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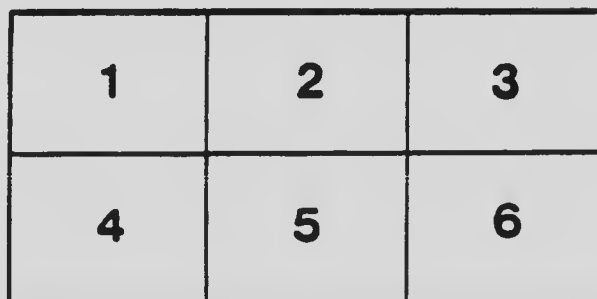
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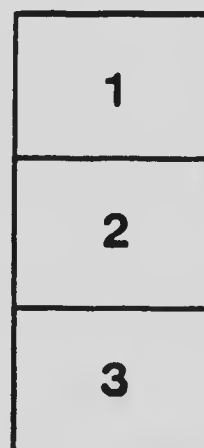
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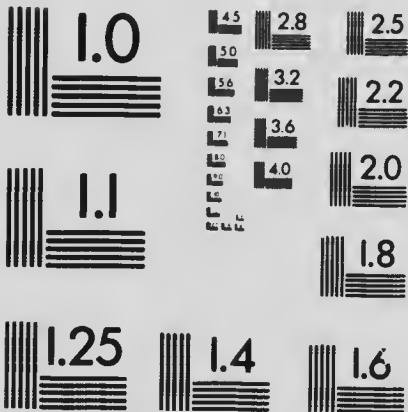
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A WELSH SINGER



Allen Raine



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A Welsh Singer

A Novel

BY

ALLEN RAINE

Author of "Torn Sails," "By Berwen Banks," "Garthowen," "A Welsh Witch," "On the Wings of the Wind," "Hearts of Wales," etc.

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CONTENTS



CHAP.	PAGE
I. ABERSETHIN SLOPES	I
II. THE SHIP INN	14
III. PRACTISING	24
IV. GLYNNE AND GWLADYS	28
V. HOPES FULFILLED	35
VI. THE EISTEDDFOD	46
VII. OGO WYLOFEN	56
VIII. SHADOWS	65
IX. CATRIN'S TACTICS	73
X. PARTING	86
XI. TEA AT THE SHIP INN	93
XII. NEWS FROM ROME	109
XIII. DEPARTURE	113
XIV. EDUCATION	125
XV. TOM'S LOVE	137
XVI. VISIT TO THE WEST END	143
XVII. OLD MEMORIES	153
XVIII. A DISCOVERY	160
XIX. OLD FRIENDS	169
XX. GOOD-BYE TO THE CIRCUS	180
XXI. SULTAN AND TOM	188
XXII. SINGING TOGETHER	195
XXIII. AN UNEXPECTED MEETING	203
XXIV. TUNEFUL ECHOES	215

CHAP.	PAGE
XXV. ONE ABSENT - . . .	225
XXVI. THE DEATH CHAMBER - . . .	236
XXVII. THE FUNERAL - . . .	248
XXVIII. THE DINNER PARTY - . . .	259
XXIX. A MORNING RIDE - . . .	267
XXX. THE WEST END - . . .	282
XXXI. RECALLING THE PAST - . . .	292
XXXII. THE BALL - . . .	301
XXXIII. A CONDITIONAL PROMISE - . . .	315
XXXIV. TOM POMFREY - . . .	333
XXXV. RECOGNITION - . . .	342

A WELSH SINGER.

CHAPTER I.

ABERSETHIN SLOPES.

"ALL on a wild March morning," on the rocky west coast of Wales, the sun, not yet risen, was beginning to flush the pale eastern sky. The wind, which had blown all night with the force of a hurricane, was gradually subsiding into fitful gusts, driving the dry sand and foam up to the long grass and rushes that bordered the shore of Abersethin Bay.

On the left the broad sea still heaved and tossed, as if in angry remembrance of the last night's stormy wind; on the right rose the two hills called Moel Mynach and Moel Hiraethog, which stood like sentinels overlooking the bay. Between them stretched a sandy beach, down the middle of which ran the little river Sethin. On the slope of Moel Mynach a boy and a girl were standing in earnest conversation, and evidently in some distress, for the tears ran down the girl's face, and the boy looked grave and serious.

"Don't cry, Mifanwy," he said "It's no good crying; the sheep is gone; there it is at the bottom of

the cliff, as dead as a red herring, and we've got to go and tell the master."

"Oh! what will I do? what will I do?" wailed the girl, with a fresh burst of tears. "He will beat me again, Ieuan, for this is the second I have lost this year."

"Didn't thee count them last night?"

"Yes, indeed, and they were all there;" and she leaned over the edge of the crag to take another look at the dead sheep. "Oh, poor thing, poor thing!"

"What if I tell him it was one of my sheep? I'm not afraid of his beating," said the boy.

"Oh, no, Ieuan, it would be a lie; and besides, thee would get the beating, and that would be worse than anything."

"Stop a bit!" said Ieuan, running his sunburnt hands through his brown curls in puzzled thought. "Let's call Robert the Mill to watch the sheep while we are away;" and in another moment he was half way down the hill, running towards the old mill that stood at the bottom. He soon returned, followed by Robert, a good-natured lout of fourteen. "We'll soon be back," said Ieuan; "now come along, Mifanwy;" and, with a few parting injunctions to Topper, the sheep dog, they made their way hand in hand over the brow of the hill towards a large white house—half farm-house, half mansion—where John Powys, their master and the owner of the sheep, lived.

The cold morning wind followed them up the hill, ruffling their hair and wrapping Mifanwy's ragged blue skirt round her thin form. Her bare feet were small and well formed, but abnormally dark in hue; the skin of her face and hands, too, had been so scorched and browned by the sun and wind, that one might easily imagine her to belong to some southern race. Her companion was a year older than herself and a good deal taller. Hurrying along, helped forward by the strong sea wind, they reached their destination all too soon for Mifanwy, who hung

back timidly when they reached the back door of the house and looked into the kitchen, where the servants were just sitting down to their breakfast of milk porridge and barley bread.

"I want to see the master," said the boy, standing sturdily at the door.

"Want to see the master?" said a rough, hard voice from a dark passage, through which John Powys was entering the kitchen. He always came in at meal times, and never failed to cast a furtive glance round the table to see that there was no surreptitious slice of cheese or smear of butter on the bread. He was not wholly without good looks; indeed, by the young girls of the village he was called "a handsome man"; but his eyes looked cunning and shifty, and his large mouth disclosed a row of teeth, which, though white and even, had a cruel look. His figure was firmly knit, and his hands, seasoned by manual labour, looked hard and strong as sledge hammers.

"What! both of you here?" he cried in Welsh, when he saw the girl's shrinking figure; "and what's to become of the sheep? Do I pay you threepence a day to wander about, you rascal! and you, you hussy, what do you want here? Don't I pay you twopence a day to watch my sheep? Is it any wonder they stray and die while you are loitering about the country?"

Ieuan took a step backwards as the angry man advanced, but still stood valiantly before Mifanwy.

"Robert the Mill and Topper are watching them, sir," he answered, "and we have only come to tell you that another sheep has fallen over the cliff. Mifanwy counted them last night, but she must have counted wrong; she is very sorry, sir, and so am I."

"Sorry, indeed!" roared John Powys in a voice of fury. "I'll make you sorry before I have done with you!" and, turning on his heel, he retraced his steps through the dark passage, and, standing at the foot of

an old staircase, called out, "Laissabeth, Laissabeth, bring me my strap."

There were a few moments of waiting, while Laissabeth was heard moving about on the uncarpeted floor above; she soon appeared, however, holding in her hand a leather strap with a brass buckle at one end. She was a girl of about the age of Mifanwy, at whom she looked with a malicious smile.

"Now stand off," said her uncle, "and let me give her a taste of the strap."

The servants all stood up, looking frightened and serious, while Mifanwy, running a few steps in terror, gave the tyrant, as he thought, a good opportunity for the first stroke; but he was balked, for, before the buckle had fallen on the ragged blue frock, Ieuan had sprung forward and covered the small thin body with his sturdier form, so that the strap descended upon him only. She struggled to free herself and bear her own punishment, while he tried his best to shield her.

"There! get up, you tramps!" said the master at last, "and go back to your work; and you, John Ellis, follow after and skin the sheep. And, look here, you two brats," he continued, "look here, if one more of my sheep dies, as sure as God is in heaven I will get rid of you both and send you to Caer Madoc Workhouse," and, shaking his fist at the children, he re-entered the house.

When he had disappeared, Laissabeth approached the boy and the girl, who stood panting against the old elder tree on whose branches the hens and turkeys slept at night, and which formed a thick porch over the back door. She was dressed in a pink cotton frock—which, in Mifanwy's eyes, was the height of grandeur and fashion—and held her straw hat in her hand; she had no need to wear it, for neither wind nor sun ever seemed to affect the dazzling whiteness of her skin. Her golden hair hung down her back in two long plaits; her blue eyes and dimpled face were generally wreathed in smiles, but now the eyes looked

tearful and the face pale. She drew her soft white fingers tenderly over Ieuan's sunburnt hands, and the tears, which he had hitherto restrained, started to his eyes.

