visible through the overhanging boughs.

Bitter and black were the thoughts that passed through his brain. The very beating of his heart seemed to reiterate the word "vengeance." It would have been a bad thing for Squire Wolfhurst had he been standing by Grayling at that moment.

So lost in thought was the poor fellow that he did not hear the rattle of horse's hoofs until they were close to him. He turned to see who the rider was, by which means he came more into the full moon-light.

Whether the horse was frightened at Grayling's movement, or at some shadow, matters not, but certain it is that the animal raised its head, and sprang quickly on one side, throwing its rider, who was evidently no horseman, to the ground with considerable violence.

In a moment Grayling had caught the horse's bridle to prevent its running away, and then hastened to the man's assistance.

"Are you much hurt, sir?" he asked.

"Not much, I think," said the man.

"You should keep your reins more in command," said Grayling.

"Oh, you country fellows are up to these sort of things, but we city men have other matters to think of. Just give me a lift into the saddle, for I must not lose time."

Grayling did as requested. No sooner had the stranger remounted than the farmer recognised his feature as those of the Squire's strange visitor, Mr. Chalkey.

"You were up at the Hall just now?" he asked.

"Right you are!" was the cool reply.

"The Squire was ill?"

"He had a fit of the blues."

Without waiting for further conversation, he galloped down the road.

"Bah!" said Grayling, when the horseman disappeared; "he's but one of the Squire's men. Like master, like man; if he had broken his neck it wouldn't have mattered much. Hilloa! what is this? He has dropped his pocket-book."

He picked up the book, and was about to place it unopened in his pocket, when his curiosity overcame his better judgment. He opened it, and found that it contained some papers, four five-pound notes, and some gold in a small pocket or purse.

A shudder ran through Grayling when he saw the money. For a moment he seemed as if he were about to cast the purse from him; but, changing his mind, he thrust it quickly into his pocket, and with a creeping step, far different from his usual firm tread, stalked into the wood, and seeking a by-path, made his way slowly homewards, where he knew his wife was anxiously awaiting his return.

CHAPTER III.

It was late when Herbert Grayling reached his home—a miserable place, scantily furnished and in bad repair.

By the side of a very small fire sat a thin, half-starved woman, rocking a child's cradle. As Grayling entered, she advanced towards him, and, throwing her arms around his neck, asked him if he had good news.

"Yes and no," replied the man, taking advantage of her kissing his cheek to turn his head. "The Squire is as hard as stone; but I met with a piece of good luck on the road, so that we can settle with Squire and go abroad."

As he spoke, he drew forth the pocket-book, and gave the money to his wife.

It was really a beautiful sight to see how eagerly the woman clutched it. She counted it over, then flew to her husband, and kissed him over and over again; never noticing that, for the first time, her caresses seemed really to trouble him.

Then she hurried to the cradle where her baby was sleeping, and embraced it. Suddenly she became silent, and lifting her head, gazed wonderingly at her husband, who had thrown himself into a chair, in a dejected attitude.

Slowly rising, she went towards him, and, placing her hand upon his shoulder, asked, with a troubled voice, "Herbert, where did you get this money?"

"I—I—borrowed it," stammered Grayling.

"Borrowed it?" repeated the woman, in surprise. "Oh, Herbert, if what you say is true, tell me who has lent it? Surely you would

not hide from me the name of the friend who has saved us from misery and despair?"

"I—I don't know—that is, I must not, cannot tell you. You have the money—be satisfied."

"I am not satisfied, Herbert," the woman said, reproachfully. "That money was never lent to you. You have not come honestly by it; I see it in your face; I hear it in your voice! Take back your money—I would not touch it for the world!"

"But the child?" urged Grayling.

"The child!" rejoined the wife. "Do you think I would let the babe be fed by the proceeds of your ruin? No; I'd sooner see it dead at my feet, and know you honest, than well, and feel that you were a felon! Listen, Herbert; if you ever love me—if you love that child—tell me where you got this money?"

"I found it in the wood," replied the farmer, drooping down his head.

"Found it in the wood? But you must be aware who is the lawful owner?"

"I don't know. I can't tell. How should I know?"

"By the pocket-book you had just now. It is sure to have the owner's name inside."

"It has not. I have searched through it."

"But I saw some papers in it. They will tell you."

"They are old documents about Mr. Raeburn, so they are no use."

"Yes, yes, that is enough!" cried the wife, as delighted as if the money really belonged to her. "You can take it to Mr. Raeburn in the morning; he will return it to the proper owner."

"And can you part with the money?" asked Herbert.

"Herbert," replied the woman, sorrowfully, "can you do without my love? Touch that money, be it but a single penny to buy bread, and from that moment we separate. Be the same firm, patient, honest Herbert who wooed and won me, and neither poverty or trouble shall part us."

For a moment he gazed at her in silence, then, clasping her to his breast, he sobbed out, "Bless you, Maggy! I will offer the money to young Raeburn the first thing in the morning. He is always in the park early. Kiss me, my own darling! Your love has saved me!"

CHAPTER IV.

Squire Wolfhurst came down to breakfast late the morning after he had received Mr. Chalkey's visit. He was stern, and his voice had lost much of its silvery tone. He first asked for his secretary, Mr. Ernest Raeburn: he was absent. He next called for his niece: she, too, had gone for a walk, and had not come back. So Mr. Wolfhurst retired to the library, leaving instructions for Raeburn and Isabel to be sent to him directly they returned, and also to admit Chalkey when he called.

Once alone, Mr. Wolfhurst paced the room with his hands clasped behind him, but spoke not. Yet it could be seen a struggle was going on within, and that he, with a lawyer's shrewdness, was working a complicated case.

At length the servant knocked at the door. Quickly seating himself at the writing-table, Wolfhurst assumed an easy attitude, and, scattering some paper about, that it might seem as if he had been working, called to the servant to "Come in."

The door opened, and Raeburn entered, leading Isabel.

"So you are here at last!" said Wolfhurst.

"May I ask the meaning of these early walks?"

"It is for that purpose I am here," replied Ernest.

"Proceed, sir; I am all attention."

"Mr. Wolfhurst, I have long loved your niece, and have now come to ask your consent to our union."

"I thank you for the honor," was the bitter rejoinder. "The lady, I suppose, is willing?"

Isabel made no reply, but the blushes suffusing her cheek, as she placed her hand into that of Ernest's, were more expressive than words.

"Ha! I see how it is. Mr. Raeburn, I neither give nor withhold my consent. The lady is able to take care of herself, and, therefore, can do what she likes. But perhaps it would be as well to inform you of one or two things before you conclude this marriage. In the first place this lady will not have a farthing from me, either during my life, or after my death. I have kept her out of charity. When you marry her, you must keep her. How you will manage to do that, I cannot say, for I have appointed a new secretary, Mr. Chalkey, who will arrive here this morning; you will leave in the afternoon. If you still wish to have Isabel, take her with you; if not, she may remain here. Good morning."

"Pardon me, Mr. Wolfhurst; our interview is not at an end," said Ernest. "There are other matters I must speak about before I leave this room, sir!"

"You have heard what I said. I never alter my determination. Leave the room instantly, or I shall have to call my servants, and have you removed."

"Call them if you will," replied Ernest, "but it will only be forcing me to make public that which I would fain keep secret. I advise you to pause, sir, and listen to me before you ring the bell."

Mr. Wolfhurst looked at Ernest Raeburn's face, and seeing his calm determination, left the bell, and seating himself at the table, de-

manded, "What is that you would fain keep private?"

"It is that you are a forger!"

"What!" demanded Wolfhurst, livid with rage; "dare to call me forger in my own house?"

"It is not your house," returned Raeburn, quietly; "it is mine!"

"Yours? It would have been but for the recklessness of your father."

"Stop!" interrupted Ernest. "I would have spared you, for this lady's sake; but now you would abuse the dead, whom you robbed when alive, I have no mercy! You have called down vengeance on your own head; I will not stay it."

Stepping quickly to the door, Ernest called, "Mr. Ingledew," and a short, bustling, little, old man hurried into the room.

"Mr. Ingledew," said Ernest, "tell this man what discoveries we have made."

"Mr. Wolfhurst, my dear sir," commenced Mr. Ingledew, carefully avoiding the proffered hand of him he was addressing, "it is now some fifteen years ago since I told you I knew you had no title to these estates, and that one day I should have the pleasure of ejecting you from them. At one time, my late friend, the deceased Mr. Raeburn, did me the honor of employing me as his legal adviser. You met him, and he fell into your clutches. You became his lawyer, but while I held that position I had seen some documents which I knew would prevent your ever having these estates. In a word, Mr. Raeburn could not sell them. They must go to his son, the gentleman who stands here. I could not find these papers, but last night the clue was given in a most mysterious way. How it came about had better be told by the man who made the discovery. Please to call Grayling, Mr. Raeburn."

Ernest did so. Grayling entered the room, and described how he had found the pocket-book, and had intended keeping it, but was persuaded to restore it by his wife.

"Early this morning," he continued, "I met Mr. Ernest in the park. He took the pocket-book, and examined its contents. He found, amongst other papers, a letter written by a Mr. Chalkey to you, wherein he stated he had the missing papers in his possession, and could turn you out of your estates. 'But,' he said, 'if you take me into partnership, all will be well.' He then hints at some forgery, and ends by signing himself, 'Your old clerk, W. Chalkey.'"

"It's false—bassly false!" cried Mr. Wolfhurst.

"Oh, no," said Mr. Ingledew, "the papers are in my possession; and what is more, we have Mr. Chalkey here, who has confessed all. Call Mr. Chalkey."

The person named walked into the room with a quiet swagger, nodded carelessly to Mr. Wolfhurst, and said, "Game's up, gov'nor; it's no use holding out. Rather hard lines for me. I knew your game all through, and have spent all my time and money to find these papers. You have had an innings; I haven't."

For a moment, Mr. Wolfhurst remained silent; then, looking up, he said, calmly, "Gentlemen, I perceive you have a strong case. If the papers are correct, I shall only be too happy to hand over the estates, although doing so will leave me a beggar; for what money I have laid out upon them."

"On improvements!" chuckled Grayling.

"On improvements, as you say," repeated Mr. Wolfhurst. "Still, it will be my duty to hand them over. As for the forgery and fraud, they are nonsensical."

"Pardon me, I can send you to prison instantly," said Mr. Ingledew. "I have the proofs necessary to establish the charge."

"He's right, gov; he has," said Mr. Chalkey, nodding.

"Oh, no," interposed Isabel; "he must not go to prison! Ernest, if you love me, do not let them hurt him. Remember he saved me from destitution."

"Mr. Ingledew," said Ernest, "this man must not be injured. For this lady's sake, he must go free. I want no account of how he has managed the estate. I only bid him depart at once thankful that the love I bear this lady has saved him."

With a bland smile, Mr. Wolfhurst bowed and left the room, and, within an hour, quitted the Hall for ever.

A month had scarcely passed before Isabel became Mrs. Raeburn, and there were gay doings at Offerton. How the bells of the old church did ring! They seemed as if they were ready to crack their sides with merriment, and the old belfry rocked until the oak beams creaked under the vibration of the music.

Of course, Grayling and his wife were there, amongst the tenants. He made the speech at the dinner on the lawn, wherein he told them how the gay Squire had put him into the large farm over the meadow lands; and, having imbibed pretty freely of the "October," he gave the story of the pocket-book and his dreadful temptation, and how he had eventually been "Saved by Love."

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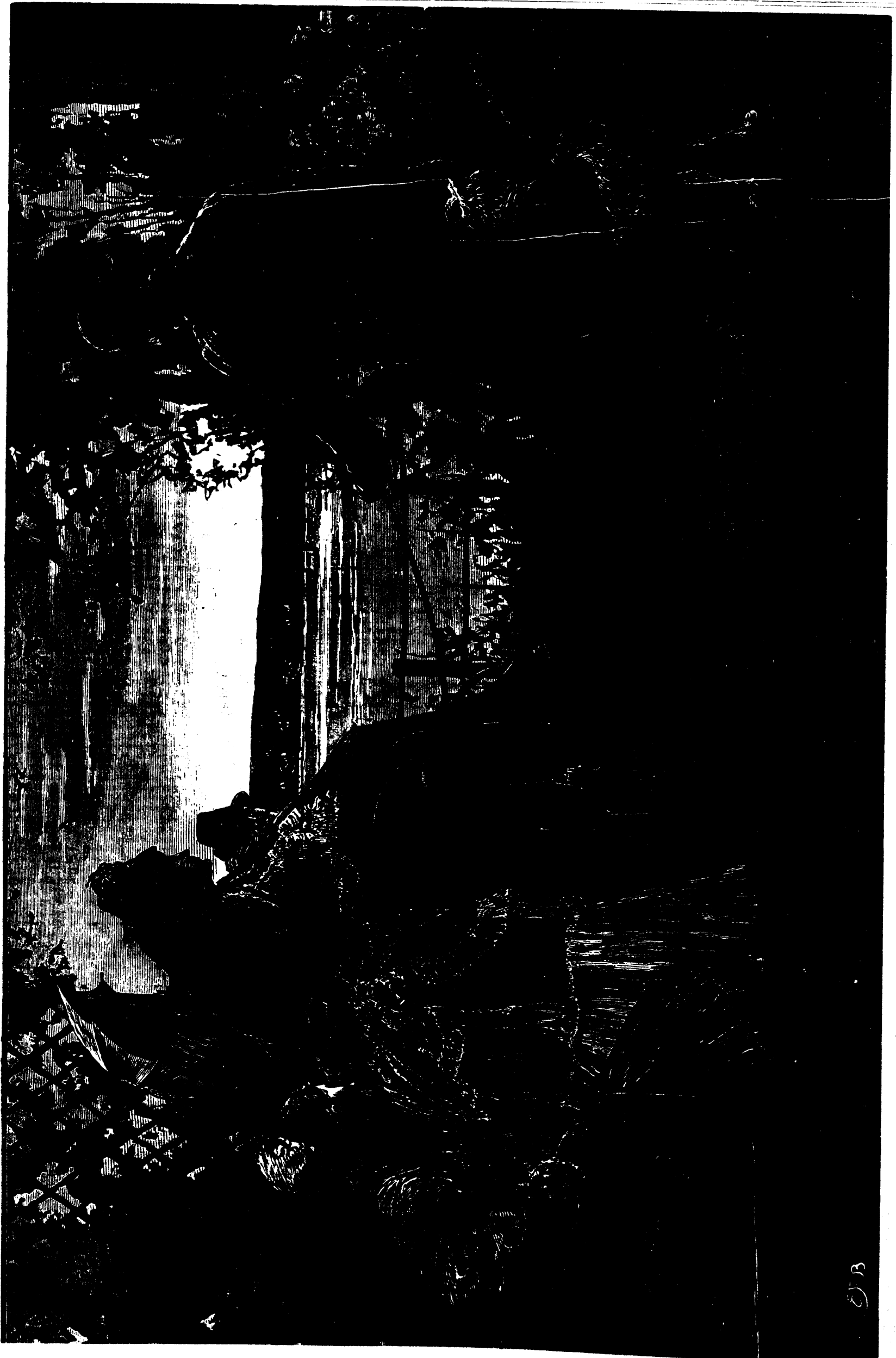
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"AN INVALID."