"Oh, Ieuan bach!"¹ she cried, taking no notice of Mifanwy, who stood by silent with a sullen look on her dark face, "art hurt? Why didn't thee leave Mifanwy to bear her own punishment? It was all her fault; oh dear, oh dear!" and the tears began to fall with long-drawn sobs.

"Hurt! no, not a bit," said Ieuan, rubbing his shoulder; "so don't cry, and spoil thy pretty eyes. Mifanwy and I will go back to Moel Mynach; only give us a hunch of bread, for we have had no breakfast."

She ran into the kitchen, and soon re-appeared with a piece of barley bread, a slice of cheese, and a tin jug of milk, which she pressed into Ieuan's hands.

"Here, here, take them," she said, "and don't show thyself to my uncle."

The food was meant for the boy alone, a fact which Mifanwy fully realised; but Ieuan, unconscious of it, accepted the provisions gratefully, and, with a backward glance of thanks to Laissabeth, took Mifanwy by the hand, and they began their way towards the brow of the hill.

"Wert hurt, Mifanwy?" he asked.

"No," answered the girl, "not at all." Then flinging herself down on the grassy side of the road, she broke into a flood of tears, that Ieuan tried in vain to stem. At last, exhausted with the passion of her grief, she lay silent and subdued, her dark face and swollen eyelids making her look the picture of misery. Ieuan tempted her with the bread and cheese, but she would not touch them.

"Some milk, then, or thou wilt faint," said the boy, holding the jug to her lips; but she pushed it roughly away, and sprang to her feet with flashing eyes.

¹ Bach—dear.

"Drink it thyself," she said; "it is for thee. I was not hurt, and want no pity."

The boy's healthy appetite asserted itself in spite of bruised arms and shoulders; so, sitting down on the wild thyme, he began his breakfast, ceasing only when there was nothing left to eat, Mifanwy standing by, struggling silently with the pangs of hunger, and still more with the fiercer pangs that were gnawing at her heart. She had seen on Laissabeth's face, while the girl was handing the strap to her uncle, a vindictive look of pleasure—of pleasure, however, that had been quickly changed to pain when Ieuan had interposed to shield his companion, and the memory of that look had aroused in Mifanwy a bitter feeling of jealousy and anger. The children had been playmates and companions on the green hillsides from their earliest childhood; but gradually, as Laissabeth had grown older, she had begun to realise her importance as the niece of the rich and miserly John Powys. She had frequently wounded the proud and sensitive nature of the little shepherdess, sometimes by ignoring her altogether, sometimes by assailing her with ridicule and taunts; and the feeling of anger, that had by degrees taken the place of childish affection in the girl's heart, had culminated this morning in a feeling of bitter antagonism.

Meanwhile, Robert the Mill had been longing to be relieved of his charge. He had been seized with giddiness, and that sickening dread which sometimes attacks a mountain climber suddenly and unaccountably; and, when Ieuan and Mifanwy returned to their sheep, he was clinging to a broom bush in abject terror.

"It's a horrid place," he said sulkily, "and it's a wicked wind that blows up here. I thought I was quite safe, because the wind blew in from the sea, but, instead of that, it blew straight up against the cliff, and then rushed back at me as if it wanted to push me off. Come to the mill when thee likes

Ieuan, but don't ask me to watch the sheep again," and off he went, grumbling audibly down the hill.

"Well, indeed, he is quite right," said Mifanwy, smiling. "I have often felt, when the wind blows hard from the sea, as if it came back to me angrily and tried to push me off."

"Oh, yes, I have had to fight with it like a living creature sometimes," said Ieuan; "but whoop! I must go, Mifanwy; just see those sheep trailing down towards the valley; I will come back this evening after supper," and Mifanwy was soon left alone without a human voice or face to cheer her solitude. She went to the edge of the cliff, and looked down sorrowfully at the dead sheep. Its companions were all browsing peacefully on the hillside, cropping the short herbage and walking the dangerous paths, in brute unconsciousness of the gap in their ranks that death had made.

Gradually the sun came up over the hill and began to gild the "slopes"; the wild thyme and the gorse sent up their incense to greet him, the sea peeped out bravely from their grey-green tufts, the sea below sparkled and glinted in the new-born radiance, and the gulls sailed about like flecks of snow. Looking across the valley, Mifanwy, her keen eyes accustomed to long distances, could distinctly see Ieuan lying on the grass; she knew well that before him stood a block of the soft slaty rock of the neighbourhood, and that from it he was carving with rude tools one of the shapes of beauty that came continually into his head, and that never left him a moment's peace until his hands had formed them. He was a sculptor born; from babyhood it had been his soul's delight to mould and carve from any substance—clay, or stone, or wood—imitations of the things of simple beauty he saw around him. At first his models had been the bowls and platters in ordinary use in his thatched home; later, the sheep and horses, and even the pigs, had been either carved or moulded.

Many a time had Mifanwy rescued from the "midden," that leaned comfortably against the sunny garden hedge, the treasures of carving that Shân, their foster-mother, did not appreciate, and carried them surreptitiously into the loft, where she had ranged them upon a high rough shelf that ran round the attic apportioned to the two children. And to-day, while she watched him lying on the grass, his sheep dog, Juno, sitting beside him, she knew he was deeply intent upon a group he had been carving for some time past.

As the long day wore away, the sun seemed to gather strength and heat, and every little flower and blade of grass held up its head, rejoicing, and singing to those who had ears to hear, "Spring is coming! spring is here!" Gradually every cloud disappeared, and after a day of brilliant shining, the sun set behind the sea like a ball of fire, making a crimson pathway, over which Mifanwy and Topper gazed in silence. The silence was broken ere long by the girl's crooning, in a low tone, one of the old pathetic hymns of her nation, that must surely have been caught by her ancestors from the sound of the wind as it whistled over their bleak moors, or sighed through their deep forests in the early ages, so closely do some of the melodies imitate its weird and mournful tones. The crooning was liquid and musical, and as the girl sat leaning against a broom bush, her hands folded listlessly on her lap, her beautiful eyes—so dark, that they seemed to throw a brown shade on her cheek—fixed dreamily upon the sea, her red lips parted, showing the white and even teeth, the body all so calm and motionless, the spirit welling forth in living, thrilling tones, one might well imagine that, for the time, the spirit of music had entered her frame and was controlling it. The exciting events of the day had ruffled the usual calmness of her simple life, and in all such experience, whether of sorrow or of joy, her feelings found vent in song, sometimes mournful and

wailing, sometimes rising into joyful and exuberant strains.

The cottagers in the valley below were well acquainted with these bursts of song, and the intense love of music, characteristic of their nation, caused them to listen with delight, and often to drop their occupations and run out of doors, the better to hear the clear and powerful notes that echoed between the high cliffs and mountain crags.

"What has upset Mifanwy to-day?" they would exclaim, or, "Caton pawb!¹ what is it pleases Mifanwy to-day?" Robert the Mill especially was much influenced by the differing tones of her voice; when the melody was wailing and sad, he stood at the doorway looking mournfully up to Moel Mynach; but when the tones were jubilant and cheerful, he whistled at his work, keeping time with the clap, clap, clap of the mill. As for Ieuan, the usual effect upon him was to bring him racing over the sands, and up the side of the hill, singing while he came.

The sun had quite disappeared, the sea had changed into lovely shades of violet and pink, and Mifanwy still sang on. She turned to look over the long reach of sands towards Moel Hiraethog, and saw that Ieuan was gathering his flock into the fold with the help of Juno, whose short yaps came clear and distinct upon the evening air. She ceased her singing, and Topper was instantly on the alert.

"Hol y defaid!² Topper," she said, and the dog, nothing loth, was soon scouring hither and thither, and driving before him every stray sheep and wandering lamb. Mifanwy scrutinised them narrowly as they passed into the fold, and fastening the hurdles with extra care, seated herself once more upon the wild thyme. She saw the fishing boats lower their sails as they drew into the beach below; she saw the glowing

¹ An exclamation of astonishment, as, "good gracious!"

² "Fetch the sheep!"

tints of sunset fade into the cold, grey shadows of evening; she saw Ieuan, followed by Juno, turning his steps towards Maen Powys, their master's home, and she knew it was supper-time, and she was hungry; but still she sat on and watched the sheep in the fold. As it grew darker, the moon looked down over the hill-top, and the cold March wind blew fitfully around her; but still she kept her post, until, at last, Ieuan came shouting down the mountain-side.

"Hoi! hoi! Mifanwy, where art, girl? Art not going home to-night?" And when he drew nearer, she saw with pleasure that his wallet looked filled out, and that he carried a jug in his hand. She stretched out her own hands eagerly.

"What is it?" she asked. "I know thee wouldst bring my supper!"

"Bwdran it is," said Ieuan, producing wooden spoon and bowl from his wallet, and pouring out the contents of his jug. "And bread and cheese, Mifanwy; but why didn't thee come up to supper? Laissabeth was away, too. John Powys laughed when he saw thou wert missing. 'She's afraid of the strap,' he said, 'and quite right, too.' But I brought thee thy share in spite of him!"