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"BRIGANDS AND CAPTIVES."

"THE FAVORITE"

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THE FAVORITE

SATURDAY, MAY 23, 1874.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS.

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Letters requiring a private answer should always contain a stamp for return postage.

No notice will be taken of contributions unaccompanied by the name and address of the writer (not necessarily for publication,) and the Editor will not be responsible for their safe keeping.

LAUGHTER.

It is hard to believe that a good laughter is either cruel or deceitful. A smile, a snuff, a short, and as it were monosyllabic laugh, may all consist with guile. But deep, melodious, rolling laughter that rises and falls like a wave, can that belong to an artful nature? Possibly it may. We have never known but a single instance in which a good sweet, and wholesome laughter was insincere; and in this case it was, we suspect, more a habit contracted in society than a real taint of disposition. There may be silly laughter and much of it, but there is full as much silly sobriety. A boy that laughs at nothing shows a kind of exuberance of nature. But a man who will not laugh upon just cause manifests a lean and barren nature. It is what musicians call ciphering—as when one touches a key on the organ, and the pipe does not sound.

Mirth and merriment have a bad name among sober folks; but so do sober people among the merry. Each pities the other. One because his opposite does, and the other because he does not laugh. We take sides with—well, for the time being, we take sides with the Fraternity of the Laugh. If there be sin, it must inhere in the manner of doing it, and not in the quality of mirth. That it is the inspiration of the mind, and not a mere muscular and animal chuckle, is shown by the fact that animals below man do not laugh. They are not highly enough endowed. They have no soul, no moral sentiment, little complexity of mind, out of which arise those curious junctures, or crossings of ideas, which awaken laughter. An animal is not mortal, and cannot laugh. A man is immortal, and can laugh. As long as the flesh predominates, laughing is impossible; add a soul, and the creature begins to laugh! It is a superior attribute. It comes along with Conscience, Hope, and Faith; and if it will only keep in their company, laughing will always prove a means of grace.

We are displeased with the low and unworthy functions sometimes apologetically assigned to it. It is good for digestion, it is said; it is a moderate exercise,—as if, like a sneeze, it was a purely physical phenomenon. But a laugh is born of a thought; a sneeze, of only a tickle. Sneezing is an affection of the nose and parts adjacent. But laughter is the child of the soul. It springs from the immortal part, and the whole body is but an organ of expression. Every true laughter knows that, when he laughs till he coughs, till tears run down his cheeks, till his sides ache with shaking, till he is deaf—in short,

till the body has exhausted all its means of expressing delight, that the idea, which caused all this tumult, has not exhausted itself, nor has it been satisfied with the inarticulate expression of laughter. It is the soul that laughs first and most, and the body but reverberates the echoes. Laughing is good for digestion. But this is the least and lowest of its good offices.

It is a soul-cleanser. It cannot endure shams. It loves good-humored ways among the thoughts; and when conceits have slowly turned to deceits, and partial and unfair notions are choking up the soul, and unworthy feelings are depositing soot along the soul's passages, a genuine laugh is like a fire in a foul chimney. Certain sorts of shocks, explosions, conflagrations seem to be needed, from time to time, in the mind. The faculties grown numb and become stiff. The soul, like a well, collects mephitic gas, and needs burning straw to be thrown down till it is driven out. The mind needs to be roused and shaken every day, without too severe a blow. Laughter does it. It topples down a man's sham dignity. It makes his foolish pride give way, at least for the moment. It sweeps away all pretences and make-believes, and pitiful social distinctions. In an unexpected uproar of laughter at genuine wit or humor, every man in the room is on a level, and a flush of good fellowship goes round. Even Obstinacy, that old curmudgeon of the soul, yields a little.

TITLE-TATTLE.

The disposition to pry into the privacy of domestic life is, unfortunately, very common, and is always dishonorable. The appetite for such knowledge is to be regarded as morbid, and the indulgence of it disgraceful. A family have a sacred right to privacy. In guarding the delicate relations of the household, secrecy becomes a virtue. Even if by chance the private affairs of a household are laid open to a stranger, honor would require him to turn from them; and, if a knowledge of them were forced upon him, they should be locked in a sacred silence. A double obligation of silence and secrecy rests upon one who is a guest in a family. The turpitude of a betrayal of family history by a visitor is far greater than theft would be. It is a thing so scandalous, that it should degrade a person, and put him out of society. To betray the secrets of the household is not only an odious immorality, but it is a sin and a shame to be on good terms with those who are known to commit such outrages. They put themselves out of the pale of decent society. They should be treated as moral outlaws.

These hungry-eyed wretches who sit in the unsuspecting circle of parents and children, treasuring their words, spying their weaknesses, misinterpreting the innocent liberties of the household, and then run from house to house with their shameless news, are worse than poisoners of wells, or burners of houses. They poison the faith of man in man. Make no terms with such people. Tale-bearers have no rights. They are common enemies of good men. Hunt, harry, and hound them out of society. They are the worst of pests save one, and that is the listener to the tale-bearer. There could be no tattling if there were no one to hear. It takes an ear and a tongue to make a scandal. Greedy listening is as dishonorable as nimble tattling. The ear is the open market where tongue sells its ill-gotten ware. Some there are that will not repeat again what they hear, but they are willing to listen to it. They will not trade in contraband goods, but they will buy enough of the smuggler for family use. These respectable listeners are the patrons of tattlers. It is the ready market that keeps tale-bearing brisk. It is a shame to listen to ill of your neighbor. Christian benevolence demands that you do not love ill news. A clean heart and a true honor rejoice in kindly things. It should be a pain and sorrow to know of anything that degrades your neighbor in your eyes, even if he is your enemy; and how much more if he is your friend?

The Scriptures say, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people." "A tale-bearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful (honorable) spirit, concealeth the matter." "The words of the tale-bearer are as wounds that go down into the innermost parts of the belly." The Hebrews thought that the affections had their seat in the bowels; and by this phrase, "go down into the innermost parts of the belly," they signify how sharp and exasperating to the deepest feelings of our nature are the cruel offices of a common tattler. "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out; so, where there is no tale-bearing, the strife ceaseth." As if he had said that so much of the strife of society arise from tattling, that, if that were cured, there would hardly be any cause of quarrel left. Commend us to that religion which makes a man humane with his tongue, and honorable with his ear.

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

"AN INVALID."

This drawing is by a very promising young painter—Mr. E. F. Brewtall—and was exhibited at last year's Exhibition of the Royal Academy. A sick and delicate girl, too infirm to walk, is wheeled in an invalid-chair to an opening amongst the fragrant shrubs and climbing and flowers, where she may drink re-

freshment from whatever air is wafted from the calm sea, and where her eye may repose on the placid waters, the softly-gliding boats, and the serene evening sky. The self-effacing consideration and sympathy of true affection are indicated in every position and expression of her attendants. A stalwart young fellow, brother or lover, himself full of robust strength and health, has wheeled her there, and now stands aside not to disturb her enjoyment of the view, yet with an air of anxious solicitude. A sister, gentle and retiring, leans on the back of her chair; an elder female, her mother perhaps, sits behind, pensive yet watchful and alert; and all are hushed in silence. An invalid could have no better conditions for recovery; and should not such loving heedfulness be rewarded?

"BRIGANDS AND CAPTIVES."

This large and striking picture, which formed one of the principal attractions of the French annexe in the London International Exhibition of 1871 has received a variety of interpretations. It is generally supposed to depict an actual event; and the inquiry has been made, we believe in print, why the artist has represented the Marquis of Lorne and Princess Louise as captives to brigands when, happily, no such fate ever befel them! The male captive certainly happens to bear a very considerable resemblance to the noble young Marquis, but the likeness is, of course, purely accidental. The painter chose a handsome, fair-haired northern type for the victims in his picture, as affording the strongest artistic contrast to the swarthy, black-haired, villainous and brutal aspect of their captors. To give an English character to the former was, besides, not inappropriate, many of our travelling countrymen having been similarly seized and maltreated. The "motive" of the picture originated, indeed, as we are informed, from the atrocious assassination of the English captives by the Greek brigands at Marathon. But, as the artist had not the opportunity to represent that horrible scene with local correctness, he has contented himself with an imaginary illustration of the brigandage which, though now fast diminishing, has long disgraced Italy, and which has furnished many a scene similar to that before us. The painter during his studies in Italy—studies he was enabled to prosecute by having won the grand prix de Rome of the French Ecole des Beaux Arts—has, in order to secure fidelity for his work, actually tracked some Italian brigands; yet fortunately he escaped, though narrowly, falling into their power. The picture seems to bear ample witness to the closeness of the painter's observations. If, like Salvator Rosa, Mr. Layraud had lived and painted among banditti, he could hardly have told his story with an air of greater vraisemblance. The scene is laid in a rocky defile, probably of the savage Abruzzi, the desolate haunt only of the vulture and of worse human creatures, who make a prey of the living as well as the dead. With that hideous association of religion with basest villainy and murder which is almost peculiar to Italian brigandage, a cross has been set up in the middle distance, perhaps for devotion (!), more probably to mark the grave of one of the gang who has gone to his account. A couple of mounted travellers have been waylaid and captured, their attendants very likely killed, and here, to this mountain fastness, they are brought, to await the chance of their being ransomed with some heavy payment by relative or friend, or, failing that, to be murdered and possibly mutilated. While a couple of the crew guard their horses and rifle their baggage, the rest gather, threatening and truculent, round the unfortunates, and the chief, with a revolver in one hand and a pen in the other, presents to the male victim a paper with the hard terms of release for him to sign on pain of instant death. Our engraving will sufficiently show that the painter has realised such a piteous incident with as much dramatic force as truth of local color.

NEWS NOTES.

The Dominion Parliament is expected to adjourn about the 20th inst.
 A grand banquet was given at Portsmouth to the soldiers of the Ashantee expedition.
 Steerage passengers are being carried from Liverpool to New York for fifteen dollars.
 It is said insurance in New York this year will be three to four times that of last year.
 The New Tariff of Mr. Cartwright the Canadian Finance Minister has been remodelled.
 It is said that Sir Robert Peel will resign the position of Liberal whip on account of ill health.
 General Swieten, commander of the Dutch expedition to Aceh, and his staff have returned to Batavia.
 The London Daily News says the lock-out of farm laborers will soon be submitted to arbitration for settlement.
 The result of the election in Stroul, Gloucestershire, has been annulled on account of bribery, and a new election ordered.
 A body of Carlists, 2,000 strong, is said to have been defeated in the Province of Tarragona, by the National troops.
 The British House of Commons take recess during the Whitsuntide holidays, adjourning on the 12th of May until the 1st of June.
 A Little Rock despatch says Brooks's party in the State-house have thirty days' provisions, six tons of powder, and large quantities of shot and shell.

A terrible boiler explosion occurred at a mill in Shavangunk, Pa., by which ten people lost their lives. The boiler, weighing five tons, was thrown 600 feet.

The Conference at Liverpool of ocean-steamship owners has been dissolved, and as tariffs will now be made on an independent basis a lively competition may be expected.

The Franco-American Postal Convention was signed on the 20th by the French Government. Duke de Cazés will submit it to the Assembly and request its immediate consideration.

Very little further information have been received from the inundated district in Louisiana, except that the stock are huddled together throughout the district, and what are not starving are being killed by buffalo.

A famine prevails in Asia Minor, and many families are starving. It is stated that in the town of Angora alone 100 deaths occur daily from starvation. The river Tigris is again swelled by heavy rains, and further flood is apprehended.

Spanish Government troops have entered Bilbao. Gen. Concha, with 20,000 men to attack the Carlists in the rear, gained the heights on the left bank of the river Nervion above Sopuerta. The Carlist General, Andshana, was killed in one of the engagements before Bilbao previous to its recapture by Serrano. A church in San Pedro Abanto was nearly demolished by the fire of the Republicans.

HOUSEHOLD RECEIPTS.

EGG TOAST.—Take four eggs well whipped, added to a quarter of a pound of melted butter in a pan, whisk together in the pan over the fire, add a little salt and pepper; five minutes will sufficiently set the ingredients: serve on buttered toast. Anchovy can be added if preferred.

SALAD DRESSING.—Take the yolks of two hard-boiled eggs, reduce them to a paste in a mortar, or in a basin with a spoon, and add a teaspoonful of dry mustard. When these are sufficiently amalgamated, add, drop by drop, two tablespoonfuls of oil. Mix all well together, and then add in the same way a tablespoonful and a half of vinegar. The yolk of a raw egg is also an improvement, especially if a little cream be also added.

FISH SOUP.—All fish soups should be made with milk, (if unskimmed so much the better,) using no water whatever. Cut off their heads, tails, and fins, and remove the skin, and the back-bone, and cut the fish into pieces. To each pound of fish allow a quart of rich milk. Put into the soup-pot some pieces of cold boiled ham. No salt will then be required: but season with cayenne pepper, and a few blades of mace and some grated nutmeg. Add a bunch of sweet marjoram, the leaves stripped from the stalks and chopped. Make some little dumplings of flour and butter, and put them in when the soup is about half done. Half an hour's steady boiling will be sufficient. Serve up in the tureen the pieces of fish and ham. Also some toast cut in dice.

STEWED OYSTERS.—Get some fine large fresh oysters. Drain them from their liquor (saving it in a pitcher), and put them into a stew-pan with a quarter of a pound of fresh butter, and set them over the fire. When they have simmered, and have almost come to a boil, remove them from the fire; and have ready a pan of very cold water. Take out the oysters (one at a time, on a fork) and put them into the cold water. This will plump them, and render them firm. Having saved about half their liquor, put it into the stew-pan, seasoned well with blades of mace, grated nutmeg, whole pepper-corns, and a little cayenne. Stir in half a pint or more of cream; and if you cannot procure cream, an equal quantity of nice fresh butter divided into bits, slightly dredged with a very little flour. Boil the liquor by itself, and when it comes to a boil, take the oysters out of the cold water, and put them into the boiling liquor. In five minutes remove the pan from the fire (the oysters having simmered), and transfer them to a tureen or deep dish, in the bottom of which has been laid a buttered toast, that has previously been dipped a minute in hot water or milk.

LOBSTER SOUP.—Take two or three fine fresh lobsters (the middle size are the best). Heat a large pot of water, throwing in a large handful of salt. When it is boiling hard put in the lobsters, head foremost, that they may die immediately. They will require at least half an hour's fast boiling: if large, three quarters. When done, take them out, wipe off the scum that has collected on the shell, and drain the lobster. First break off the large claws, and crack them, then split the body and extract all the white meat, and the red coral—nothing else—and cut it into small pieces. Mash the coral into smooth bits with the back of a large spoon, mixing with it plenty of sweet oil; and, gradually, adding it to the bits of chopped lobster. Put into a clear soup-pot two quarts, or more, of good milk, and thicken it with half a dozen buttered biscuits, pounded fine; or the grated crumbs of two or three small rolls, and stir in a quarter of a pound of fresh butter made into a paste with two spoonfuls of flour. Put in the chopped lobster, seasoned with nutmeg, a few blades of mace powdered, and a little cayenne. Let all boil together, slowly, for half an hour, keeping it closely covered. Towards the last, stir in two beaten eggs. Lay some very small biscuits in the bottom of a tureen, and pour the soup upon them. Nasturtium flowers strewed at the last thickly over the surface of this soup, when in the tureen, are an improvement both to its appearance and flavor.