"Yes, and more," said the girl, beginning to eat; then with a sigh she added, "but he is right, Ieuan, I am afraid of 'he strap.'"

"Afraid of the strap?" said Ieuan, looking down at her with astonishment; "didn't thee say thee did not feel it a bit? Didn't I keep every blow from thee?"

"Yes," said Mifanwy, "but indeed, indeed, Ieuan, I felt it worse than any beating he has ever given me. When I heard the blows fall thick on thee, I felt them, oh! I felt them more than if they had fallen on my own flesh."

"Well, indeed, Mifanwy," said Ieuan, "thou art a strange girl, and ungrateful into the bargain, after all I bore for thee!" And, taking off his jacket, he held

his bare arm close to her face, endeavouring to show her the bruises in the fading light.

"Wait till to-morrow," he said indignantly, "and I'll show thee my back, all bruised and swollen; and feel this cut on my head; and, after all, to say thee felt it more than ever!"

"Well, Ieuan, it is true!" rejoined Mifanwy, "and thee must never do it again."

"I won't," said Ieuan, nodding his head; "but thee art an odd girl. Now, see Laissabeth! how tender she was; she smoothed my hand with her little white fingers. I have promised to get her a sea-gull's egg to-morrow."

Mifanwy sighed. "Thee'st very fond of Laissabeth?" she said.

"Well, indeed! she's so pretty, and so kind. *She* wouldn't be ungrateful."

Mifanwy sighed again, and looked pensively at her brown feet.

"Art coming home?" asked Ieuan.

"No," replied Mifanwy; "thee can tell Ianto and Shân I'll be home to-morrow night; but to-night I must watch the sheep."

Ieuan, still sulky, took his crook, and began his way over the right shoulder of the hill; but, before he had gone far, he turned round and called through the darkness, "Mifanwy! art afraid here by thyself? Shall I stay with thee?"

Mifanwy was crying softly in the darkness, and could only answer with a shake of the head, that Ieuan, of course, could not hear or see; so he stalked away, leaving her to her solitude.

It was not the first night she had spent beneath the stars, but she had never before begun her vigil with a heart so heavy.

She sat on the mountain-side, and her thoughts reverted to the events of the morning, and the fiery Welsh blood kindled within her. Topper sat beside her, with his tongue hanging out and his eyes half closed.

"I *did* count the sheep last night, and they were all right, Topper, and I fastened the hundle carefully; some wicked person came and unfastened it, somebody who hated me, Topper." The dog licked her face, and, putting her arm round his neck, she drew him close to her side. "Who did it, Topper? Nobody hates me but Laissabeth; *she did it!*" cried the girl, starting to her feet, her brown eyes flashing, and her dark face flushing a deep red with her suspicion. "It was Laissabeth, Topper; nobody else in the world would be so wicked; to-night we'll catch her." Topper pricked his ears, and stood up ready for action. "We'll watch, Topper, and we'll catch her, and thou shalt seize her, and then we'll tell Ieuan, and he'll never like her again."

And, sitting down once more beside her dog, she fell into a deep reverie, in which she pictured herself detecting her enemy red-handed, and exposing her to Ieuan's withering contempt. On and on in the still watches of the night she sat with wide open eyes, and, when the night grew colder, she brought from the hut built on the hillside, as a shelter for the shepherds, an old red cloak that had served her in many a storm; wrapping it around her, she crouched again, a weird little dark figure in the shadow of a stunted hawthorn. Suddenly she started, her eyes opened wider, and she stared with a quivering excitement, which Topper shared in every muscle; for they saw the silent, stealthy figure of a girl making her way round the shoulder of the hill. At a turning in the path, the moonlight caught her head and shoulders, and Laissabeth stood revealed. For a moment a look of vindictive satisfaction glowed in Mifanwy's eyes, and both she and the dog seemed to be steadying themselves for a spring upon the unconscious enemy.

"Down, Topper; lie down and watch."

Topper obeyed, and, with his nose on the ground between his two front paws, lay motionless, with eyes and ears alert. Mifanwy, too, watched silently,

but while she watched, a gradual change came over her face.

"How dreadful to catch her in the very act, how ashamed she will be ; and I—I shall be ashamed, too, and Ieuan will be unhappy and ashamed for Laissabeth. No, no, I will not." And, restraining Topper's frantic efforts to rush away, she began in loud, clear tones to sing one of her mountain songs. Laissabeth heard, and knew that Mifanwy was still with her sheep. Immediately she checked her steps, and retired as quickly as she could into the shadow of the hill ; and while Mifanwy still sang and watched her, she passed round the edge of the hill, and disappeared from view. Gradually Mifanwy's song died away in trembling tones, and ended in a burst of sobs.

"Cruel, bad girl, how I hate her !" she cried ; " but I will never tell Ieuan ; it would make him so unhappy, and he must go on liking her." At last she turned towards the shepherd's hut, followed sulkily by Topper, who was evidently disgusted at the tame ending to his night watch. In one corner of the hut a heap of heather was spread, and on this Mifanwy stretched herself, wrapped in an old red cloak, Topper lying at her feet. The day's events had tired her out, and she was soon sleeping the sleep of youth and innocence.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHIP INN.

AT one end of the village of Abersethin, where the roadway or village street lost itself in the sandy grass and loose stones which bordered the shore, stood The Ship Inn. There was no occasion to go any farther, for there was nothing beyond it but rough grass and sea holly, mixed with clumps of seaweed; so it stood defiantly across the road, looking straight down the straggling street, its low doorway always open, its small windows overshadowed by its thickly thatched roof. They were not made to open, but there was no necessity for this, for all the doors remained unclosed from morning to night, and the large open chimneys provided sufficient ventilation without the modern luxury of sash windows.

The place reeked of the sea. Every door in the house was coated with tar; the floor, which was paved with round cobble stones set in a diagonal pattern, was swept out every morning with a hard broom of heath blossoms, and freshly covered with sand, which Betto, the maid-of-all-work, fetched in her apron from the shore. Before the day was over this sand had become so saturated with beer, the droppings from the jugs, the glasses and "blues," that the air was always pervaded by a mingled odour of sour beer, seaweed, and tar, that permeated the air of the whole place, and when the wind blew from the south, reached to the farther end of the village.

The children grew up in that odour, and, in after years, whenever, in distant ports, the same kind of

scent reached their noses, it brought back to the sailors' minds the old dark kitchen at The Ship Inn, with its wide, open chimney, up which the peat fire sent its circling blue smoke, and where, hanging above its glowing embers, the huge crock of "cawl" sent its appetising odour through the house, or the kettle hissed and sang its cheerful song in readiness for the cosy tea.

On each side of the open hearth stood settles of black and shining oak, on one of which sat, when she was not trotting about, Catrin Howells, the landlady, and the patron saint of half the male inhabitants of Abersethin. It cannot be said that she was such a favourite with the female half of the community, although they always came to her in any trouble or grievance, always to find a ready ear and a sympathising heart; but there was a lurking jealousy of her; her cheerful fire and excellent "home-brewed" ale were too attractive; she was too prosperous, too content; her brewings always turned out excellent, and clear as crystal; her bread was known to be the best in the village, and, moreover, she had no children to worry her! In fact, Catrin Howells, in the opinion of her female friends, was unfairly exempt from the ordinary troubles of womankind. She was sixty years of age, but was still bonny and comely, her teeth even and white; her hair, though sprinkled with gray, abundantly filled out her high frilled cap; and, although she did not trip about her household duties with the youthful agility of former years, she still trotted nimbly up and down. Her once slim figure had now grown stout, so stout, indeed, that her apron string was a myth. Her shoulders and ample bosom were covered with the loose shawl of the Welsh costume, and as she sat on one side of the hearth, directing Betto in loud, but pleasant, tones, her husband from the opposite settle would look across at her with confidence and admiration. Dan Howells was seldom heard to utter a word, but sat hour after hour,

day after day, in the chimney corner, a long clay pipe in his mouth, and an empty glass on the little round table beside him. It was empty, because, under Catrin's firm rule, it was filled only four times in the day, when its contents were swallowed at a gulp. On his head he always wore a tall black hat of the sort generally known as "chimney-pot," bruised and battered in every direction, but still his inseparable companion; he appeared in it the first thing in the morning, and at night, when his palsied legs carried him out of the sanded kitchen, he still wore it. The kitchen had been unaccountably empty for ten minutes, and Catrin was congratulating herself on the opportunity for a nap, when John Powys entered.

"A glass of beer, Catrin," he said, seating himself near Dan Howells.

"Well, indeed," said Catrin, "I am glad to see you; where have you been so long?" And she filled his glass, Dan's also, which was instantly emptied, and replaced on the table.

"Everything is going to the bad, Catrin," said John Powys, shaking his head.

Catrin gave a long, low whistle, and laughingly exclaimed: "Caton pawb!"

"You may laugh," he said, "but you wouldn't like to have your sheep dying as mine have been lately."

"Have they indeed? Poor things! what has been the matter with them?"

"Oh, those two devils of children, my shepherd and shepherdess, have let them fall over the cliffs."