FATA MORGANA.

BY T. FERGUSON.

Mark where you city's towers,
Purple and golden, to the dim clouds rise,
Girt by a fair green land and shining bowers
Like bowers of Paradise.
A river, deep and wide,
Flows, pure as crystal, past the jasper walls,
While a faint sound of music o'er its tide
Floats as from festal halls.

Ah, but behold! A change
Has flashed across the splendor of the scene;
The golden palaces wax dim and strange—
A mist floats in between.
Now all has passed away;
The river is a belt of barren sand;
The lofty towers have fallen to decay
Amid a desert land;

And rustic folk will tell
How that bright city, with its gleaming
towers,
Rose 'neath the magic sway of fairy spell,
Wrought by the mystic powers
Who leave their starry land
To fill the Earth with blessing for a while,
And build them up such dwellings, rich and
grand,
As havens safe from gulle.

But Science says the sight
Was but a mere delusion after all—
The woven work of shadow mixed with light;
The loom a misty pall:
The music, faint and sweet,
Was but the murmur of the passing wind.
How fair the vision, but how swift to fleet,
Leaving no trace behind!

So, friend, the hopes that shine,
Starry and clear, along Life's rugged way,
Crowning the distant goal with light divine
In youth's brief resting day—
Fata Morgana these,
Bright fairy castles in a shining land,
That fall to careless ruin by degrees,
And leave but mist and sand!

A TRUE STORY.

It is a terrible thing to see a man weep, and so Olive Preston found it to be, that beautiful moonlight evening, as she stood silently beside Oscar Wyde, and averted her eyes to banish the sight of the tears that fell in large drops from his own. It was a manifestation of weakness for which he cursed himself, those tears, but his heart and pride were touched deeply, and he was powerless to keep them back. He had just parted from Emilie Granger, and, passing through the conservatory, had found Olive, his little friend, to whom he had confided everything since his school-boy days.

He had told her all, never dreaming that every word was a dagger-thrust to her gentle heart. All along there had been a hope in her bosom of holding his love—a hope born of their frequent intercourse, of his tender, affectionate manner towards her. Now that hope was gone, from his own lips she had heard the avowal of his love for another—an avowal wrung from him by that other's treachery and falseness. Now, though she was suffering tortures, she strove to comfort him—to allay, if possible, the wildness of his manner.

"You will not always feel thus, Oscar," she said wistfully. "Time will soften your grief, and some day you will smile at its present intensity."

But he interrupted her passionately. "No! It is that which maddens me. I feel that I cannot forget—that the days to come will bring with them no change. She has given me the right to feel thus, to think thus; she has let me hold her in my arms and press my lips to hers; she has led me on and on, to believe that some day she would be mine, and I—poor fool!—I was happy in that belief. I could have died for her! I would have been willing to stake my hopes of heaven on her constancy." He seemed to feel the mad incoherence of his words for he ceased suddenly, and, turning from her, walked rapidly backwards and forwards, for a few moments. Then he caught her hand in his, with a quick, convulsive motion.

"Good-night, little friend: forget this, if you can."
"Good-night," she whispered back; but he was gone before her low-spoken accents reached his ear.

She sat for a few moments amid the dusky shadows of the perfume-laden conservatory. In the parlor, her cousin Emilie was chanting a wild German dirge, and, as the sweet lingering notes rose and fell on the still night, a strange feeling of bitterness crept into Olive's heart—a feeling that was almost envy of this beautiful, heartless girl, who had won so easily the love of Oscar Wyde.

She arose with a heavy sigh, and walked slowly into the drawing-room. Emilie was sitting at the piano alone.

"She is beautiful enough to turn any man's head," thought Olive, as she glanced at the graceful, drooping figure, with the golden-brown hair swept back from the piquant face, at the dark, fringed eyelids, just now slightly veil-

ing the light of those dangerously charming eyes.

She turned quickly as Olive entered, and the white, jeweled hands fell with a nervous crash amid the ivory keys.

"Ah, is it you, my dear?" she said, with a little affected laugh of gaiety. "I thought, at first, that it might be that hot-headed admirer of mine, coming back once more to make me uncomfortable with his wild words and still wilder manner. Really, I didn't think he would take our little flirtation so deeply to heart—unreasonable fellow!"

"Emilie, Emilie!" said Olive sadly. "Are you, then, so utterly heartless? How could you treat Oscar Wyde so cruelly? Surely you might have found a less worthy subject to practise your coquetties on."

"What else was I to do?" interrupted Emilie, with a petulant shrug of her shoulders. "Of course he was very nice, and all that, to amuse myself with, and I won't deny"—here her voice faltered a little, and she turned over the leaves of her music restlessly—"that I did fancy him just a little. He was so handsome, you know, so different from the rest of my 'courtiers,' as you have named them, that, for a time, I really believed myself in love. But I never meant to marry him; how could I, Olive. You knew my circumstances, know how expensive my tastes are." Here she glanced slightly at the rich, glowing velvet that swept the floor in its splendor around her, at the jeweled bands on her wrist, and the shining circlets on each hand. "I could not live without the ease and luxury I have always been accustomed to. How could we live on his salary of one thousand a year, when I spend twice that amount annually in mere trifles? No, no, Olive! Love in a cottage might do for some—never for me; the very idea is absurd!"

"Why, then, did you encourage his attentions?" asked Olive, almost sternly. "Why did you lead him on to believe that you would eventually become his wife, when every word you uttered was false?"

"Mercy!" uttered Emilie, with a faint scream, putting her hands to her ears. "Am I then to have no peace? Forbear, I beg you, cousin, and let us drop the subject."

She threw her arms round Olive's neck, and drew her head playfully down, while she pressed one hand over her lips, and Olive felt her short-lived resentment giving way, as it generally did, before the irresistible charm of her cousin's manner.

One month later, Emilie was on her way to France, accompanied by her husband. What a strange contrast they had formed on their bridal eve—that white-haired, corpulent old man, and that beautiful young girl! With her burnished hair falling around her shoulders, and her eyes shining like blue stars, Emilie seemed scarcely more than a sweet child, although, in reality, she was entering her twenty-third year. To many assembled there that evening it seemed a cruel sacrifice of tender youth and beauty to old age and hoary hairs; yet Emilie did not seem to feel it thus. Her face was as serene as usual, and her voice did not falter, or her cheeks pale, as she made the necessary responses.

For there were two amid that fashionable gathering who knew that her composure was merely external, and assumed for the purpose of concealing her real feelings. Oscar Wyde stood back from the rest, with folded arms and pallid face; it was a bitter trial for him to witness the ceremony, for he had loved her with all the strength of his passionate nature. Once she looked toward him, then quickly veiled her eyes; she could not, dared not, meet that scornful glance again.

When it was all over, and Emilie out of his sight, as he hoped, for ever, they met again—he and Olive. He had sought her to say farewell. He was "going away," so he told her, "some-where." He did not know where, as yet. But any place would be preferable to Miltonville, where every hour he was reminded of her presence.

"Some time," he said, "I will come back again—not till I have forgotten her, or shall have ceased to remember her with any feeling but that of scorn."

The heart of Olive beat heavily as she listened; she felt that without his presence existence would be almost worthless; and some tears which she could not restrain forced themselves into her eyes, and fell silently on the hand Oscar held in his. It touched him greatly, this proof of her sympathy and regard, and perhaps an inkling of the truth forced itself upon him, for he bent down and kissed her tenderly on the brow and lips.

"Good-bye, little sister. May our meeting be happier than our parting."

Slowly the days passed into weeks, the weeks into months, until twelve of the latter were numbered. How slowly they had passed with Olive! And yet she was not entirely without hope. Occasionally she received letters from Oscar Wyde, and from their general tone she understood that the old passion for Emilie was dying out. In the very last she had received were the lines:—

"I can laugh now, Olive, at the folly of a year ago, and I assure you, little one, I return to Miltonville heartwhole, better and wiser too, I hope, than when I bade you farewell on that last wretched day."

In one week from the receipt of that letter they met. Oscar seemed his own natural self again, handsome, gay and cheerful as ever.

Something of the truth must have smote him as he gazed into that pale, sweet face, now so full of joy at meeting him—a joy that was almost pain, for her eyes were full of tears.

"Are you then so glad to see me, Olive? Tell me?"

He took her hands tenderly in his, and would have forced her to look up into his face; but she broke from him, and the knowledge that he had discovered her secret, sent a bitter, burning flush of girlish shame to her brow.

He took her in his arms suddenly.

"Olive, my darling, I love you! I love you! Will you believe me when I tell you that you alone have filled my heart for the past few months? My passion for Emilie has vanished entirely. Olive, will you be my guardian angel? Will you, by giving your pure heart into my keeping, bring peace and happiness to my life at last?"

What could she do? She let him hold her in his arms, pressing warm kisses on lip and brow. She was too happy for words; the love she had hoped and thirsted for during weary days was now offered her. There was no thought of Emilie in her mind. She did not, would not recall those wild words of Oscar's when he had so passionately affirmed his inability to forget her on that night, so many months ago.

That evening they sat together with clasped hands. Oscar's manner was very captivating, very tender, and his low whispered words of love thrilled Olive through and through as she listened. They sat till the mystic moonlight began to wane, and the stars to pale; then they separated.

In the solitude of her room, Olive sank down, and for the first time that day attempted to collect her thoughts—to fully realize what had passed. It seemed like a sweet dream, those words of Oscar's, telling her he loved her.

"My darling!" she murmured, covering her burning face with her hand. "Oh, forgive me, Heaven, if I love him too much!"

She felt that she was now being rewarded for those long days and nights of weariness and misery.

The days after that went on smoothly and happily for both. Oscar Wyde loved Olive in a calm, quiet sort of way. He had persuaded himself into the belief that his love for her was tenfold deeper than the passion he had borne for Emilie.

"For it was only passion," he argued with himself. "She was heartless, mercenary, and unprincipled. The thought of her now fills me with contempt for the weakness I manifested one year ago. Yes, my love for Emilie is buried evermore."

What, then, was it that caused his cheek to burn, and his heart to throb, when her name was accidentally mentioned in his presence?

They were to be married in September. It was now August.

They were sitting together, one hazy afternoon, with the softened rays of sunlight filtering in upon them through the half-closed blinds. Oscar sat just near enough to reach over and playfully twitch the long dark curls of Olive, her greatest beauty, with the exception of her eyes, which were large, and clear in their crystal depths as a spring. She had changed much since her engagement with Oscar; a crimson bloom had tinted permanently her formerly pale cheeks and lips, while the light of the happiness within shone from those sweet hazel orbs, making her positively beautiful in Oscar's sight this afternoon, as he sat idly watching the white hands glancing to and fro amid the delicate embroidery upon which she was engaged. She was very happy now, very sure of Oscar's love, and no presentiment of what was coming shadowed the contentment and peace of her heart as she sat there.

The energetic ring of the postman at length broke the sweet silence between them, and Oscar arose for the purpose of bringing in the letter-bag. There was but one letter, a little, delicate-looking affair, but ah! it was bordered with deep lines of black, and bore a foreign postmark. With a strange thrill at his heart, Oscar recognized in the graceful, flowing characters upon its surface, the handwriting of Emilie.

Olive took the letter with trembling fingers, and read its contents aloud. It was the first epistle she had received from Emilie, and it was certainly a most startling one, for it contained the announcement of the death of Mr. Burton. "He died very suddenly from an apoplectic stroke," Emilie wrote. They had stopped in Paris for a few months, then went on to Brussels, where the society had been so excellent that Mr. Burton, in compliance with her wishes, decided to make it his home, for a while, at least. There he had died, and there, by his request, he had been interred. "And now," wrote Emilie, "I am coming back to Miltonville, where I can bear my sorrow more calmly amid my friends."

Oscar smiled with a bitterness that Olive did not notice as she finished reading the letter. He doubted the depth of Emilie's bereavement, as expressed in her epistle. "I hope to be home soon." They looked hastily at the date of the letter; it had been written long previous, and, by some mismanagement, had been delayed.

"We may expect her, then, shortly," said Olive slowly, and in a constrained voice.

They were silent for a short space of time; then Oscar arose and kissed Olive tenderly.

"Do you doubt me, little one?" he asked, playfully.

But there was a new, strange look on his face—a look which had not been there for months. They parted, that day, with a trouble at their hearts which neither could define or would acknowledge. Somehow, a shadow seemed to

have suddenly come between them and the sunshine. Oscar cursed himself for the momentary bound his heart had given to know that she was free; he hated himself for that unconscious infidelity to Olive, the true and tender girl who had loved him so devotedly so long. He tried to school himself to think calmly, dispassionately, of meeting Emilie, but in vain; the thought of seeing her again, of meeting her face to face in all her glorious beauty, intoxicated him with a sensation, half pleasure, half pain, wholly undefinable. He could not understand it; he feared to trust himself further with thought of her.

"I imagined I had conquered the old weakness," he muttered, as he walked slowly homeward. "Surely I love Olive? Yes, I love her so much that it would grieve me to death to lose her, or to know she suffered pain. But this feeling in regard to Emilie is an intoxication of the senses rather than of the heart, and one long year has failed to destroy it. But I will triumph over self," he uttered, with a sudden resolution. "I will eradicate every thought, even, which, might prove unfaithful to Olive—Olive, my darling Olive, my little one, who loves me so tenderly, so faithfully. Yes, from this moment I banish Emilie from my mind!"

He was successful a while; he devoted himself so closely, so attentively to Olive for the next few days, that she chided herself for the doubt that had assailed her at the thought of his meeting Emilie again. He would hang over her chair, in his flattering, love-like way, sometimes dropping kisses on her dusky curls, and playfully forcing her to look up in his face with those dreamy hazel eyes, in whose clear depths he was hourly discovering new beauties.

Those days were very sweet to Olive. In the evening they would walk together down the long avenue of beeches, with the quiet moonlight falling through the branches on their happy faces; for they were happy—at least Olive was, and Oscar persuaded himself that he was the same.

But this state of things was not to last; a great change came over the spirit of their dreams. That change consisted of Emilie's arrival.

She came at the close of a sunny August afternoon. Ah, if she had been beautiful before, that beauty was now intensified a hundredfold. It was a loveliness so dazzling, so perfect, that Olive gazed at her for a moment, almost expecting to see the peerless vision fade away into indistinctness. Emilie's widowhood certainly had not lessened her attractiveness. The dark garments, and sombre, sweeping veil only served to enhance her brilliant Saxon loveliness. She had not changed much in speech or manner; she embraced Olive in her old impetuous, girlish fashion, then broke out into enthusiastic exclamations in praise of Olive's improved appearance, how well she was looking, and how pretty she had become, etc. Then she wept a little behind a black-edged handkerchief, as she spoke of her husband, who had, she said, been so good, so kind to her, always indulgent, never denying her in anything, though of course their tastes, she said, with a sigh, had been widely different. Then suddenly, and with a little irrelevancy, she inquired,—

"What has become of Oscar Wyde? Did he shoot himself, or take a dose of poison, or what, after—"

"After you jilted him?" said Olive quietly. "No, he is yet in Miltonville. He will be here this evening."