"What! Mifanwy and Ieuan?" said Catrin; "I shouldn't have thought that of them."

"They are two troublesome brats, and I shall send them both to Caer Madoc Workhouse one of these days."

"Oh, no, you won't, John Powys; I was thinking about the boy last night."

"Never mind the boy thou art always talking

about him ; I never knew thou wert so fond of boys, Catrin."

"I am fond of that one," said Catrin. "Another glass?"

"No, no, no more," he said, "one's enough;" and he pulled out of his pocket a canvas bag, from which he extracted slowly two pennies, which he placed ungraciously on the table.

"Nonsense, man!" said Catrin, placing bread and cheese and golden butter before him; "put back your money and make a good supper; I am not going to charge you anything, for your mother was a good mistress to me till I was twenty years of age; sit down, man, and let us have a little talk before customers come in."

Her visitor did not relish the prospect of a "little talk," but could not resist the temptation of another glass of beer "for nothing," and he at once applied himself to the bread and cheese.

"Well," said Catrin, "I was thinking of that boy a great deal last night; wasn't I, Dan?"

"H'm!" grunted Dan, "thee was talking about him a great deal."

"Well, it was exactly fifteen years ago last night; I was sitting here late in the evening, when I knew, by the clinking and shouting in the harbour, that the *Aden y don* had come in. I knew she was expected to bring a cargo of slates from Caernarfon, and I went out to the door to welcome the men. It was a good while before the 'trwp' of men who had landed in the small boat came up the street, and I couldn't think what made them so slow, and surprised I was indeed, when they reached the door, to see a woman amongst them; she walked as if she were weak and weary, and, in her long black cloak, which covered her from head to foot, and her pale face all wet with the spray, I thought I had never seen such a forlorn-looking creature. I gave the woman a warm welcome, though she came in such a strange manner,

and I warmed his feet and tied up her hair. She sat there in that very chair you are in now, and leant her elbow on the table. I can see her now," continued Catrin, fixing a far-away look on John Powys, who winced uncomfortably, and moved closer to Dan. "At first she would not let me unfasten her cloak, but when all the men had cleared out, for it was late, and old Dan there was nodding more than usual, well! then she let me take off her wet cloak, and then it was I saw by her condition that she was in need of more care and attention than she could have had on board the *Aden y don*. 'Caton pawb! woman,' I said—"

"There, there, that will do," said John Powys, rising, "a pretty thing if I were to listen to the history of every tramp and beggar who passes through Aber-*sethin*." And he approached the door with the intention of leaving.

But Catrin was not to be baulked of her intended "little talk." She placed her ample person between him and the doorway.

"Twt! twt! John Powys, you must listen to *this* story. At least, there is something in it that may interest you. Sit down!"

Her visitor seemed spell-bound, and sat down again, though unwillingly.

"Well, well, make haste with thy gossip," he said, "for I must be going. The wind is rising, and remember I have to ride round the Devil's Elbow."

"Well," continued Catrin, "I nursed that woman for three weeks. I killed my fattest fowls for her, and got fresh milk and eggs from Morfa for her; and a sweet creature she was. So gentle, so patient, so pretty. But *close*, John Powys, but close as *you*. I could get nothing out of her except that she wanted to reach Maen Powys. 'Dost know John Powy's my girl?' I said."

"Yes," she said, "I knew him well, and he was always kind to me. He has a kind heart at bottom,

and he will be glad to see me; I am sure he will."

"Well, after three weeks' nursing, we got her into the cart, and Will Bullet drove her away, wrapped in her cloak, and right sorry I was to see her go; but, before she went, John Powys, she asked for pen and ink and some paper, and she wrote a letter, sitting at that little table: she folded it and sealed it."

At this point Catrin's visitor began to get uneasy.

"What has all this to do with me?" he snapped, bringing his fist down heavily on the little table, and causing the glasses to jingle.

Catrin, not at all abashed, drew nearer, and brought her fat fist down on the other side of the table.

"Perhaps nothing, John Powys! perhaps a great deal. But listen! When she had finished writing, she handed the letter to me. Didn't she, Dan?"

Another grunt from Dan.

"'I feel very ill, Catrin,' she said, 'and I don't know what may happen to me before I reach Maen Powys. I may die, I may be unable to speak; but, should anything happen to me, and should I not be able to get speech of John Powys, I trust you to give him this letter. Will you promise?' I gave her my word, and, had she not succeeded in seeing you, I would have kept my promise."

John Powys' mouth was dry and parched. "Have done, woman," he said, "and bring out my horse, for I must be going."

"Betto! bring out his horse!" she cried. "I have only a few words more. When I came in from the doorway, after the poor girl had started in that rough, trundling cart, I went straight back to the dresser to take up her letter, which I had placed there on the shelf, but it was a boisterous afternoon, and the letter was thin, and before I could lay hold of it, the wind had caught it and blown it behind that board. I could still see the corner of it, but, in trying to get it up, I only pushed it further down, and there it is still."

You never got that letter, for I heard from Will Bullet that the poor girl had got out of the cart as soon as Maen Powys was in sight, and that *you*, coming along under the trees, had met her, and when he turned his cart back you were talking together."

John Powys stood up, and gathered his gloves and his whip from the chair beside him; he was a little less florid than usual, but, with his furtive eyes and thin, compressed lips, looked more cruel and secret than ever.

"Is that all?" he said. "Catrin, thou'rt getting garrulous in thine old age."

"That's all!" said Catrin, "except this, John Powys, if you do not treat that lad well you *shall* receive that letter, if I have to pull down every stick and rafter of the old house to get it."

With these words ringing in his ears, John Powys mounted his horse and rode away, taking a narrow bridle path that made a short cut over the bleak moor that lay between Maen Powys and Abersethin. Here in a rounded hollow of the mountain-side, Ianto and Shân Morgan's thatched cottage lay ensconced, built on one side of a small basin, whose other sides formed the garden and the yard. At a little distance nothing of it could be seen but its roof and chimney, from which the blue peat smoke was generally curling. Here they had lived ever since their marriage, thirty years before. They had no children of their own, but, for all that, had brought up a large family; three stalwart men now sailing on distant seas, looked back to their thatched hut as their happy home, and no less than four ruddy-faced farm girls found their way there whenever they had a holiday, for there they had been nursed and watched over with the tenderness and care they would otherwise have missed. Shân eked out her scanty livelihood by taking to her arms and heart any little unfortunate who, having come into this cold world uninvited, and with no legal right to expect a welcome, was

handed over to her, and, thenceforth, except for an occasional surreptitious visit from its shame-faced mother, was left entirely to her tender upbringing until it should be old enough to be sent to sea, or to a farmer to act as shepherd or shepherdess, or to help in the fields and gardens. Then was poor Shân's heart troubled, and many a journey did the kind-hearted woman take, over cliff and moor or ploughed field, one child wrapped in her red "mantle," while the other trotted beside her, to visit the little brother or sister who had just left the warm nest to forage for itself. Then she would sit down by the hedge-side, and the little home-sick child would rush to her arms, rubbing the tears away with its earthy fingers, to be comforted with a large slice of barley bread and butter, thickly spread over with brown sugar.

On a stormy night in March fifteen years before, John Powys had sent for her, and, leading the way to the barn, had pointed to a little morsel of humanity lying asleep on the bed of hay, not far from his dead mother; and Shân's heart had leapt up at once towards the little helpless creature.

"Hast any children to nurse now?" the morose man had asked, apparently unmoved by the sad spectacle before him.

"No, sir!" Shân had answered, with a curtsy, "and I did not mean to take another; I am getting too old to take proper care of them now, but oh, the little one—*druan bach*¹! I can't leave him here, if you will pay me, sir. And who was she?" nodding towards the straight, still form, over which a sheet had been laid.

"Do you think I know every tramp that comes here?" John Powys had replied; "any way, I want to get rid of the brat; perhaps it would be better to send it to the workhouse."

"Oh no, no," Shân had said, and gently lifting the sleeping child, had murmured, "Come then, little one,

¹ Poor fellow!

come to Shân, and thou shalt not miss thy mother; and a fine boy he is, too!" she had added, "and a heavy one."

"There, take him away, and don't bother me; I will pay thee every month, and thou canst have as much milk as thou wantest from Maen Powys."

Shân had carried the child gently towards the silent form, and, turning the sheet down from the face, had laid the little red cheek of the boy on the pale lips of the mother. "There, poor thing, let he have one kiss from her baby before she is buried."

"Thou art an old fool, Shân." And John Powys had taken the candle hastily towards the door, so that Shân had had to hurry after him or be left in the gloomy barn with the dead woman.

"Yes, I am an old fool, I know," she had muttered, while she wrapped the child warmly in her red mantle and took her road back over the moor to her cottage, where Ianto, wondering, had been waiting for her return. When she had loosened the baby from its warm coverings, Ianto had made a show of grumbling, though in truth he had from the first guessed what Shân would bring with her on her return, for he was accustomed to these sudden messages.

"I thought thou wert never going to nurse another child," he had grunted.