A peculiar look flitted over Emilie's face as she gave Olive a quick, enquiring glance; but Olive's face revealed nothing.

That evening they sat together in the parlor, Emilie and Olive. They formed a decided contrast, and that contrast was not flattering to Olive. Placed by the side of her cousin's brilliant loveliness, her quiet beauty faded away as the morning star fades before the coming of the sun. Hers was that tender, home-like type of loveliness that must be seen often, and known much, to be sufficiently admired and appreciated. Emilie's was that glowing, dazzling beauty that bursts upon you, taking you captive at first sight—a passionate, intoxicating, loveliness that few men could resist.

She was seated in her old position at the piano that evening, when Oscar entered, all her bright hair falling unrestrainedly about her shoulders, the old bloom on her round cheeks, the old soft light he remembered so well shining from the sapphire eyes. As he gazed, the words involuntarily shaped themselves in his mind:—

"A man had given all other bliss,
And all his worldly worth, for this:
To waste his whole heart in one kiss
Upon her perfect lips."

Those lips had been pressed to his—those soft, rounded arms, gleaming so white through the half light, half shadow, had encircled him in those old days. Something sweet and subtle as the breath of past summer roses stirred within him as he gazed at her. Then he looked at Olive. Was he mistaken, after all? Had the old love for Emilie lain dormant in his breast all these months, only to revive at sight of her?

He would not stop to speculate, but stepped forward, thus making his presence known. It was a strange moment for all, for Olive, who saw these two meet, for Oscar and Emilie, who now stood facing each other. Considering the emotions within him, Oscar Wyde bore his part well.

"I am happy to welcome you back to Preston

Hall, Mrs. Burton," he said, calmly extending his hand.

For once, Emilie's self-possession forsook her. She grew pale—then red—she was by far the most embarrassed of the two. Her agitation was so apparent to Olive, that she thought, with a pang of jealous anguish, "She loves him still!"

Emilie, however, was not one to allow her disquietude to be manifest any longer than she could help; so, with a slight effort, she recovered herself, and laid her hand in Oscar's with a few low murmured words, and a pathetic look from beneath the dusky lashes that thrilled Oscar Wyldie through and through.

That evening was a fatal one for Oscar, a fatal one for Olive, a triumphant one for Emilie. She saw, with a woman's unerring eye, that she was still mistress of Oscar Wyldie's heart; the thought gave her exquisite pleasure, for she loved him. She had loved him all the time. Mr. Burton had stood to her more in the relation of a banker than aught else; his death had in nowise disturbed her mental equilibrium; it was a relief, nothing more. She had not longed for it; she was not heartless enough for that, for he had been kind to her; but when it came, she accepted it as the captive bird who finds the door of his gilded cage suddenly opened might accept his freedom.

Oscar parted with Olive that evening, more tenderly, if possible than usual. He was fighting a severe battle with himself—an enemy that would not be conquered. He was trying, Heaven knows how hard, to crush out the old feeling for Emilie; but—it would not be crushed; it arose perpetually, haunting him with the remembrance of Emilie's star-like eyes, bright tresses, Emilie's voice, which had power to thrill him as no other voice ever had done before. When with Olive, it did not seem so hard to forget that which he had no right to remember. She seemed so sweet, so pure, so trustful, standing with him there under the quiet sky, that he caught her to his breast with a sudden remorseful tenderness.

She smiled, looking up in his face with her loving hazel eyes; but there was a troubled shadow on her brow, and a half quiver around the sweet, girlish mouth. Already a dim presentiment of what was to come darkened her mind. She breathed not a word of her fears to Oscar Wyldie, however, and he went home, convinced that she suspected nothing of the true state of his feelings. He was somewhat of a fatalist, and he ascribed it all to fate.

"It was fate," he muttered to himself, switching the grass absently with his whip as he rode slowly along, "it was fate that brought Emilie back to prove to me that I love her still, and she—she loves me also. I can see it in every glance. She loved me when she stood up to be a bride; she has loved me all along. I know this, and should scorn and despise her. But it is my fate that I should love her instead. What will the end be? I dare not think, dare not speculate. I must do my duty, however, and that is to marry Olive, and be as true and faithful to her as she deserves. I love her as a brother might love a dear sister, no more. The love a husband should bear for his wife—that I never felt for her, though I imagined I did. How I have deceived myself all along! how I have deceived her! But it is fate!"

Do not smile, reader; there are just such men in the world we live in—weak-minded men, who never blame themselves for any wrong thought or deed. It is their fate that they should do this, that or the other. Oscar Wyldie was one of the above sort; so he settled it with his conscience that fate, not he was to blame. Of course he was terribly weak-minded; if he had not been, this story would never have been written; and yet he tried to do right.

Knowing his lack of strength in the matter, he would not trust himself too far, and so he urged that the marriage day should be hastened, and Olive blinded by his seeming lover-like impatience, half-reluctantly consented. She was quite alone in the world, with the exception of an aged grandfather, now confined to his chamber by a severe paralytic stroke; so she had only her own heart to consult in the matter. They were to be married at Preston Hall, quietly, and with no display whatever.

It was the evening before the wedding. All day long there had been a bustle and stir of preparation sounding through the hall. Now all had subsided, and quiet reigned once more. It was one of those gorgeous, balmy evenings, with a full moon sailing grandly through the purple blue of the sky, when the air is heavy with a slumberous perfume, and the listening stars seem to be looking down their silent admiration for earth's loveliness. They had left Olive alone for the most part of that day.

"It was her last day of freedom," she repeated to herself, with a thrill of half pleasure, half pain. "To-morrow her bondage would commence—but what a sweet bondage!" And she covered her face with her hands in the dim darkness of the old parlor.

It was very sweet to her to think to-morrow would behold her Oscar's bride. There were no doubts disturbing her peace now in regard to Emilie and him. She had long since discarded her transient fears on that subject. Oscar said he loved her fully and entirely; his manner showed it besides, they were only coldly polite to each other—her lover and Emilie. She smiled when she recalled the fears that had assailed her on the night of Emilie's arrival, and then she thought of her cousin's young, widowed life with a thrill of pity.

Emilie had kept herself alone from Olive lately, remaining in her room while the greater part of the preparation had been going on. She

had pleaded a slight indisposition, and had not been disturbed; so Olive was quiet alone this evening. She sat for a long time in the parlor, dreaming her sweet dreams of the happy days to come. Outside, all was hushed in a dim, hazy quiet. Inside, the house was still, save for the subdued hum of voices coming from the servants' apartment.

The weird beauty and solemn splendor of the hour tempted Olive out into the garden, then, still further, down the long walk of beeches, thence to the summer-house, half hidden by trailing green vines. Here she had played in her motherless childhood; here Oscar and she had often sat together, and now—

"It may be a long time before I sit here again," she murmured softly. "Olive Preston will never sit here again, certainly," she added, "not after to-night." And then she seated herself in a shadowy nook by the entrance.

She had sat for a few moments only, when the lightsound of approaching footsteps surprised her, and caused her timid heart to give a quick bound. Who could it be? She sank down further amid the dim shadows of the summer-house, and then, with a sigh of relief, she saw that it was Emilie, her cousin—but she was not alone; another figure was by her side, and that figure was Oscar Wyldie's. They came so close to where she was sitting, so very close, that Emilie's perfumed robes almost touched her; and yet they were unaware of her presence.

Olive did not bear many words, but the few she heard were enough. They were apparently terminating their conversation here. She could catch, even in that painful, bewildered moment, the quick glitter of the jewels on Emilie's restless fingers—the shimmering light of the radiant hair half concealing her face as she bent towards Oscar. He drew her towards him in a long embrace, while he pressed hot, passionate kisses on her brow, her hand, her fragrant hair.

"They are the last," he said, releasing her. But she caught his hands in that quick fashion of hers.

"Oscar, my love, my darling! Why will you so recklessly sacrifice your life and mine, and for what? A rash engagement contracted with a mere child, who never can love you as I do, who has it not in that calm, quiet disposition of hers to love any one deeply, while I—O, Oscar! My heart will break if to-morrow sees you her husband! My punishment is more than I can bear. Oh, you are fully avenged for the wrong of one year ago! Oscar, my darling, will you forgive me that I was so untrue to you, to my own heart? Listen to me," she went on, passionately. "I stand here, to-night, pleading for the love that I know fills your soul for me, and which a false sense of honor prevents you from giving voice to—I, who have seen nobles kneeling at my feet in vain for a word or smile! I ask for nothing but your love. Let us fly together; she will soon forget you, simple child, and in another land we can be happy."

What man on earth could withstand such pleading? Not Oscar Wyldie. He had struggled hard with himself, but the battle had been all in vain; so now he let himself drift on with the tide. After all he loved Emilie, and a man can scarcely be blamed for loving a beautiful woman, even though a sensitive heart should be broken in his so doing? Beauty reigns paramount the world over, and must have its due allegiance.

Alas for Oscar's resolutions! The glamor of Emilie's intoxicating presence was upon him. With her beautiful head on his bosom, and her arms encircling him, he forgot everything; honor was thrown to the winds; Olive was for the time forgotten. Once her name fell remorsefully from his lips, but Emilie's kisses stopped further utterance.

Twelve o'clock fell in slow, measured tones from the distant steeple, and then only they aroused themselves from their trance of happiness. Guilty though each felt it to be, preparations for an early flight on the morrow were arranged. It was the only way they could see out of the difficulty.

Emilie walked back to the mansion with a smile on her red lips, and a triumphant light in her false blue eyes. She was utterly devoid of heart or principle, so no pang of remorse troubled her as she prepared to disrobe for the night. Letting down her magnificent veil of glittering hair, she went to the mirror, and gazed long and admiringly at the fresh, innocent-looking face that gazed her own from its polished surface.

"I am beautiful," she murmured. "What wonder that men fall down and worship me. I knew I should win! I love him, and yet I have within me a feeling of contempt for his faithlessness to her. What does it matter, after all? I cannot be happy without him; she will forget him soon. Our flight will create a terrible *surprise* among the 'conventionals' of society, but what care I? I can afford to set them at defiance."

Oscar's feelings weep far different. He went home, his heart burning, his head in a whirl. He could not think calmly of the evening just past; he could not sleep—indeed, he did not try; he was a villain, but unlike most villains, he fully realized his turpitude. He loved Olive, but not with the sort of love he bore for Emilie, that was a love which comes to a man but once in a lifetime; his love for Olive was a pure, passionless emotion; and now that he was away from the glamor of Emilie's intoxicating presence, he thought with a thrill bordering on horror of the terrible position in which he was placed.

One o'clock sounded, then two, then three, and at four o'clock he was still sitting by the open window, where he had seated himself on entering the room; and in those few hours of

silent, bitter communion with himself, Oscar Wyldie's nature underwent a change. By what strange process was it that the love which had filled his whole being so long for Emilie became changed into loathing, almost hatred? We know not, but so it was; he loved her no longer; the scales had fallen from his eyes; possibly it was the man's fickle and inconstant nature, possibly it was the utterly selfish love Emilie had exhibited for him that evening that jarred on his more delicate sensibilities.

The east was beginning to glow and flicker with a crimson radiance when the sound of a horse's hoofs on the avenue beneath smote upon his ear, and roused him from the half stupor into which he had fallen. He started up hastily, and, throwing back the window, stepped out on the verandah. Beneath, his horse covered with foam, stood one of the servants from Preston Hall. He was breathless from his swift ride, and could only gasp—

"Miss Olive!"

That was enough. In another moment, Oscar was seated on the horse and speeding like the wind in the direction of Preston Hall. He felt that something terrible had occurred—he knew not what that something might be.

Emilie met him at the hall door; her long hair streamed over the white wrapper she wore, her face was pallid and affrighted. He scarcely looked at her.

"Olive!" he uttered hoarsely. "What of her?"

"She is—oh Oscar! She is dead!"

He reeled under the terrible intelligence—reeled for a moment, then fell heavily to the floor.

He lay in an upper chamber, raving with delirium, when they carried Olive away to the quiet graveyard on the hill-side. None but the village doctor and a few tried and trusty family domestics knew Olive's secret—knew that in a moment of wild agony and despair she had sent her soul unannounced into the presence of the Great Ruler. "Heart disease," so the villagers said; and in three weeks the poor old grandfather followed her, and he, too, was laid in the graveyard on the hill.

Oscar Wyldie did not die. He recovered slowly from his sickness; and one day, when he was strong enough to hear all, the doctor told him, and gave into his keeping a sheet of paper containing these words:—

"Oscar, my darling—I may call you this for the last time—to-night I heard all. I do not blame you, but I cannot live."

That was all; here the record ended.

That night Emilie received a note. To do her justice, she had shown that she possessed some feeling; she had nursed Oscar through his long illness, sitting up night after night with him, never tiring, never complaining. The rich red had faded from her cheeks, and she seemed to have lost something of her brilliant girlish beauty since that fatal morning. Now she opened the note with hands that shook a little, and read these lines:

"Emilie, it is needless to say that all is over between us."

That was all the note contained.

Oscar is still in Miltonville. His life has been a failure. He lives in the Preston Mansion, which the grandfather willed to him ere he died. Here he drags out a miserable existence, useless alike to himself and the rest of the world.

Emilie is on the Continent. Her name to-day is a byword in the mouths of men, and a forbidden subject to be mentioned in a pure woman's presence. Need I say more? My tale ends here.

ABSENT.

My thoughts are far away to-night,
And I, in fancy, see
A party gay; each eye shines bright,
Their laugh rings merrily,
As through the mazy dance they go,
With footsteps light as air;
So gaily flitting to and fro,
I wish that I were there.

One form I see amid the throng—
A form to me most dear;
And with that form I linger long,
Though but in fancy near.
Who leads her through the dance to-night,
My own so bright and fair?
Her dark eyes beaming with delight,
I wish that I were there.

No jealous feelings fill my breast
Because I am not there;
To be with her, to join the rest,
And in each pleasure share;
No! I thought from her I'm far away,
What cause have I to fear?
I know at least one heart will say—
"I wish that he were here!"

LITTLE MIDGE.

CHAPTER I.

The giant intellect was overthrown; and great as had been the height to which it had attained, bowed in humble reverence all that is noble, great, and good, now, bowing in abject helplessness to his inscrutable doom, lay prostrate, a thing to pity and shudder over.

What had brought him so low? Vice—love—passion—intemperance—overlook? The malice of man—the faithlessness of woman? O horrible, horrible fate!

The iron gates were flung wide open to receive him. Had not every gate—that of the prince as well as the millionaire, of the saint as well as the sinner—opened wide at his approach? Had—yes; now one door only opened for him—opened silently, and he entered.

He was a great man still—great even in his abject abasement; all proper respect therefore was shown him. The master of the house stood on the threshold to receive his guest, and bowed low before him his uncovered head, not daring to look into the face that had been so glorious, that was so marred—so terrible.

Along the dim vaulted passages, reaching to each man's tread; no eager crowd pressing forward to catch sight of him—no eager whisper circulating his name—utter silence around him.

Sounds, indeed, there were in the great house so full of pain and misery; but the walls were thick, and, like the grave, they guarded well their secret.

They gave him a room to himself, and light and air—the only things left to him of a life that had been so beautiful. And even these were his no longer, for the tortured soul could neither see nor feel them.

The good will always reverence what is great, and feel for what was great. Dr. Ferguson was a good man—how, then, could he look at that other man, so great once, so fallen now, without both awe and pity?

The case had been pronounced a hopeless one. The patient was not violent, not outwardly at least, though there was something of the wild beast about him—in the red glare of his eye; in the limbs that grovelled and crouched, as if the right were theirs no longer to stand upright upon God's beautiful earth; in the sharp sudden cry that alone broke the dreary silence in which he lived.

The keepers were half afraid of him—afraid to meet his eye, to enter his lair. If the doctor feared anything, it was to betray to the man who was so infinitely greater than himself the pity that he felt for him. For spite of all his care, and the skill that was little less than miraculous, the case grew more hopeless day by day. Day by day the maniac's cheek grew more hollow, his eye more sunk; the frame, once erect and strong as that of a Hercules, more gaunt and shrunken and bent. Yet he did not sicken; he was not ill; and if he suffered, it was in silence.

Had he not once been great—so great—force, the triumph of the many over the one, would have compelled obedience to the rules of the house. His rags would have been taken from him; the long bright hair with which woman fingers had so rapturously toyed, now tangled into a hideous mass, would have been cut and combed; the fool, from which the gnashing teeth turned in loathing, would have been forced between them to prolong life, and such a life!

"Why, if the man starves he'll die, won't he?" quoth a good simple Mrs. Ferguson one day. She had sat down very hungry to dinner, and felt all the better for two juicy slices of roast beef. Not understanding how any one, even a madman, could refuse good wholesome food, she had heard with horror that the patient who paid so handsomely had actually not tasted anything for two days. "Shouldn't you make him eat my dear?"

The doctor looked anxious and troubled. To his care had been committed the stricken life; his duty it was to prolong it to the utmost—but how? Must he use force? have the man, so grand still even in his dire humiliation, seized, bound, held down, grappled with, like some common malefactor? One other chance there was—the last. He had heard of its having once been tried. It might be a mere tale; half may more than half, we read is false; but it was a chance, and he would try it.

Dr. Ferguson had a little daughter. Such a little daughter, such a wee specimen of humanity was she, that her friends had christened her Midge, and then, as if in very mockery, added the word little to the sobriquet.

Now little Midge was no stranger to papa's poor people; nearly all of them she knew, some of them she loved. She was quite familiar with their ways too, and not a bit afraid of them—no, not even when they made big eyes at her, or glared out at her from behind their iron bars, calling her by name as she wandered among her flowers. So when papa, looking careworn and troubled, found her out, and asked her very softly if she would go with him to see a poor man who was so bad that he would certainly die unless something could be done to help him, she gravely nodded her head, as if she understood him perfectly, which no doubt she did; for though the weest of wee women, she was mighty wise, having already learnt ever so much from—experience.

"Do you remember, darling, how you got old Parker to give up swearing, because it made you cry? and how you coaxed old Mrs. Macleddy into changing her stockings?"

"Am I to make your poor man change his stockings, papa?"

"This victory over the stockings had been the hardest won, and therefore the most glorious of our heroine's life. And she now put on a look of determination that said, plainer than words, "I'll do it again, if I mus'."

The doctor smiled; his little girl could always make him smile, however full his heart might be of care and trouble. He did not say what was expected of her; he only told her what he had read of a poor maniac who had loved a little

child; and this had made him think of her as his last hope.

"Will you come, dear?"

He held out his hand; she took it, and went dancing and skipping at his side, until all at once she darted off, and then back again, a half-open rose in her eager grasp.

"I thought he might like it, papa, you know; they sometimes do."

She always called papa's poor people they; for her they constituted a distinct world, apart from that other world that lay beyond the gates, and of which she knew as yet so little.

Midge was not the doctor's only child; but it was not because there were many other little ones that he loved her less. On the contrary, as, where there are many, we naturally single out the one, Midge was papa's pet and his constant companion—naturally enough, for she loved his poor people, and his flowers, and himself, oh, so dearly!

It is terrible to see those we love exposed to danger; it is more terrible still when we ourselves expose them to that danger.

Hand in hand and silent, because both deep in thought, they walked on together; the little fingers clinging tightly about the man's big thumb. Silently they passed along the dim echoing passages till they stopped before a certain door. Very pale the father's face had grown by this time, and even over that of the young child a shadow of awe had stolen.

A man paced up and down, mounting guard. "I've brought my little girl, Rodgers; I thought the sight of her might do him good."

The man started, and looked from father to child in blank amazement. He knew that Miss Mary went in and out among the poor patients, and did more good with her pretty baby ways than he or his whole staff put together. But for her to enter that room—to look upon that man!

"It'll never do, sir. He's worse than ever this afternoon, and looks dreadful."

A wild sound—half moan, half howl—the irrepressible cry of mingled rage, anguish, and despair, falling drear and desolate on the shuddering ear! The strong hand tightened its hold of the small fingers, fluttering as if to get free; the doctor turned his looks down upon the wistful eager face.

"You are frightened, darling?"

"No, papa."

A pause—a silence within as without. Father and child were looking into each other's eyes.

"You will go in, dear, alone?"

"Yes, papa."

Then the doctor opened the door, the child passed in alone; and the father's hand closed the door behind her.

He knew that it must be so. The half-open door—the pale anxious face peering in—might arouse the man's suspicions and excite his rage. Too well he knew the danger to which the little one was exposed; but in her lay his last hope, and God would take care of her.

The strong hand, nerved to calm, lay ready on the door; the straining ear was schooled to listen. No sound at first; not even the child's receding footsteps, for they fell inaudible in that padded room.

A life-long agony in one brief moment of suspense, then a sharp sudden cry. Not a call for help; but the involuntary cry of pain, grief, or fear. Had he, against whom it had seemed a sacrilege to use violence, now used it against the little helpless child who had come to save him? Had he, with his lost greatness, lost too every spark of humanity, becoming something lower than the beasts?

The door was burst open; doctor and keeper both stood in the room. No regard for the man's feelings now! He should be seized, bound, fettered. No matter what became of him if he had hurt the child.

"Midge—little Midge!" And the child sprang to her father's arms, her own about his neck.

"O papa, it has stung me. It hurts me so; and—and it has left its sting in, and will die; mamma told me it would. Poor little bee!"

And that was all! It was the sting of the bee, and not the gripe of the maniac, that had called forth that piteous cry.

"Never mind, darling. I will take you to mamma."

So the child was carried out, and transferred from the father's to the mother's arms. The bee that had so cruelly wounded the little hand crawled away to die, and the half-open rose lay at the madman's feet, his eye down-bent upon it.

CHAPTER II.

The wound healed—the bee dead—the rose withered! Were the next few days to bring no other change? Was the doctor's last attempt to save the doomed life to have no better result?

On the day following the events above recorded, Midge asked papa if she might go again to the black man's room to look for the bee. "For if it must die, papa, you know, wouldn't it be much sicker for it to die out among the flowers than in a dark ugly hole?"

It was seldom the father said "No" to his little daughter's "May I?" He certainly did not in the present instance. So she went to look for the bee; and no way abashed by the wild looks of the maniac, who stood pressed up against the wall, his arms tossed above his head, shrinking and cowering like some caged angry beast, she walked straight up to him, and flushing and pouting, because feeling rather shy and so very much in earnest, she said:

"Will you come and help me look for the bee? I want to find it, and carry it out to the flowers—"

"Yesterday it stung you," interrupted the man with gloomy bitterness, looking down at her where she stood, so far below him that the great mad eyes lost half their fierceness before they reached her face. He had not forgotten what he had seen and heard.

"It did hurt very much"—looking down, self pitying, at the mite of a hand so lovingly swathed and bandaged—"but it's quite well now, and the poor bee will die—mamma says so—and papa let me come and look for it. It was in the rose I brought you yesterday."

The rose she had brought him! How often had roses been brought to him before—placed in his button-hole; laid at his feet; given in exchange for a smile, a jewel, a box at the opera, a kiss of the little hand that offered it. Roses as well as laurels fall to the share of the great; and the eager hand, outstretched to grasp the one, too often allows the other to be placed in it instead. Fame and love! Both his once—both lost to him now. Was it of the lost love and its summer roses he thought, as his softened glance fell on the young child's upturned face? "Won't you help me?"

He did not answer—he was thinking, thinking deeply. In the room so carefully examined, so carefully added, there were no cracks or crannies, no crevice even, where a poor little bee that felt thoroughly ashamed of itself could creep away to hide. Midge's protégé therefore was soon found, and secured in a large leaf brought for the purpose. Then Midge held out her hand to the black man, who seemed to have forgotten her presence.

"You would like to see it put back on the flowers, wouldn't you?"

He certainly did not give her his hand, yet her wee fingers had soon closed about it, and she was quietly leading him towards the door. "Won't you put on a hat? Papa always does."

The fashionable chimney-pot screening the wild head, the sinister brow, the darkling eyes! When had he last worn one? Walking down Piccadilly, the handsome dandy almost as much run after for his beauty as his genius, perfumed locks, calm eagle glance, and stately bearing. Would the envious rival, the dotting woman, have recognised him now?

Thinking, thinking deeply still, he allowed himself to be led on; the guiding impulse of those weak clinging fingers more resistless than the iron hand of force; for who would have the heart to shake it off?

Step by step she led him on to the door, which seemed to open of itself to set him free, and out into the corridor.

Three men stood there: the doctor and two keepers hidden by the angle of the wall. Her eyes bent wistfully on the big leaf gathered up into her wounded hand, little Midge passed them by unnoticed.

Did the woman's tender instinct tell her that they must be passed unseen? that clinging to the poor pale hand, she must draw him silently on, nearer to herself, farther from those who were his judges and his jailers?

When would he awake from the fit of abstraction into which he had been thrown by her rose and sweet child's face? A rush of hair blowing about his uncovered head, the deadly faintness that sizes on the frame exhausted by long confinement. He looked up and around him. That sea of vivid noonday, that blowing fresh exultant breeze; light and air, and no escape from either now! The glories of Nature around him; and he who had worshipped her instead of God drew a deep gasping breath, reeled, and sank to his knees.

The child was on her knees too. She had found the bush from which the rose had been gathered, and very gently she laid the bee down among its leaves.

The bee found and carried off, there was no reason why little Midge should again visit the dark bare room, about whose hushed walls hung an atmosphere of gloom and terror. But children have their whims as well as their elders, and Midge evidently took a particular interest in the black man (she only called him so because of his black scowling looks, for his eyes were as blue as hers, and the tangled mane, had it been less tangled, would have been almost as bright); and scarce a day passed but she would get Rodgers to open the door, that swung back so noiselessly on its hinges, and skipping up to the distant corner where he cowered and brooded the long hideous hours through, she would laugh up in his face and pluck him by the hand, dancing about it, and leading him on, as she had done that first day, to light and air and freedom. But not always was he obedient to her child's will. If his hands were folded high up on his broad breast, she could not reach them. If he scowled upon her when she smiled, the smiles would die away, and she would pout and blush and grow shy; and sometimes, in very shame, hide away her face on his knee.

One day when he sat on the leathern seat fastened to the wall, his head dropped back against it, his eyes fixed and despairing, finding his look more sad than fierce, and hearing how he muttered to himself, she clambered up to his side, and asked him eagerly if he were telling himself a story. Nurse sometimes told her stories, and papa; but they hadn't much time. Papa had told her such a pretty story that morning. Then seeing that the great eyes had turned from vacancy to her face, she nestled up closer, and getting within the shelter of his arm, her fingers straying about his, her bright hair over his breast, she told him the story.

After that papa very often told his little daughter stories, and when she repeated them to the man he listened.

We have said that the keepers, big stalwart men were more than half afraid of the patient whom they dare not treat like any other poor raving fool; but strange to say, little Midge, whose life is uplifted hand could so easily have crushed out of her, was never a bit afraid of him.

Once only he frightened her and made her cry—when he killed a bright butterfly she had brought to show him, and then laughed its death and her tears to scorn. How often had he perhaps, in the wanton cruelty of his strength and power, destroyed some creature scarcely less bright and frail than the butterfly he had but to touch to kill!

But when little Midge huddled the dead insect up in her apron and left him; when he heard the small angry feet pattering along the stone corridor, and the sobs dying away in the distance, he felt sorry, and called out, "Midge, little Midge!" echoing the cry he had so often heard when, from behind their iron bars, papa's poor people would call out to her as she wandered among her flowers.

But Midge did not come back, and he fell into a train of thought—thought of the pass and of faces that the child's, in its pretty tender petulance, had conjured up. Not the faces whose looks had burnt into his soul, making of love something worse than a passion, a madness; but of others that had smiled and frowned and beamed upon him; that would have been so beautiful if seen by the magic light of home, that were beautiful when looked back upon now.

"Pretty, spoilt, silly child," he muttered, half angry with himself for having vexed her, half angry with her for having left him. Then he laughed, and rising to his full height, shook back the tangled masses of his hair with the old careless movement, half petulant, half defiant.

If some envious rival could have seen the maniac now, would he have recognised him? At least some good woman might, I think.

"Well really, if I don't believe the child will make something of the poor fellow after all!" said good, compassionate Mrs. Ferguson one day, as she stood at the drawing-room window looking out upon the garden. "I declare if she hasn't got hold of his hair, combing it through with her fingers, and laughing fit to kill herself as she shows him each separate curl." And the mother laughed too with sheer sympathy, so contagious was the child's mirth. "I suppose she'll be undertaking to shave him next. Just to see how she hangs about him and fondles him, with all that nasty hair over his face too! But she always was an oddity, wasn't she, John? And really he's a fine fellow, and not so wild-looking either with our little Midge hanging about him—eh, John?"

But the doctor did not answer; he could not. His eyes were fixed upon the man and child, and his heart was full.

CHAPTER III.

It is strange how that of which one will make so great a trouble another will only laugh at. The responsibility that weighed so heavily on the doctor's mind, lining his brow and turning his hair prematurely gray, little Midge took upon herself as lightly as did her poor bee its burden of honey culled among her roses; and so the patient, who was to the father a ceaseless source of anxiety, was for her but as a new plaything, too pleasant ever to weary of. Through the long bright summer days she played with him, combing out his hair with her own small nursery comb, and laughing, gleeful and triumphant, as she saw how it glittered in the sunlight, and how much prettier it made him look. Through the long soft summer twilight she played with him too, nestling up into his arms, which were not opened to receive her, but into which she crept with the most perfect confidence, as if they could but have been made so big and strong to afford her shelter; and once there she would whisper odd foolish things, or tell him stories, to which he listened because her voice was sweet; which he remembered because they recalled the past and set him dreaming. And sometimes, as evening deepened, worn out with the hideous wakefulness of the vision-haunted night, he would lay down the pale grizzly head upon the baby lap, the soft arms folded somewhere about him; and his rest would be all the sweeter for their contact.