"Oh, but see him, see him, Ianto!" had cried the woman, unfolding the little warm bundle, and crooning over it; "see his fine limbs, and his big hand; oh! a fine man he will make some day; and be a comfort to us in our old age. The house has seemed empty the last few years since Siencyn went to sea."

And so the little waif had been taken into this warm home of love, and had grown and thriven to Shân's satisfaction. A year afterwards another little helpless orphan had been added to the family circle, for on the further side of the hill stood a small farm, in which both master and mistress had suddenly been stricken down by a malignant fever, to which both had

succumbed within a few days of each other, leaving behind them their first and only child, barely a month old. After the funeral, the frail girl-baby had been consigned to Shân's care, who had taken her to her ample bosom and to her large heart.

CHAPTER III.

PRACTISING.

FIFTEEN years had passed away, and Ianto and Shân were still strong and healthy, though the wrinkles round Shân's eyes and lips had grown more pronounced, and Ianto's shoulders a little more bent, as he wove his willow baskets in the evening by the peat fire, while her bright knitting-needles clicked as rapidly as of yore.

"Where's the children to-night?" he asked one evening, while Shân was serving out the bowls of cawl from the simmering pot hanging over the fire.

"They ought to be here now," said Shân; "Mifanwy won't stay cu' another night, I should think."

"No; I wonder she's not afraid up there on the mountain, and so near Pemyynydd church! They do say a corpse candle was seen there last night."

"Do they?" said Shân, with bated breath, and turning rather pale. The sea wind, blowing up over the little hollow in which their cottage was built, moaned and whistled eerily in the chimney, and Shân rose to close the door; but, at the moment, a flood of melody swept over the hill on the night breeze. "It is Mifanwy," she said, listening; "oh, anwyl! how the child sings!"

"Yes," he said, pausing with a spoonful of cawl half way to his lips; "she will beat her grandmother one day, and what a singer she was!"

"Ieuan is with her," said Shân; "I hear his voice in the seconds; but he can't sing like Mifanwy. Wh-

a voice like that comes under your roof, there is no more room for howling winds and 'corpse candles.'"

Then Mifanwy's slight form appeared at the door, and the tender woman folded her in a warm embrace

"Where hast been, my singing angel, these two long days and night?"

"On the hillside, mother, watching my sheep. Two have fallen over the cliff, so I feared to leave them last night."

"And for each one Mifanwy was beaten," added Ieuan, sitting down at once to his supper.

"Only once," said Mifanwy, "for the last beating was thy portion, lad."

Shân and Ianto were loud in their sympathy.

"Never mind, mother," said Mifanwy, "we must make haste with our supper. I hear the bell on Ynysoer. Rhys Morgan will be waiting for us."

"Yes, go, my child," said Shân: "I long for the Eisteddfod, that they may hear thee sing; only I do wish it were a Welsh song. I don't know how thy voice will sound in that English gibberish."

The children laughed merrily, then left the house, their bare feet falling noiselessly on the ground, but Mifanwy could be heard singing until they had crossed the Rock Bridge that led from the mainland to the little island of Ynysoer, with its thriving fishing village and its tiny church, built into the side of the rock for safety from the strong sea winds.

When they entered the little porch, they were joined by Laissabeth, who looked rather nervously at Mifanwy, but, finding she made no sign of anger or suspicion, immediately regained her self-possession, and the three children entered the dimly-lighted church together.

The Rev. Rhys Morgan sat at the harmonium waiting for his pupils.

The lamps had been put out, and the church was in darkness except for the light of a flaring candle.

Twice every week he gathered these three children

around him for practice in singing, in preparation for the National Eisteddfod to be held at Caer Madoc in the course of the coming summer. It was a labour of love. Indeed, his whole life amongst the fishing folk of Ynysoer was so.

He drew his hand caressingly over Mifanwy's dark hair while he arranged the music on the harmonium, and, pushing her gently into the background, drew forward Laissabeth, who was in nowise loth to take the lead. She blushed and smiled, and began in clear crystal tones that beautiful aria from "Acis and Galatea," "As when the dove," for the best rendering of which a prize of three guineas had been offered by the Eisteddfod committee, a sum of fabulous wealth to the simple country folk. All over the country young maidens were practising the air; in the farmyards, out in the fields of clover, on the sandy beach; anywhere and everywhere rang out the dulcet melody. But Rhys Morgan thought proudly, and not without reason, that none could rival his two pupils.

Laissabeth pictured the hundreds of faces turned to her with approving smiles, and the thought lent a fresh sparkle to her voice. She sang from beginning to end with perfect self-possession, and Rhys Morgan could not find a fault; the execution was good and the timbre excellent, but where was the soul?

And then Mifanwy began in clear, mellow tones the recitative, "Oh! did'st thou know the pangs of absent love, Acis would ne'er from Galatea roam!" and then poured forth the graceful melody:

"As when the dove laments her love
All on the naked spray,
When he returns—no more she mourns,
But loves the live long day."

It was a voice of most unusual beauty both in tone and expression, not so clear and limpid, perhaps, as Laissabeth's, but with a depth of feeling that could

not fail to strike a responsive chord in every music-loving heart. The pathos of the first part, the returning happiness of the second, were so admirably rendered that when the last words, "Melting murmurs lasting love," died away, the master broke forth in admiration of his pupil :

"Splendid, child!" laying hold of both her nervous, trembling hands. "Delightful! I believe it is the soul of music in you that wears out your little frail body and makes you so thin. When the Eisteddfod is over I advise you to leave off singing for a few years until you are older and stronger."

"Not to sing! Oh, master, I could not live; I should not want to live!"

The master gazed at her kindly, tenderly. "I believe you, child. Good-night."

The lesson was over, and the children were crossing the Rock Bridge together, Laissabeth, as usual, chatting merrily with Ieuan, leaving Mifanwy unnoticed, only sometimes casting a sarcastic look at her frayed blue skirt, bare feet, and tattered hat; but Mifanwy walked on heedless of Laissabeth's airs. Then, having reached home, the boy and girl climbed up the ladder to the loft in which they had slept from babyhood.

It was only a tiny place altogether, and partitioned off into two sleeping rooms; it seemed scarcely large enough for the narrow beds; but health and youth required no rocking, and in a short time Shân from below heard the heavy breathing of the sleepers.

CHAPTER IV.

GLYNNE AND GWLADYS.

IT was a lovely evening in April, the sky flecked with soft, rosy clouds, the air clear and bright, the sound of the surf falling musically on the ear, when Sir Glynne Meredith drove through Abersethin and alighted at The Ship Inn. He was a sculptor, whose name was a household word in the world of art, but down here his chief claim to notoriety lay in the fact that, having been bred and born in the neighbourhood a simple farmer's son, he had now developed into a "rich gentleman from London." About two years before, Sir Ivor Glanarvon of Glanarvon Hall had died, but a short time before his death he had commissioned Sir Glynne to execute for him a marble monument in memory of his wife's father, the late Sir Owen Glanarvon, to be placed in Pemynydd church; and this had necessitated the frequent visits of the sculptor to his old neighbourhood. He had always been a welcomed and honoured guest at the Hall, and though the connection between him and its inmates had been fraught with bitterness in the past, this feeling had been buried deep beneath the surface, and out of it had blossomed a warm friendship.

The monument had been executed to a certain point in Sir Glynne's studio in London, and had been sent down to the Hall in separate blocks, requiring only the finishing touches of the master's own hand. He was a man of about forty years of age, tall and broad-shouldered, and firm of step, with black hair

and heavy moustache, his clear brown complexion and keen black eye betokening good health and a cheerful disposition. He had never married, and many were the conjectures as to the reason ; some people said, " He was difficult to please ;" others said, " He had married a country girl in his youthful days, and had her still hidden away in some out-of-the-way village ;" others thought, " He had been cruelly jilted by some fashionable London belle ;" but Sir Glynne kept his own counsel, and although he knew well why his handsome house in the West End was without a mistress, and ruled over only by Mrs. Jones, his old housekeeper and friend, yet, as said before, he kept his own counsel, and did not look like a broken-hearted man.

Catrin Howells, who had known him as a boy, and had heard with awe and pride of his increasing fame and riches, accorded him a more than usually warm greeting, and brought out her best English, though Sir Glynne spoke Welsh as fluently as on the day of his leaving Wales.

" Well indeed, sir," she said, " there's glad I am to see you."

" Well, Catrin, how are you ?" answered her guest, in good broad Welsh, and shaking her hand warmly ; " can you give me a crust of bread and cheese ?"

" Iss, iss, sir," said Catrin, clinging to her English, for she thought the occasion worthy of the effort ; and she opened the door of her well-sanded parlour.

" Not I," said Sir Glynne, turning on his heel with a laugh ; " you won't lure me into that cold room ; I am going to sit by you, Dan ; and bring me my lunch on this little round table, Catrin."

Dan raised his sunken head for a moment, and grunted, " Glad to see you, sir."

The little table was soon laid, and Catrin's English breaking down altogether, she glided into her native tongue, to Sir Glynne's great relief.

While questions were being asked and news retailed,

a boy entered the kitchen, carrying in his arms something wrapped up in a red cloth.

"Here is Sir Glynne," said Catrin to the boy. "Thou hast been asking for him so often; well, now, here he is; what dost want with him?"

"To show this," said the boy, pulling his forelock, and lifting some heavy object on to the table, and withdrawing its wrappings.

Catrin burst out laughing; the boy blushed to the roots of his hair, and looked anxiously at the visitor.

"Well, my lad," Sir Glynne said kindly, "what have you there? Last time you had a fine bull to show me." And, rising from his seat and putting on a pair of gold eye-glasses, he examined the object of Catrin's merriment, while the boy stood rubbing one brown foot against the other and nervously clasping and unclasping his fingers.

Sir Glynne looked closely at the block of grey stone carving on the table. A dead or dying sheep lay on the ground, and a girl, kneeling on one knee beside it, was looking at it sorrowfully, while a boy with a crook stood by. It was crude in workmanship, faulty in detail, but excellent in design, the girl's figure especially being graceful and delicate, and finished with more care than were the other figures.

Sir Glynne walked back a pace or two, looked at it from another angle, and then, holding the boy by the shoulder, said, "Did any one help you to do that, my lad?"

"No, sir. The stone is bad; it breaks away where I don't want it to break; if I had stone that wouldn't split, I could carve much better."

Sir Glynne sat down to his lunch thoughtfully, while Catrin, with her arms akimbo, said, "Well, I have heard that you, sir, have made all your money by cutting figures out of stone, though I can't understand it. Now, to my mind, that would look much better if it were painted. I can give thee some beauti-

ful paint, Ieuan, some green for a petticoat, some red for a shawl, and some coal tar for her bare feet would make her look as if she had Sunday shoes on."

Ieuan looked inquiringly at Sir Glynne, whose black eyes twinkled while he answered, "No, no, that wouldn't do at all. You have improved, my lad, since you showed me the bull; I thought you would. Will you leave that group with me? I will show it to Lady Glanarvon, and I will see you again."

Ieuan's face beamed with delight, while Catrin, playfully touzling his brown curls, placed a huge hunch of bread and cheese in his jacket pocket and fetched him a drink of sweet brei from the brewing tub. Ieuan tugged his forelock again, and ran away with a light heart.

"That boy is a genius," said Sir Glynne, "and if he lives he will make his mark in the world unless I greatly mistake. Who is he?"

And Catrin, nothing loth, began her tale of that wild March afternoon fifteen years before, when the poor woman had arrived in the *Aden y don*.

"Ah!" said the sculptor, bringing his meal to a close, "a not uncommon story I am afraid in the annals of our country;" and he dismissed the subject from his mind.

"Come again soon, sir," called out Catrin as he drove away from the door.

Some explanation is here necessary to show how the successful sculptor was connected with the retired neighbourhood of Abersethin. As a boy he had shown a wonderful talent for carving. His parents, well-to-do farmers, intelligent and refined beyond their station, desiring to encourage his genius gave him a good education so far as was obtainable at the Grammar School at Caer Madoc. The lad was frequently invited to the Hall, the old baronet having early recognised his talent; and here he spent many happy days of his youth, petted and spoiled by Sir Owen and his amiable wife, and teased and de-

lighted by turns by their little daughter Gwladys, five years his junior.

When the lad grew older, Sir Owen gave him an introduction to a friend of his in London, a sculptor of no mean repute, and under his tuition he began that career which had been a series of successes. He had never forgotten or neglected his old parents, for he was a man of very strong and tender feelings. Every summer saw him at the old homestead, where a sister, many years younger than himself, and much beloved by him, was growing up to be the prop and comfort of her old parents.

As the years passed on, and Gwladys Glanarvon grew up into a lovely girl, was it to be wondered at that the youthful sculptor saw in her the embodiment of all his artistic conceptions, and that his boyish admiration gradually became a deep and over-mastering passion. But he made every effort to disguise it from those around him, and so successfully, that no one guessed that the son of the farmer, Robert Meredith, had dared to raise his eyes to the only daughter of the wealthy baronet. A hundred times he had resolved never again to enter the Hall; but, alas! a hundred times his good resolutions were thrown to the winds. Year after year Glynne Meredith visited his old home, and year after year Gwladys became more dear to him, but he knew that to ask Sir Owen for his daughter's hand would be as useless as "to cry for the moon"; so he tried to conceal his feelings, even from himself; but Gwladys was conscious that he loved her, and he knew that she loved him; and with this secret consciousness between them, they were content to let affairs drift on, thankful only to be allowed free intercourse with one another. None suspected their secret, and they never spoke of it. Suddenly they were in the midst of the breakers.

Gwladys had walked to Abersethin, and, in returning, had caught up Glynne Meredith and his sister, a girl of fifteen who sometimes accompanied her brother

to the Hall. The three young people were chatting merrily, when, at a bend in the road, Sir Owen appeared, a tall, handsome stranger with him, who was introduced to Gwladys as her cousin Ivor Gwynne. Glynne and his sister were also made known to him; but, from that moment, a gloomy foreboding took possession of him, and though, during the rest of the day, his treatment by the baronet and his daughter was as kind as ever, yet Glynne could not shake off the depression that was haunting him. When he returned to Berthlwyd, his own home, he found a letter from his friend and patron, Mr. Clifford, requesting his immediate return to London on important business connected with his studio, and adding "that he might finish his holiday at the end of three months," and Glynne had no choice but to obey.

Gwladys Glanarvon felt herself deserted at the very time when she most wanted support and sympathy. Her cousin soon showed that his object in coming to the Hall was to win her love, if possible—at all events, to win her for his bride—and in this he was seconded by his uncle and aunt. Gwladys did all in her power to resist the strong influences brought to bear upon her, hoping that, if she could stave off her decision for three months, Glynne Meredith would return, when, with his presence to strengthen her, she would summon courage to tell the truth; but, at the end of the three months, his home-coming was still postponed. Mr. Clifford could not spare him, and, had he been able to do so, Glynne had enough knowledge of the world to know that an avowal of his love could result only in a complete separation between Gwladys and himself. He, therefore, hoped that his fears concerning Ivor Gwynne had no foundation, and that, when he could return to Berthlwyd, he and Gwladys would be able to resume their sweet companionship.

At last, wearied out with Ivor's pleading, the persuasions of her parents, and the long-deferred hope of

Glynne's return, Gwladys yielded, but unwillingly, and shortly afterwards she and her cousin were married at Pemynydd church. At the bride's earnest request, it was a simple wedding.

Soon after this, a baronetcy was conferred upon the rising sculptor; but, with the knowledge of Gwladys' marriage, he felt it had come too late. About the same time a great trouble fell upon him. His young sister, Mary, for whom he had a strong affection, had just completed her education, and was on the point of returning home, when suddenly she disappeared from the school at which he had placed her. Her disappearance almost stunned him. He made every effort to learn her whereabouts, but without success. From the servants and some of her schoolfellows, he discovered that she had frequently been seen at the garden gate talking to a young man of handsome appearance, but the fact had been kept from the knowledge of the schoolmistress until after the flight of the missing girl, when it was too late to trace her.

Sir Glynne was so shocked at his sister's deceitfulness and want of principle, that his love for her seemed to turn to hate, and he gave up his search, and, with a sorrowful heart, went down to Wales to break the sad news to his parents, who took it so terribly to heart that, before the end of the year, and within a short time of each other, it brought them to the grave. Sir Glynne gave out that his sister was dead—for dead indeed he considered her—and in the far-away village of Abersethin no one knew or guessed the truth.

CHAPTER V.

HOPES FULFILLED.

ONE day, more than fifteen years after the events recorded in the last chapter, Sir Glynne drove up to the main entrance of Glanarvon Hall. In spite of his forty years, he could not quite still the tumultuous beating of his heart ; he had not met Gwladys since her husband's death, and he felt actually ashamed of the boyish nervousness that now came over him. He had been a frequent visitor at the Hall during Sir Ivor's lifetime, and was now warmly greeted by Williams, the old servant, who helped him out of the gig.

"Very near dinner-time, sir," he said, with a confidential nod, "but I know of old you're never long dressing, sir," and he condescended to carry Sir Glynne's portmanteau up himself.

When he entered the drawing-room, it was fully ten minutes before dinner-time. The room was lighted only by a wood fire, save where the moonlight streamed in through one of the long windows. Lady Glanarvon was sitting on a low chair talking to a gentleman, who seemed much interested in their conversation. She rose at once upon Sir Glynne's entrance, and, in the moonlight, she looked the same Gwladys as of old. There was a warm clasp of the hands ; then, in her old natural way, she drew another chair to the moonlit window, saying : "Come and join us ; I think you know Mr. Rhys Morgan."

The men shook hands, and a few of the usual questions asked and answered when a traveller arrives, put

them all at their ease. They were joined by Captain and Mrs. Price, cousins of Lady Glanarvon, who had resided with her since her husband's death, and had frequently met Sir Glynne before.

"Mr. Morgan is much interested in the Eisteddfod, to be held at Caer Madoc before long," said the hostess. "I think we must all go and patronise it."

"I hope you will, indeed. There are three children I am coaching up for it, two girls, especially, who have beautiful voices."