Little Midge, the only friend and companion of him who had once had the world at his feet—his own gay fashionable world, and all that it held of grace and beauty. Women, soft, wild, meek, passionate, he had but to choose, who, if they had not really loved, had professed to worship him; and now only the little child to cling about him and remind him of what he had lost, the last link between him and the brilliant past. And has he, after all, lost so much? Youth and grace and beauty and love are his still; something else too that was never his before—faith in them all. Will not the love of woman, if it is ever again to be his, seem to him something more real, more reliable after that innocent perfect love? Will not henceforth the woman's weakness or the woman's sin meet with more pity and less scorn as he remembers that, however lost now, she was once good and innocent like little Midge, and capable perhaps of a devotion as great?

The summer—such a glorious summer!—had come and lingered and passed, and the doctor,

so absorbed in his anxious duties, scarce noted the changed of the season; but little Midge did all too plainly. We have said that she was a wee frail thing, as frail almost as the insect whose name she bore—a dainty creature born to live through the summer day, and die when the sun set. Well, little Midge had watched out many sunsets with her big friend, so she had more than lived out her day; and when the autumn succeeded the summer, the child was missed from her favorite haunts—from the park, the garden, her friend's room—no longer the bare ugly room, for something of its lost grace and elegance had been restored to his life, now that he could once more appreciate them. Yet I think he would gladly have renounced it all to have had back his child companion and her wayward caresses. He did not say to himself that he missed her, but his eye saddened, and as it saddened, it softened too. For how could he think of her, without at the same time thinking of all with which her innocent young life had been associated? and such thoughts are gentle and good. Frenzy turned to sorrow. On the man's darkened brow lay the shadow of a troubled thought, and something more; something that would never have been there save for that awful visitation and the young child's ministry of love. All that was over now. Little Midge could do nothing more for him or any one else. Why, she could hardly lift her little weary head from the sofa cushions, or raise her hand to where the sun-beams danced about the wall so tantalisingly within her reach. And lying thus alone often—for papa had so much to do, and mamma had many more little ones, as we know—Midge would long for the man who had been everything to her, or to whom she had been everything—the child never paused to reason which; long for him more than for air or flowers or birds or insects or all the other things that had made her summer life so beautiful. And the longing growing more than she could bear, she told papa.

"Bring a madman into our own private rooms, and leave him alone with the child!" cried the mother, aghast. "Do you think that would be safe, my dear?"

And the doctor answered solemnly, "I do." So the man came, and was to the suffering child all that she had once been to him. The hand at whose touch woman had thrilled; whose clasp had been esteemed a favor; whose power, as the interpreter of the soul, had been so gigantic, now played with the bright curls, smoothing and caressing them. If she could no longer tell him stories, her voice being so weak, she listened to the stories he had to tell, and listening, she forgot to suffer. Sometimes, worn out with the wakefulness of the fever-haunted nights, she would lay the pretty nestling head upon his lap or within the cradle of his arm, and her rest would be all the sweeter for its contact.

Holding her thus—meeting the first awakened look of her eyes, so full of longing and grief—strange thoughts, holy and calm, would creep into his heart; through light, the boasted light of reason, into darkness so deep, so appalling; through darkness, the darkness of the shadow of death, back again into light. Who said that your work was over when God's hand laid you low, little Midge?

In the dear shelter of his arms, alone—her last look fastened on his face—Midge died. They would gladly have held her back, those strong protecting arms; but they could not prevent death coming, and they had to lay her aside in the little coffin, that was a thing altogether pitiful to look at, so wee and light it was.

She was carried without the walls to be buried, and two men only followed her to the grave—her father and the friend on whose arm he leaned for support, in whose sympathy, so true, so deep, he found his best consolation.

A month after the great iron gates had opened to let the little coffin pass out, they opened wide once more, and the man over whose life the storm had passed like some hideous vanishing dream, leaving behind no trace more bitter than a vague solemn memory, went forth, and felt that the world lay once more before him.

Silently he had entered the house, so silently he left it. On its threshold the master stood to bid him goodbye, and bowed low before him his uncovered head, unable to look up into the noble shadowed face for the tears that blinded him. In silence their hands met and dropped apart.

"Good-bye, Ferguson; God bless you—and thank you. I shall never forget all that I owe you."

"Me! you owe me nothing."

Both men knew all that the words implied. So Midge's friend went back to the world that was waiting for him. Would it find him less great than when it had first run after him? Posterity will not say so, nor will we.

With his future we have nothing to do, but leave him to pass through the gates in silence, as if following the little angel guide who seemed to have gone first to lead the way. The solemn lessons of the past, the great work of the future; the man standing between the two in the full strength still of undiminished power, in the full flooding sunlight of that vivid noonday sun, light and air around him—the breath of faith, the light of truth; no need to shrink from either now—now and for evermore.

The doctor stood bareheaded on the threshold and watched him go, then with a sigh he turned; but the house looked dark and drear within, and without all was so bright, so calm, so beautiful. Not far from the porch was the little plot of ground that Midge had called her garden; the doctor often went there; he went there

now, and stooping, picked a weed from her favorite bed. From earth and the flowers she had so loved he looked upward to the bright, blue, joyous sky. Why is it that, when we bury our dead deep down in the earth, we look upwards, and not downwards, when seeking them? Is it not the involuntary impulse of faith following the instinctive cry of the soul, "He is not there; he is risen?"

"Midge—little Midge!"

It was but the silent cry of the father's heart yet he heard it echoed close at hand; some madman calling it out from behind his prison bars. It was poor old Parker, who never could be made to understand that Midge was dead, and that it must pain the doctor to hear her name when she was no longer there to answer to it.

"Midge—little Midge!"

The doctor looked up, nodded, and smiled.

OH, WOULD WE TWO HAD NEVER MET.

Oh, would we two had never met,
Or, meeting, had not dared to love,
For hearts like ours can ne'er forget
This sweet delusive dream of love.

Method thought ye loved me as a friend,
Or only as a sister dear;
This trusting faith did nought but tend
To make thee doubly, trebly dear.

When first he pressed your lips to mine,
In that impassioned ling'ring kiss,
Oh, then I felt this heart was thine,
Or why that thrilling sense of bliss?

Sincere esteem I felt for thee,
Of love I did not even dream;
"Ye may not love," is fate's decree,
But love will aye be lord supreme.

In lordly hall, in lowly cot,
He wields o'er all a power divine;
To feel that power is woman's lot,
Oh, can it be that lot is mine?

Oh, had we met in bygone years,
When both from other ties were free;
No reason then for sighs and tears,
No sin in love 'twixt ye and me.

'Twas not to be. 'Tis wrong, I know,
For us to even own Love's spell;
To fate's stern mandate we must bow,
May Heaven bless thee!—fare ye well.

ESTELLE.

It was a unique, Gothic structure, bristling with pinnacles, minarets and lance-like points, and profusely ornamented with elegant carvings. On the west two acres of strawberry plants were in bloom, their white petals and golden hearts uplifted to meet the caress of the sun. On the north stretched away a rich meadow, watered by a singing, sparkling brook. On the east an orchard of pear trees in full bloom. In front, facing the south, a half-acre of portulacca in bloom formed a lovelier carpet than man ere dreamt of making, and, farther down, a smooth, green field, dotted with dandelions and violets, finished the picture in nature's sweet simplicity.

"It is a paradise!" exclaimed Edith Delmar, as she alighted from the phaeton and came up the path between the variegated portulacca.

At that instant a masculine head appeared at one of the chamber windows, a pair of deep gray eyes were directed upon the lovely stranger, and then the man's finely-cut, roseate lips curled with impatient disdain.

"Another one overflowing with sentiment," he ejaculated, sinking back into his chair. "Why couldn't she have said, 'It's really a beautiful place, and been sensible about it. A 'paradise on earth'! Bah! Harmony in a ward-room or ceremony between dogs and cats! I'm tired of such contemptible foolery!"

Pushing his hand through his wavy chestnut hair, with a restless motion, he wheeled his chair round to a desk, and began writing rapidly. An hour passed, the man remaining in the same position, absorbed in his work.

"Wallace!" sounded a pleasant, womanly voice.

No answer.

"Wallace!" this time a little louder.

"What," he answered, at last, somewhat sharply.

"I want you to come down, Miss Delmar is here."

"Oh, bother Miss Delmar. I'm busy."

"I'll torment you till you do, so you'd better come now before you get into a worse humor."

"Plague take the woman," he grumbled, throwing down his pen. "I'd like to find some Crusoe island where I could be alone a minute! I stipulated when I came here that I was to have my own way, and—I'll fix 'em though—I'll make this Miss Delmar hate me in three minutes, and then I'll have some peace."

But he was very careful to smooth his hair and whiskers, and remove every particle of dust from his elegant garments ere he left the room.

"What are you so cross about?" queried his sister, Mrs. Westcott, as he came down.

"Cross? Well, that's good! Why don't you use a little judgment? You wouldn't stir up a bear with cubs, but you make nothing of dis-

turbing a man in the middle of an essay. I wish you'd be a little more consistent."

"Oh, fudge!" laughed the pretty brunette.

"A woman's answer!" muttered Wallace, with a shrug of his broad shoulders.

Miss Delmar was seated in the sumptuous drawing-room, gazing over the emerald fields, a placid smile on her noble features, a light of contentment in her lustrous blue eyes. She was not a beauty in the strict sense of the term, her face was too large for that, her form too full and commanding, but without being in the least Amazonian. There were a majesty in her presence, a winning gentleness in her manner, a reflection of heart and soul in her countenance—all of which combined rendered her indescribably attractive, and exercised a mystic charm upon nearly every one who approached her.

"Appearances deceitful again!" thought Wallace as he greeted her with a grave politeness. "She doesn't look like one of the gushing order, but she must be, else she would never have talked about 'paradise'!"

"How do you like her?" asked May, after Wallace had dragged out a proper length of time in the drawing-room, and disgusted himself with common-place remarks about traveling, scenery, summer heat, etc.

"Oh, she looks well enough, and that is all that is necessary."

"Wallace, you make yourself awfully hateful!" said May, reprovingly.

"It's a privilege of mine," he replied with a grim laugh and sliding into his chamber, locked the door.

"Anybody would think him awfully ill-natured," mused his sister, pouting her red lips. "But he isn't, he's the dearest, kindest brother that ever was, only he's so provokingly odd. I do wish he would act naturally once in a while."

For two days Wallace and Miss Delmar met only at the table. May felt somewhat mortified in consequence, and tried to explain that her brother was engaged upon a series of articles that must be finished at once, and hoped Stella would pardon his absence. Miss Delmar really hadn't missed Mr. Hartley, and this was said so coldly that all of Mrs. Westcott's dreams of making a match between them were crushed. On the forenoon of the third day another couple arrived at Strawberry Lodge—a Miss Clay, one of May's dearest schoolmates, and Herbert Appleton, a former friend of Mr. Westcott. The young lady—Kitty as she was called—was a bright, vivacious little fairy with shining hazel eyes, saucy, pouting lips, and masses of golden hair a shade or two lighter than Stella's.

"What a heavenly place!" exclaimed Kitty, clapping her hands with delight. "I shall expect to find angels at every step. I can't believe that this is the same earth I've been in."

"I'll give it up! I might as well try to work in pandemonium! I wonder why May doesn't import a whole cargo of magpies, and then set up a lunatic asylum for amusement."

He twisted his handsome features into a ridiculous look of disgust, and tossed his papers into his desk with a spiteful motion. Then clutching a straw hat, he fled from the house, never pausing until he reached a little hillock, at the foot of which the meadow brook made a detour to the south.

Throwing himself upon the luxuriant grass, he covered his face with his hat, and drew a long breath of relief.

"I'm safe for a minute now I hope. They won't find me in a hurry. Hullo! What the deuce is that?"

He raised himself upon his elbow and listened.

"'Twas down in the meadow the violets were blooming.
And the spring-time grass grew fresh and green,
And the birds by the brooklet their sweet songs were singing.
When I first met my darling Daisy Deane."

The old song was never sung more sweetly; each note seemed to quiver with sympathy, and rose upon the air in silvery strains.

"By Jove! that's a fine voice!" said Wallace, admiringly. "I wonder who owns it? I'd like to see her—upon my eye I would!"

His wish was gratified instantly. A soft, white hand put the bushes at his left aside, and Miss Delmar appeared.

"You have a fondness for ballads, Miss Delmar."

She started slightly; until he spoke she had been unconscious of his presence. Recovering her composure, she answered, quietly:

"Yes, but I was not aware I had a listener.

I came on for a few moments' solitude."

"So did I," he answered, with a yawn.

"I trust I am pardoned for intruding upon you," she rejoined, telly. "I will repair the error, and bid you good-morning."

"You are very kind, I am sure," he said with a provoking smile.

She stopped, and, plucking a dandelion, began tearing it to pieces.

"I thought you were going," he remarked with irritating deliberation.

"I've changed mind," she replied, with her head turned from him. "I've just thought that the grounds are as free to me as they are to you."

"Perhaps my presence is distasteful to you."

"Don't move," she retorted, with a little laugh. "I shouldn't know you were near if you didn't talk."

"Very good indeed. Try again, Miss Delmar," he said, with a patronizing air.

A slight frown clouded her brow—his manner

was little less than exasperating—and then there was so much confidence in his blue eyes, so much invulnerable composure in his smile. Instantaneously the scene was presented to her mind in a new light—the ridiculousness of it was clearly portrayed in each minute particular, and obedient to the impulse, she laughed long and loudly.

"Such nonsense!" she said, as the last dulcet echo died away.

"True; there is nonsense in everything," he answered, moodily, "Sense is a beggar, and goes about in rags."

"I've a mind to speak frankly to you, Mr. Hartley," said Estelle, looking him straight in the eyes.

"Do so, by all means; candour from feminine lips would be like gold from lead—a simple impossibility!"

"There it is again! Well, then you act like an overgrown boy disappointed in love!"

His features moved not a particle—not a symptom of surprise or annoyance could be detected. He merely said with an approving nod:

"That is the best shot yet. You will really become witty if you persevere."

Her face flushed a little at this—his sarcasm had a sharp sting, but she revealed no other sign of discomposure.

"I wish to ask you a question."

"You may," he interposed, condescendingly.

"Thank you," she proceeded, calmly. "Do you think all women are fools?"

"Yes, in some respects."

"And men—what are they, pray?"

"Fools also."

"And what of marriage?"

"The very acme of folly."

"And death?"

"The end of folly."

She paused and gazed upon the man in perplexity. Sighing softly, as if almost weary with the burden of wonder that oppressed her mind, she queried again:

"What is life?"

"The analysis of folly."

"Then you cover love, devotion, sacrifice, patience, resignation, hope, faith, with the epithet, folly?"

"Oh, no."

"What are these, then?"

"The very rare exceptions to folly, my dear Miss Delmar," he answered, smiling.

She regarded him a moment in mingled curiosity and admiration.

"You call marriage the acme of folly. Now why?"

"Because eight-tenths of the people plunge into it before they are conscious of the science of single life—before they know what they marry for. One who cannot live understandingly with himself cannot expect to live decently with another person. Men know little about themselves, and less about the other sex—hence misery, bickering, jealousies, divorce, etc."

"Do you think you understand this theory of yours well enough to marry happily?"

He laughed and pushed his hand through his hair.

"No, I don't. But it is likely that folly, in one of her disguises, will deceive me into believing I do, and thus another example may be made for somebody else to preach about."

"You are consistent at all events," she said, artlessly. "I'll take back what I said about your being disappointed in love. I was wrong, but I think I have hit upon the right explanation of your peculiar manner now."

"Indeed! What is it?"

"The most shallow of follies—an affectation of eccentricity!" she responded, her blue eyes sparkling.

"You may be right," he replied, imperturbably. "I'll think of it."

"And I shall watch you, and when I see you giving way to frivolity or any kindred folly you'll know it. Now be on your guard."

"I will. Shall we walk back to the house now? It is nearly dinner-time."

Unconsciously they had dropped the manner of new acquaintances and acted towards each other like old friends. And neither thought of it until each had passed some time in solitude and reflected upon the events of the day.

Time passed rapidly now.

Without realizing it Wallace was being drawn into the vortex of society.

Kitty Clay was often with him, and her childish, careless manner, her happy, sparkling face and merry voice pleased him. He gave way to these attractions as one allows his imagination to carry him among the characters of a play when he is witnessing it. One bright moonlight evening he and Kitty were seated on the lawn gaily conversing.

"They say you are cynical, Mr. Hartley, but I couldn't believe it if I should try."

"Why not?"

"Because you are so courteous and have so high a respect for our sex," answered Kitty velling her eyes, and so flirting her white arms, that her diamond bracelets caught the light.

"I know how much this sounds like flattery, but it would be difficult to foist flattery upon you without your knowing it."

"You could accomplish the feat if any one could."

"You naughty man, you are flattering me now."

"No, I protest. There is no limit to the power of fairies you know, and—"

A carol and then a tempest of allvery laughter cut short his words.

He sprang to his feet chagrined and mortified. Estelle Delmar and Mrs. Westcott were a few paces in the rear.

"You talk too loud when you become elo-

quent, Mr. Hartley," said the former, a triumphant sparkle in her eyes.

Wallace resumed his seat, thanking the ladies for the interruption in his sarcastic way, but he could not drive from his mind the fact that Stella had caught him in a very simple folly, and that she was doubtless comparing his theory with his practice. Why had he been foolish enough to chatter with that flirt Kittle? Why was he not in his room attending to his duties? His pride was severely wounded. Presently he arose and went to his room. Sitting down by the window he lit a cigar and sought to give vent to his vexation in long draughts of smoke. Minutes passed in silence, and then he heard Stella's voice utter the words:

"Fairies! Bah! Harmony in the wardroom, or ceremony between dogs and cats!"

The sentences were familiar to him. She must have overheard him. His face flushed, he felt a tantalizing humiliation creeping over his mind. Did she think him a sophist or a ninny, which? He would leave the Lodge the next day. He could not endure her clear mirthful gaze after this. And yet the thought of parting with her was sad. Why should it be? He slept on the question and went out early the next morning for a walk. He directed his steps down the avenue, and paused suddenly upon the little bridge that spanned the brook.

"You here, Stella?" he exclaimed, using her given name for the first time in his surprise.

"I was not aware you were so near," she rejoined, with a twinkle in her eyes. "I came out for a few moments' solitude."

"So did I," he answered, regaining his coolness, and seeing the application of her words.

Stella laughed, and Wallace could do no better than join in her mirth.

"You conspired to entrap me," he said, presently.

"And succeeded!" she exclaimed, proudly.

"It was all folly, nevertheless."

"But it was very pleasant and amusing," she responded, the same arch look upon her features, that never looked so lovely as now. "I suppose you will grant now that some folly is innocent and diverting, and that even a man of your brain, your shrewdness can fall into it very easily."

"I claimed the same weakness for myself as for others, didn't I?"

"You did, pardon me," she hastened to answer. "I have gained nothing after all, and my boasting is vanity, a very insipid folly."

"You don't know what you have gained, Stella, and when you do I fear you will not accept it."

"What is it?"

"My heart, my love, my devotion." His face was pale now, his voice trembled. "Oh, my darling, will you take it?"

"Yes, Wallace, as the best blessing of my life," she murmured, her eyes full of unshed tears.

For a moment her beautiful head rested upon his breast in the rapture of love. It proved anything but folly.

SCIENTIFIC AND USEFUL.

IN Peru potatoes are dried in a furnace to deprive them of their moisture; after this operation they readily keep for a whole winter.

THE combustion of one pound of coal in one minute is productive of a force equal to the work of three hundred horses during the same time.

ACID STAINS.—Sal volatile, or hartshorn, will restore colors taken out by acid, and may be dropped upon any garment without doing harm.

PUNCH was originally a Persian beverage, and drives its name from *punj*, five, because it consisted of the following five ingredients—water, spirit, acid, sugar, and spice.

A SOLUTION of pearlash in water, thrown upon a fire, extinguishes it instantly; the proportion is 4 ounces, dissolved in hot water, and then poured into a bucket of common water.

CARPETS may be cleaned by pounding them in soap-suds, and washing the soaps well out of them. The suds must be very strong and cold. This is done by cutting down the bar soap, and dissolving it in water.

BARLEY WATER.—A good barley water may be made by adding the juice and rind of one lemon to one table-spoonful of honey and two teacupfuls of barley. Put it into a jug, and a quart of boiling water upon it.

SOFT CORNS.—Scrape a small quantity of soap from the tablet on your washstand every morning and insert between the toes after your tub (yellow soap is best), and within a month a cure will be effected, and it will be final.

A NEW packing for stuffing boxes is made of saw-dust mixed with talc, plumbago, plumbagine, black-lead, or other like substance. The saw-dust must be well sifted, and that from white wood cut with the grain is preferred.

WINE STAINS ON LINEN.—Put the tablecloth in milk, soak for twelve hours, and then wash in the usual way, taking care to dry in the open air; or filter cold spring water through the part stained as soon as possible after the stain has been made. If the above fail, try salts of lemon.

Two of the edible dogs of China are now on exhibition at the Zoological Gardens in Paris. If it be found easy to acclimatise them, it is proposed to introduce this new article of food. The

dogs in question are small and hairless, and enormously fat. They are fed solely on vegetable food, a regimen which imparts a rare delicacy to their flesh.

A GERMAN chemist named Lonsberg professes to have discovered that, by passing any kind of artificial light through a thin layer of alum or mica, these calorific rays are absorbed, while the illuminating power on the true light rays is undiminished, and becomes exceedingly mild and pleasant to the eye.

INDICATOR OF VITIATED AIR.—A solution of palladium chloride is so connected with a battery, that so long as no metal is precipitated, no current passes; but as soon as carbonic acid appears in the atmosphere, metallic palladium is precipitated, which establishes a current, and rings a bell to give warning of the presence of the noxious gas.

TO CLEAN BLACK CLOTH.—Dissolve one ounce of bicarbonate of ammonia in one quart of warm water. With this liquid rub the cloth, using a piece of flannel or black cloth for the purpose. After the application of this solution, clean the cloth well with clean water; dry and iron it, brushing the cloth from time to time in the direction of the fibre.

TABLE LINEN.—To make table linen stiff, it should be scarcely dried at all before folding down. If dried very much, and then damped down it will be soft. After lying a night in the fold, mangle and hang before a very hot fire, when it will dry stiff and rough. When perfectly aired mangle a second time, when it will be beautifully stiff and glossy like satin. No ironing is necessary, except for napkins, then the second mangling is not required.

SALVE FOR CHAPPED LIPS AND HANDS.—Take two ounces of white wax, one ounce of spermaceti, four ounces of oil of almonds, two ounces of honey, quarter of an ounce of essence of bergamot, or any other scent; melt the wax and spermaceti, then add the honey, and melt all together, and when hot add the almond oil by degrees, stirring it until cold. This is superior to glycerine for chapped hands, sunburns, or any roughness on the skin.

TAR AND BACON-FAT AS REMEDIES FOR CONSUMPTION.—The tar is used to medicate the air, and is prepared as follows: To one pound of tar add one ounce of common potash to deprive it of its pyroigneous acid; mix well and boil together in the open air for fifteen minutes; then keep it gently simmering in the room of the patient. The bacon-fat is cut in thin slices (raw bacon) and tacked on a bit of flannel and placed on the chest, the fat near the skin. Many cases of consumption are produced from either tape or round worms, which feed on the nutriment of the food taken, and so impoverish the blood.

BIRDS AND CHOLERA.—Can birds scent the cholera infection in the air? Certain well authenticated facts render it not improbable that they can. Recent European journals state that at Munich were several cases of cholera have occurred, the rooks and crows, which before flew about the steeples and through the trees of the public promenades, have all emigrated; and the same thing happened during the cholera seasons of 1836 and 1854. According to Sir Samuel W. Baker, the same phenomena occurred at Mauritius, where the martins, which exists in immense numbers the year round, wholly disappeared during the prevalence of the cholera.

HEATING APPARATUS FOR DOMESTIC PURPOSES.—A new form of heating apparatus, intended to warm comparatively small quantities of water at a time, has recently been patented by Mr. Strode. A vertical chimney is arranged over a set of Bunsen burners. This chimney consists of an inner and outer cylinder, and in the jacket thus formed a current of water is allowed to flow, taking up the heat as it goes from the heated surface of the inner cylinder. The water is admitted cold at the bottom, and discharged at the top heated. The invention is intended for use in positions where a complete heating apparatus for hot water supply with cisterns, etc., cannot be constructed.

OUR PUZZLER.

104. DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

The primals down, and finals up,
Two British queens will show;
The name of one, at least, I'm sure
You very well do know.

- This on the Danube you will find,
And of a congress does remind.
- The novel that you here have got,
Was written by Sir Walter Scott.
- He of King Arthur's kings was one;
As true as his wife there was none.
- The brother of a king does show,
And whom he tried to overthrow.
- This Flemish port did long sustain
A siege against the arms of Spain.
- This did Napoleon invade,
And for it very dearly paid.
- The name of this old man is seen
In Spenser's famous "Faery Queen."
- Our grammars very clearly teach
That 'tis one of the parts of speech.

105. SQUARE WORDS.

- A general; an entertainment; an animal; produced; a planet.
- A general; one who rides; to worship; pluck; vegetable products.
- A marshal; proprietor; to join; oblivion; plants.

106. CHARADE.

My primals is a name that strikes
Like music on the ear;
A pity 'tis that it should be
A name for some to fear.

Each farmer in our native land
My second well will know;
The want of it, at certain times,
Oft causes bitter woe.

My total's influence is great
To lead a youthful life
To tread the paths of joy and peace,
Or those of woe and strife.

107. ANAGRAMS.

- Worn by that ruler; 2. A robber, can hunt;
- Line a bird in James; 4. No rony at the poll;
- Neil try win ma's zeal; 6. Hurry ask the Celt;
- Locks Willie in; 8. Dear Lenny's font;
- A hill warrior isn't womanish; 10. Hens cackled, sir; 11. Why was the glen won, Lord Rolf;
- Then cheese-barrow terms.

108. DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

You could not have a better wish
Than that you'er may be,
What in my primals, when read down,
Or finals, up, you see.

- Whate'er may be your lot in life,
May you be first, and free from strife,
- If in a country place you live,
You cannot be what this will give.
- Though third here you this explore,
Yet 'tis a number more than four.
- With colored files we often wish
To lure and catch this little fish.
- Another number this will state;
'Tis less than twelve, but more than eight.
- This plant is in your garden found;
But it must, first, be twisted round.
- My final then to you will name
A pleasant and a homely game.

109. ARITHMETICAL QUESTION.

A and B are a certain distance apart. A train leaves A at noon, and travels 48 miles per hour, and meets another train, which left B at 12.45, and travels 32 miles per hour, at $\frac{5}{17}$ of the distance from A to B. Find the distance from A to B.

110. CHARADE.

The virgin first, when winter reigns around,
And poor red robin hops from door to door,
In showers fall upon the frosted ground.
At morn, if woods and meadows we explore,
The lark from grassy haunt begins to soar,
And off her wing the dewy last she shakes.
The total is a flower that's seen before
The gentle spring to buds and verdure wakes,
And 'fore are gone the days of ice and frozen flakes.

111. ANAGRAMS OF SINGERS.

- I love Mr. Dales, Emma; 2. My care is great, Sam G.; 3. I try half corn; 4. From Fred S., dear Maud; 5. I don't say old Ben, mama; 6. Would Mr. Sharp, a; 7. Severe Miss Mr.

112. SIX-LETTER SQUARE WORD.

- The primal of my square will give
One of the feather'd tribe.
- A word that means contrary quite
My second will describe.
- My third is simply to repeat,
What you have heard before.
- A kind of three-legged iron stand
In fourth you will explore.
- Transpose my fifth, and it will name
A cunning little thing.
- Now, to complete, I need but say
My final has a sting.

113. LOGOGRIPH.

If of a part of food you change the head,
What means to peruse you'll have instead;
Now, if this word you will transpose,
What is not cheap it will disclose;
Now, if to this you give a touch,
What means to defy you know this much.

ANSWERS.

- DOUBLE ACROSTIC.—Flowers, thus: 1.

FlagstaF; 2. LaureL; 3. OlympO; 4. WillOw; 5. EdIE; 6. RiveR; 7. SicknesS.

87. ARITHMETICAL QUESTION.—

The first share = $\frac{1}{3} = \frac{1}{3} \times \frac{3}{4} = \frac{1}{4}$ of the whole
 $\frac{1}{4}$ of $\frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{16}$ of the whole.
 Similarly, the second share = $\frac{1}{4}$ of the whole
 $\frac{1}{4}$ of $\frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{16}$ of the whole.

$$\frac{1}{4} - \left(\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{1}{12} \right) = \text{£}51 \text{ 0s. 3d.}$$

$$\frac{1}{24} \text{ of the whole sum} = \text{£}51 \text{ 0s. 3d.}$$

$$\therefore \text{whole sum} = \text{£}1,224 \text{ 6s.}$$

This, divided in the ratio of 3, 4, and 5,

$$\begin{aligned} &= \text{share of first} = \text{£}308 \text{ 1s. 6d.} \\ &= \text{second} = \text{£}408 \text{ 2s. 0d.} \\ &= \text{third} = \text{£}510 \text{ 2s. 6d.} \end{aligned} \text{ Ans.}$$

88. ENIGMA.—Wind.

89. DOUBLE ARITHMORUM.—James Sant, Peter Lely, thus: JalaP(a), AmiranLE, MontforT, EllesmerE, StavangerR, StavropolL, ArispE, NeuchatelL, TrichinopolY.