But here dinner was announced; so, for the moment, the subject dropped; but in the drawing-room, later, Mr. Morgan returned to it, expatiating with enthusiasm on the rare quality of Mifanwy's voice.

"You will come and hear her, will you not?" he concluded.

"Certainly!" said Lady Glanarvon.

"And I," added Sir Glynne, "will certainly be there; I delight in an Eisteddfod. I think this neighbourhood must be rather rich in prodigies, for I have found here a youthful sculptor. I have brought with me this evening a specimen of his work. May I ring for it?"

And when William had lugged in the small piece of statuary and laid it on the table, he pulled off the cloth that covered it.

"There!" said Sir Glynne, "now, what do you think of it, Gwladys?" in his excitement forgetting her usual title.

Lady Glanarvon noticed the omission, and, while she approached to inspect the sculpture, blushed a rosy red. Sir Glynne, wholly unconscious of the cause, wondered, and thought within himself, "She is as beautiful as ever!"

"Did that boy do that?" she asked. "How wonderful! Of course I do not understand much about sculpture, but to me it seems beautiful! That girl kneeling by the dead sheep! Where have I seen

her before? And the boy standing beside her! Is he the little sculptor himself?"

"I think he is," replied Sir Glynne; "he is a handsome boy, and worthy to be a sculptor's model. And now, will you allow it to be placed in that little niche under the cavalier's portrait? I see it is empty still. Do you remember how we used to wonder what it was meant for?"

"Yes," said Lady Glanarvon; "I shall value it very much. It seems made for that niche. Thank you."

And, after a little further conversation on the subject, Ieuan and the two girl singers were forgotten in more interesting topics, that kept them sitting late over the blazing wood fire.

"What are you going to do with yourself to-day?" asked Captain Price, coming down to breakfast the next morning when the meal was half over. Mrs. Price never left her room till noon.

"Well! I am full of business to-day," replied Sir Glynne. "I want to see John Powys; and, after that, to find my little shepherd. I wonder, Gwladys, whether you would accompany me? Are you as good at long walks as you used to be?"

"Oh, yes, quite," she answered; "better, I think! I was not very strong then, but now I can walk miles without getting tired."

Sir Glynne looked pleased, and Gwladys laughed and talked with a return of her old vivacity. In less than an hour they were both walking over the moor towards Maen Powys.

"I shall be glad when this visit is over," observed Sir Glynne. "I do not often take dislikes to people; but when I meet John Powys I must confess to an unreasonable aversion to the man, though he has never done me any harm."

"I think the feeling is shared by most people in this neighbourhood; but why do you seek him out to-day?"

"I want to get his consent to take his shepherd, Ieuan Gwyllt, away with me, to bring him up as a sculptor, and—and, in fact, to adopt him; that is, if no one has any objection."

"But who is there to object?" asked Gwladys innocently. "You are your own master, if any man can be."

"Yes, that is true," rejoined Sir Glynne. Then they crossed the farmyard and stood under the thick elder tree that stretched its interlaced boughs like a porch over the door.

John Powys was standing in the kitchen when their shadows fell on the sunny floor. When he turned round and first observed Sir Glynne, a dark scowl came over his features; but it partially cleared away when he saw Lady Glanarvon's pleasant smile.

"Well, to be sure!" he said, taking her proffered hand with a show of hospitality; "well, to be sure, Lady Glanarvon, I am glad to see you. And you, Sir Glynne? What, may I ask, has procured me the honour of a visit from *you*? But come in," and he led the way through a dark passage into the "hall," his usual sitting-room.

In a corner of the stiff horse-hair sofa sat Laissabeth, surrounded by a heap of her uncle's stockings, one of which she was busily darning.

"Oh! the little singing maiden!" said Lady Glanarvon. "We were speaking of her last night; I did not think I should have the pleasure of seeing her so soon."

Laissabeth rose up hastily, scattering the stockings on to the ground, but was not at all embarrassed; the consciousness of her pretty face was a continual source of confidence and assurance to her in all sorts of experiences, and she was soon chatting unconstrainedly with her visitor, who was much amused at the girl's self-possession, not to say conceit.

"Oh! yes," said Laissabeth, "I am going to school,

and to have my voice trained ; my uncle thinks it is worth while."

"Indeed it is," said Lady Glanarvon. "To Caer Madoc, I suppose?"

"To Caer Madoc ! No, indeed, Lady Glanarvon ; to London !"

Meanwhile, Sir Glynne had expressed his intentions with regard to Ieuan, and described his plans for the boy's improvement and education. His information was received by John Powys at first with a sullen, dogged look of resistance, but, as Sir Glynne proceeded to unfold his plans, a new light seemed to dawn upon him, and in a sarcastic tone he asked :

"And what in the world has made you fix upon my shepherd as the object of your intentions?"

"Well," said Sir Glynne, "the boy's genius, his wonderful talent in carving ; you know it is my own profession, and he reminds me of my own youth. If I mistake not, he has the making of a great artist in him, and I wish to give him a chance."

John Powys stretched out his legs, dug his hands deep into his trousers' pockets, and throwing his head back, burst into a fit of laughter.

"Great artist ! Ha, ha ! That is good ! Ieuan Gwyllt a great artist ! An idle lout, I call him. But take him if you like, Sir Glynne ; I give you my full consent, only never let him come bothering me afterwards."

"Oh, no ; when I take him it will be for good ; but, if you have no objection, I will leave him here another year ; he will then be sixteen."

"Well, that will suit me too," said John Powys.

"I mean to tell him to-day," said Sir Glynne ; "but, if I am right in my estimation of the boy, it will make no difference in his behaviour towards you."

"Oh, I'll take care of that," said John Powys, with a chuckle. "If I see any signs of uppishness, he shall soon taste of the strap."

After his visitors had left, he stood long looking after them, at last muttering to himself, "Well, let him have him; it couldn't be better arranged; but it's strange—strange!"

Laissabeth was full of curiosity and delight.

"Oh, uncle," she said, "will Ieuan be going to London to live with Sir Glynne Meredith? Won't he be a gentleman! And what will Mifanwy say?"

"Mifanwy be d—d!" said John Powys, "and you, too, with your prating tongue; go and get my dinner, miss!"

And Laissabeth, well used to his bursts of temper, went smilingly to do his behests. At dinner she could not refrain from asking another question:

"Am I to learn to play the piano?"

"Piano indeed!" said her uncle. "No; I want no tinkling and strumming here! You can learn to sing, for I think you can do that. You may be glad to earn your living that way one day, when I am gone."

This he said with his usual cunning, and a grudging disinclination to let the girl expect anything more from him. But Laissabeth was as cunning as he, and answered him, smiling:

"Yes, indeed, Uncle John, bach! I can then earn plenty of money and keep myself and mother."

"Humph!" said John Powys, not ill-pleased, for, with all his craftiness, he was completely taken in by his niece.

Meanwhile, Sir Glynne and his companion were walking steadily over the soft velvet of the cliffs; a fresh March wind blew in straight from the sea, bearing on its breath the odours of spring and promises of sweet things to come. Under the hillocks primroses peeped out, and in sheltered corners daffodils nodded to the breeze. The blue bay of Abersethin stretched before them, gleaming here and there with a golden radiance; the little ships flitted like moths over its surface; one, catching the

full sunshine on its snow-white sails, was making its way to the harbour below.

"That is the *Aden y don*," said Gwladys. "I know most of the ships that trade to these ports; there goes the *Speedwell*, I know her by her red sail with the new patch on it."

Sir Glynne drew in a long breath of delight. "Oh, how lovely it all is! Shall we sit down and rest here?"

"Yes," said Gwladys; "and now see the contents of my basket." And from it she drew forth and spread on the wild thyme a dainty lunch of cold pie and cake; and they were soon enjoying their repast, and chatting and laughing with the light-hearted gaiety of old times.

"How this brings back our excursions of long ago, Gwladys; the lunch in the nut wood, do you remember? The teas on Moel Mynach? How often my thoughts have reverted to those happy times! In my studio, in the toilsome pleasures of a London season, and, above all, on my lonely hearth at evening, where I have often sat till the small hours and my fire has gone out, thinking, thinking; and always your image was woven into the pattern of my dream. Ah! Gwladys, it has been a long, dreary loneliness."

Gwladys picked at the wild thyme with heightened colour and fluttering breath; and, with drooping eyes, replied, "Yes, yes, I know; but don't let us talk of the past, it is too sad!"

"The future then, dearest!" said Sir Glynne, starting towards her and clasping both her hands within his own. "Shall we talk of that? And will you promise to brighten it with your loved presence? Have I not thirsted long enough for your love? Give me one word of hope and encouragement. You must know, Gwladys, why in all these long years I have never married. I have never felt inclined to do so. I have kept the chambers of my heart empty, feeling and knowing well that no one but you could ever

walk in them. But now, Gwladys, will you come and make my hearth bright and my heart happy?"

She did not draw her hands away, but looking up into his earnest, black eyes, said simply, "If you can forgive me for the past, Glynne, I will try to make your future happy."

"And what about your own, dearest? That is more important to me than my own happiness."

She did not answer, except by lifting up his brown hands to her lips with a long look of trustful love.