90. HIDDEN PROVERB.—'Tis an ill wind that blows no one any good.

91. SQUARE WORDS.—

1.	2.	3.	4.
RASP	RASP	KALE	PLUM
ALOE	ABLE	ABEL	LURE
SOFA	SLOE	LEEK	URGE
PEAR	PEEP	ELKS	MEET

92. CHARADE.—Gooseberry.

93. DOUBLE ACROSTIC.—Garibaldi, Kosciusko, thus: 1. GreenocK; 2. AjacciO; 3. RosS; 4. Isaac; 5. BornoU; 6. Alfieri; 7. Limoges; 8. DecK; 9. IachimO.

94. ARITHMETICAL QUESTION.—

$$72 \times 60 = 4320, \text{ area of window.}$$

$$\frac{4320}{30} = \sqrt{144} = 12.$$

$$\sqrt{12} = \sqrt{11.25} = 11.75, \text{ allowance for frame-work.}$$

$$\frac{11.25}{4} = 2.8125 \text{ diameter of the circular space.}$$

$$2.8125 \times 7854 \times 30 = 186.375 \text{ of circular space.}$$

$$4320 - 186.375 \times 11.75 = 4121.375 \text{ inches, or } 28.624 \text{ feet, the area of the glass.}$$

95. ENIGMA.—Diamond.

96. CONUNDRUMS.—1. Because it's pain (Spain); 2. America (a merry cur); 2. Because it's an isle (anile).

97. DOUBLE ACROSTIC.—Flaxman, Chantry, thus: 1. FontenoY; 2. LeaR; 3. AlicanT; 4. Xenophon; 5. Mecca; 6. AsapH; 7. NardaC.

HUMOROUS SCRAPS.

SOMETHING likely to end in smoke—The report of a gun.

WHICH is the most celestial part of the British Empire? The Isle of Skye.

WHAT relation is that child to its father who is not its father's own son? His daughter.

THE REASON.—An instructor asked a girl why beer in French was feminine. She replied that it was probably owing to the fact that the boys liked it so well.

"WHAT'S the matter there, Alice? Don't your shoes fit?" "No papa, they don't fit me at all," replied the little one; "why they don't even squeak when I go out to walk."

CONCLUSIVE.—"How many deaths last night?" inquired a hospital physician of a nurse.—"Nine," was the answer.—"Why, I ordered medicine for ten."—"Yes, but one wouldn't take it."

A FREEZER.—Said a pompous husband, whose wife had stolen up behind and given him a kiss, "Madam, I consider such an act indecorous"—"Excuse me," said the wife, "I didn't know it was you."

THE CAUSE PROSPERS.—A newly established provincial paper, having obtained a new subscriber, records the startling fact in a half-column article, headed, "Still another! Our cause endorsed by the people!"

A CITIZEN of Delta, Iowa, writes to the Postmaster-General: "If you don't send some one to run this 'ere post-office purty soon it'll be throwd in the river, for I'm going off on a bear-hunt and can't fool any more."

"DICK," said a certain lawyer to a countryman who had been considered more fool than knave, "what would you call the two greatest curiosities in the world?" "Why," replied Dick "an honest lawyer and a river on fire."

"How is it, my dear, that you have never kindled a flame in the bosom of a man?" said an old lady to her pretty niece, who was portionless. "The reason, aunt," replied the young lady, "is, as you well know, that I am not a good match."

ABSENT.—George, a very absent-minded man, went the other day to call upon a friend at his office, and seeing his bookkeeper, asked, "is Mr. — engaged?"—The bookkeeper replied, "Alas! he died last night."—"Oh, never mind,"

said George. "I only want to see him for a minute."

"A YOUNG lady of Lyons, Iowa, recently said: "Some men are always talking about patronizing their own town—always harping on that duty—and yet they go abroad to get married, while here we all stand waiting! I do hope that some of the men who marry Eastern women will get cheated!"

AN INVISIBLE ANTAGONIST.—A Gascon officer who was present at a skirmish, fired a pistol at one of the enemy, and afterwards boasted that he had killed him. "That can't be," said another, "for not a man was left on the field." "Pooh!" said the Gascon; "don't you see?—I must have blown him to atoms."

CARELESS TRICK.—A paper, in telling how a little boy got drowned while in swimming, says that after wading about for some time he "stepped off over his head." Now that was a careless thing to do. Little boys should be very careful not to step over their heads, for even if they do not get drowned that may break a leg.

AN IRISH glazier was putting a pane of glass into a window, when a groom, who was standing by, began joking him, telling him to mind and put in plenty of putty. The Irishman bore the banter for some time, but at last silenced his tormentor with—"Arrah, now, he off wid ye, or else I'll put a pane in your head without any putty."

LACONIC.—One of the most laconic men we have heard of is an Aberdeen farmer, upon whom a young man, wishing to marry his daughter, called one day. The farmer happened to be ploughing in the field. The hesitating lover, after running parallel with the furrow several times round the field, and essaying with all his courage to utter the important question, at last forced out a prefatory half-volumeful of sentences, ending with, "I should like to marry your daughter."—The farmer replied, "Take her, and use her well. Whoa, haw-buck!"

A CAPITAL story comes from Vienna à propos of Liszt's last performances in that city. It is said that the great pianist found himself in the company of a number of ladies, who begged him in hyperbolic terms to procure for them "the ecstasies, the artistic raptures, which his magnificent talent inevitably produces." He obligingly seated himself at the piano and played. When he had finished some of his admirers had fainted. "Well," said Liszt, "I played wrong notes all through, intentionally—so badly, indeed, that I should have been turned out of doors at any elementary school of music!"

LORD MACAULAY, passing one day through the Seven Dials, bought a handful of ballads from some street singers who were bawling out their contents to a gaping audience. Proceeding on his way home, he was astonished to find himself followed by half a score of urchins, their faces beaming with expectation.

"Now then, my lads, what is it?" said he. "Oh, that's a good 'un," replied one of the boys, "after we've come all this way!" "But what are you waiting for?" asked the historian, astonished at the lad's familiarity. "Waiting for! Why, ain't you going to sing, guv'ner?"

A GLORIOUS OPPORTUNITY LOST.—They tell about a man who refused to get up and light the fire, and as his wife said she wouldn't, they remained in bed thirty-seven hours before the matter was settled. Our sympathies are, of course, with the woman, and we may be permitted to entertain a regret that it did not occur to her to perform a great deed of self-sacrifice upon this occasion. How noble and beautiful would have been the example set her husband—how touchingly would she have shown her wifely devotion—how keenly would she have made him feel his meanness—if she had risen and made a fire under the bed, in order to rout him out all of a sudden! A woman who throws away such a chance as that is false to her duty and to her sex.

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ABOUT SPRING HOUSE-CLEANING

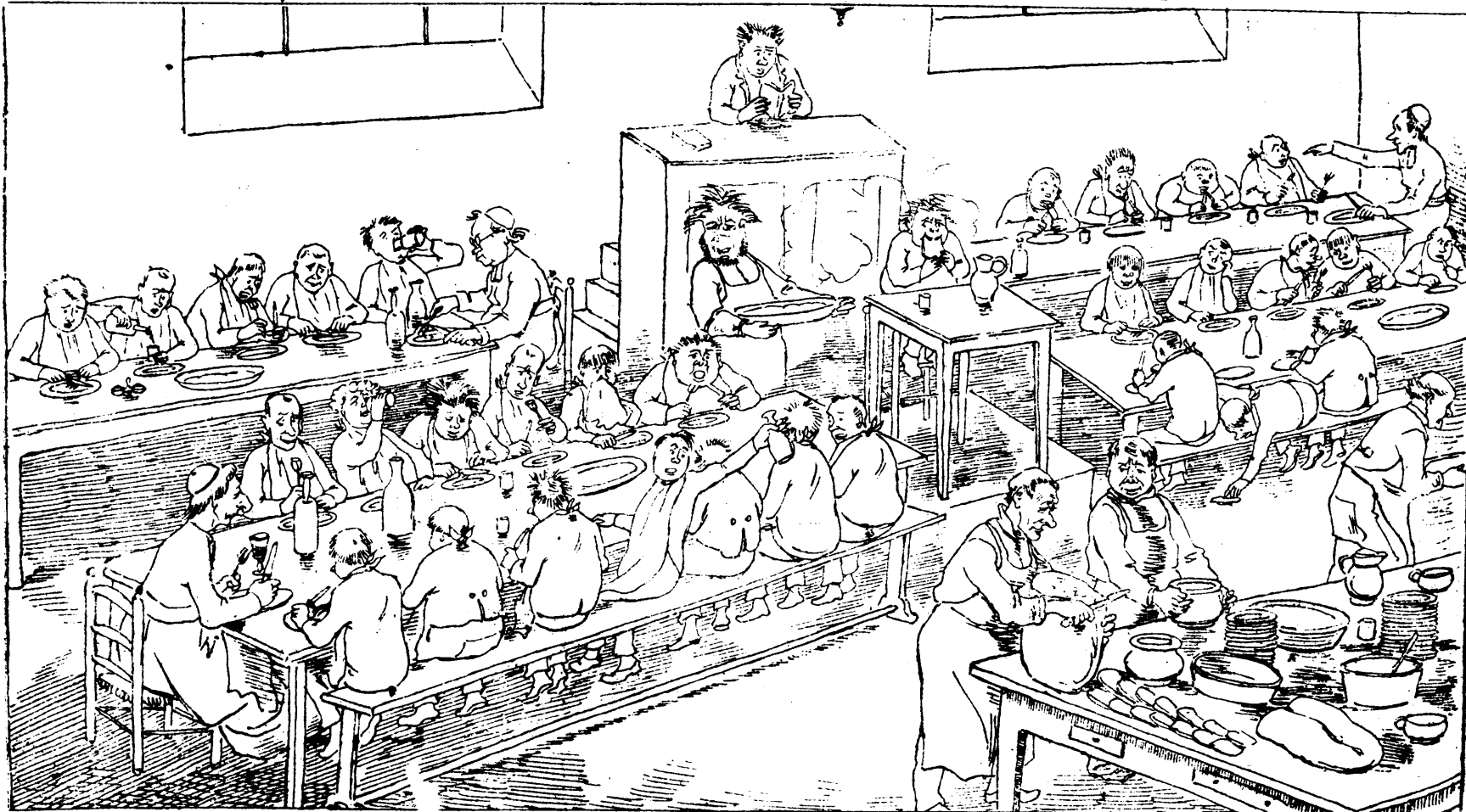
It is an epidemic which attacks all well-regulated households twice a year. The spring visitation is usually the worse of the two. It unsettles everything. It goes to the very marrow of the situation, and makes every member of the family home-sick clean down to the stocking. Like measles and chicken-pox and courting and similar derangements, there is no cure for it but to go through it, and blessed is the man who does not lose his temper on the way. For while it lasts the beefsteaks will be tough as sole leather, and the coffee the poorest substitute for slops. Dinner will be late and inedible when ready. The cook will be cross, the children will tease each other and torment the maid, the old servant will quit and leave her mistress in the lurch, the dog will upset the basket with the best china and ruin the set, the cat will deposit a litter of kittens on the satin sofa, a half dozen cousins will drop down from the country to spend a week, and a few friends will come in to take a quiet tea and have a delightful sit-down, and the mistress of

the house will be sure to have one of her sick headaches or break down from overdoing. It always happens, too, that when the east wind blows a perfect hurricane through the house, and every room in it is a regular Growlery, Mr. Smith is sure to invite Mr. Jones to come to lunch, or take it into his head to have the rheumatism or some other company. Then the upturn discovers so many uncomfortable facts! The parlor curtains are faded, and must be replaced with new ones. Three chairs are rickety, and the rosewood sofa can't possibly be mended, and the stair carpet is threadbare, two bedsteads are broken, the gas-pipes are out of order, the water leaks through the ceiling, and the last domestic carried off a whole chestful of her mistress's clothes. Everything was serene and lovely on Sunday night, but on Tuesday morning there is bedlam, and five hundred dollars to pay into the bargain. But the epidemic is inevitable. Sanitary laws don't reach it. And perhaps, after all, it is not so bad as the thing it removes. The civilized senses look on dirt as the devil, and half the contrivances of modern life are devised for its

removal. It has a remarkable ability to stick. It is subtle as sin and finds its way into the smallest crevices of our habitations. It uses all our modern conveniences for its own ends, takes special delight in the furnace, makes its bed in the velvet carpet and damask chairs, and claims every costliest and choicest thing as its special property. Whoever has these elegant furnishings must pay the price. We cannot engraft the simplicity of the old time on the complex order of the new. Whoever has carpets must shake them, and curtains will fade and gilt will wear off and China will break. There may be too much fussing and fretting about the matter, but the matter itself is wholesome. Now and then a housewife has cleanliness on the brain, and wears out her gloves with scouring, and scrubs all the paint off her doors, and keeps the furniture of her parlor standing in such mathematical order that each article looks like a sentinel and almost seems to ache from standing in one posture so long. But these women are so exceptional that they are studied as curiosities and their houses are inspected as a sort of cross between a museum and a sepul-

chre. Use has got the better of looks. The average American home to-day is a place to live in and make the heart glad, and not a place to look at and clean every six months and be miserable in all the rest of the year.

The other day a Jerseyman was observed standing in Wall Street gazing very earnestly at one of those hairless Chinese canines which are so much admired by dog connoisseurs. Near Jersey was a rampant crowd of brokers. Jersey looked at them and then at the "dorg." "I say, mister," said he, speaking to a gorgeously robed Bull, whose hands were filled with stock lists—"I say, does that dorg belong to you?" Bull nodded distantly. "Yaas? well, I thort so." "What made you think that 'dorg' belonged to me?" "Well, I wasn't so edasotly sure he belonged to you, but I was certain the dorg has had dealin's with you or some of your friends." "Why so?" says Bull, getting excited. "Cause he's so close shaved; there ain't a hair on 'im." Broker walked away, whistling the Rogue's March.



P EASANT RECOLLECTIONS OF FRENCH BOARDING-SCHOOL LIFE.

Some of the happiest moments of my life have been passed in a French boarding-school dining-room. There, under the eye of the schoolmaster, dressed in his greasy robes, the unwashed scholars, with unkempt hair, fill themselves with tasteless food served up by filthy servants. A bad boy placed in a pillory at the table of "disgrace," eats his allowance of dry bread, while another bad boy seated in a kind of pulpit is reading in a nasal twang the "Lives of the Saints," or some other book of that class. It was a jolly life, I tell you.



"A REAL EASTER AMUSEMENT."

"MASTER IS VERY SORRY, MA'AM, BUT HE'S GOT SUCH A DREAFFUL TOOTHACHE HE CAN'T SEE ANY PATIENTS TO-DAY!"



THE TALKERS IN THE STALLS.

First Patron of the Drama. SHEN A—TRING BEFORE, A—? Second Ditto. YA—AS—'BOUT FORTY TIMES A—. First Ditto. SO HAVE I—A—. Second Ditto. BY JOVE! WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? First ditto. DASHED IF I KNOW!—A—NEVER LISTENED.