When at last they had reached Moel Mynach, the mid-day sun was shining down the steep slopes on which Mifanwy watched her sheep. She was lying near the top of the slope, her head sheltered only by a low furze bush from the heat of the sun. With the vigilant ear of a watcher, she heard their approaching footsteps on the soft grass, and started up in astonishment, so seldom did anyone break in upon her solitude.

"Well! merch i," said Sir Glynne, "where is your companion?" He spoke in Welsh, but she seemed not to understand.

"My companion! I have none, except Topper, and he has gone to the mill to look for his dinner."

"But it is Ieuan we want, my child!"

"Oh! Ieuan!" said the girl with a bright smile, which disclosed a row of perfect white teeth; "he is on Moel Hiraethog—over there—I will show you the way," and, holding Topper's chin in her hand for a moment, she looked into his beautiful brown eyes, not unlike her own in their liquid softness of expression. "Now, Topper, stay here and watch!" and she was soon leading the way down the hill to the shore below; it was dangerous work, but Mifanwy tripped on with steady steps and graceful motion, stopping sometimes to look back, or to point with her crook at some dangerous rock; across the sandy shore and up the rugged side of Moel Hiraethog they made their way. The sheep were browsing on the

ledges and slippery tussocks, Juno was sitting blinking in the sun, and snapping at the flies, but Ieuan was nowhere to be seen.

"He is cutting his stones," said Mifanwy.

"Where?" said Sir Glynne with interest.

She pointed to the shepherd's hut, stuck like a crow's nest between a huge boulder and the side of the hill; and there they found him, forming, with his rude, imperfect tools, from the soft, grey stone, an object of ideal beauty. He was so wrapped up in his work that he did not hear the sound of his visitors' footsteps, and Sir Glynne gazed with breathless interest at the block of statuary before which the boy was kneeling.

He was painfully and delicately finishing the face of the figure, which was that of a girl standing on the extreme edge of a high cliff or ledge. She held her arms stretched out before her, the fingers apart, as though invoking or adoring some distant object on which her eyes were fixed; she seemed to be singing a hymn of praise, or invocation, and was evidently breasting the sea-wind, for it blew back her streaming hair and her thin drapery. In the curl of that skirt and the tossing of that hair you could almost feel the wind.

At the sound of a slight exclamation from Gwladys, the boy turned round, surprised, but not embarrassed; indeed, so intent was he upon his work that, ignoring Mifanwy and Gwladys, he turned instinctively to Sir Glynne, and, drawing him towards his work, said:

"How is it, sir? Is it good, or is it bad?"

"Good, my boy," said Sir Glynne in admiration, "very good; it is the sea-wind, of course, that's blowing against her; she is standing on the edge of the cliff, and, surely, she is singing. What is it? A hymn of praise, or prayer?"

Ieuan clapped his hands in delight. "Oh! anwl, anwl! I am so glad! You found it out without my telling you. Yes, she is singing 'Codi. ' yr Haul'

(‘The rising of the sun’), welcoming him, do you see, when he first rises out of the sea!”

“The girl,” said Sir Glynne, “is beautiful; it is the same girl who in your last work was watching the dead sheep, is it not?”

“Yes, yes,” said Ieuan, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, “it is Mifanwy, of course; she is the most beautiful girl that I have seen; in form, I mean, not in colour. Laissabeth is the most beautiful in colour, but I can’t put colour in stone.”

Both Sir Glynne and Gwladys unconsciously turned round to look at Mifanwy, who stood leaning on her crook; and both saw, what had not struck them before, but what was evidently familiar to the boy’s artistic eye, *viz.*, the elegant rounding of her form, the graceful attitude, and the beautiful, regular features, which even the darkness of her complexion and the tangled wealth of dusky hair could not disguise.

When they had sufficiently criticised and admired the statuette, Sir Glynne, holding the boy by the shoulder and looking into his clear, grey eyes, began to unfold his plans for his education and advancement in his favourite pursuit. Ieuan was speechless with astonishment and delight! He did not thank Sir Glynne, but, at the magnitude of the proposal, his face blanched a little, and in his eyes there was a moisture that in a girl would have resolved itself into tears, but that Ieuan surreptitiously brushed away with his ragged cuff.

“Well, my boy,” said Sir Glynne, “it will not be for a year; I shall be going abroad, and making some changes in my home this year, but this time next year, please God, I will come and fetch you. Meanwhile, go on steadily as you have begun; I suppose you cannot read or write?”

Ieuan flushed over neck and brow. “Yes, sir, I can read and write. Mr. Rhys Morgan has taught me a little; I go to him twice in the week, except lambing time; but John Powys does not know.”

"And what has he taught you?" inquired Sir Glynne.

"Oh! to read and write both in Welsh and English, a little geography, a little history, and a little arithmetic. But what I like best of all is astronomy, because," spreading his hands out towards the sky, "there it is, you see, and I can watch the stars all night, and find out their names. Oh! it is grand and wonderful!" he concluded.

"Good, my boy. And now good-bye, and expect to see me here next year."

Gwladys thanked Mifanwy for her assistance, and Sir Glynne, giving them each a bright half-crown, the visitors departed, taking no further notice of Mifanwy, who turned slowly round the corner of the hut, and wended her way back again to her own resting-place on Moel Mynach.

At a convenient spot on the edge of the cliff she stopped, and, with all her strength, flung the half-crown Sir Glynne had given her into the seething waves below; then slowly holding her crook in her right hand, and pressing her left to her side, she made her way back to her sheep, and flung herself down beside Topper, who greeted her with delight. She lay on the ground beside him, her arm round his neck, her great eyes fixed mournfully on the sea. No sound escaped her lips, but the tears gathered in her eyes, and coursed each other down her cheek. At evening she rose and folded her sheep; then, like a dumb animal that has been stricken with mortal sickness, she made her way homewards, took her supper quietly, and went to bed in the loft above; and, when Ieuan returned later in the evening, was supposed to be fast asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EISTEDDFOD.

MR. RHYS MORGAN, or Rhys Morgan, as he was familiarly called by all the inhabitants of Abersethin and its neighbourhood, stood in the porch of the little Rock Church, ringing the bell with his own hand. There had been a prayer meeting, and his congregation had just dispersed, and now he was waiting for his three pupils, for this would be the last singing lesson before the Eisteddfod.

Presently they came, Laissabeth first, beaming and sparkling, and panting with the exertion of running, and then Mifanwy and Ieuan.

"Come along, children," said Rhys Morgan; "we have much to do to-night. Remember this is the last practice we shall have. Let us begin with the trio." And soon the three clear voices were blending in harmony.

"Bravo! well done!" he said. "If you sing as well as that at the Eisteddfod, you will satisfy me. And now for 'The Dove.'" And from beginning to end Laissabeth sang the lovely air in perfect time and tune. Clear and cold as crystal her sweet voice carolled forth, and when she had come to the final notes, Rhys Morgan had no fault to find.

"Now, Mifanwy," and he drew his stool closer to the harmonium, waiting for her to begin.

"Oh! didst thou know the pangs of absent love,
Acis would ne'er from Galatea rove!"

sang the girl. The words were in a foreign tongue

to her, but Rhys Morgan had taken much pains to teach her the right accent.

"Beautiful! child," he said. "And now the aria; smooth, don't hurry."

The rich, full tones swelled out as he desired, without hurry, without passion, but with a depth of tenderness that had been entirely absent from Laissabeth's singing.

"That is music," he said, drawing a long breath of satisfaction. "Do you understand the words, Laissabeth?"

"Oh, yes, I know English," said the girl with a toss of her head.

"And you, Mifanwy?"

"Yes, sir; it is Galatea longing for Acis to come home, and quite happy when he returns."

"Quite right, child, and you express it well."

There was a good deal more practising before the little party broke up; and after many injunctions from Rhys Morgan to be in good time at Caer Madoc on Wednesday, the children went home through the moonlight, Ieuan and Laissabeth having most of the conversation to themselves, Mifanwy walking beside them silent and thoughtful. Arrived at home, she found Shân in a great state of excitement about some clothes she had fished out from the old coffer that held the family wardrobe.

"Here," she said, "is a petticoat of my grandmother's, which will make a fine frock for thee, Mifanwy; and here are stockings, and Rhys Morgan has been here to-day, and he says he will buy thee a hat and a pair of shoes. I told him I knew thee wouldn't take them; but he said thou wert sure to get the prize—three whole sovereigns, Mifanwy—and that out of that thou couldst pay him for the hat and shoes."

Mifanwy was silent for some time.

"I suppose it must be. But what if I should not get the prize?"

When the door was closed, and they had all sat down round the shining oak table, each with a steaming bowl of cawl, it seemed to Ieuan the proper time to inform his foster parents of the vista of happiness and grandeur opening out before him. The effect of his words was dramatic. Ianto stared open-mouthed. Shân lifted up her hands in astonishment.

"Well, I never, never, did hear of such a thing! Is it true, child, what thou art telling us?"

"Quite true!" said Ieuan, nodding.

"Quite true!" said Mifanwy. "I heard the grand gentleman and lady telling Ieuan all about it."

"And didn't they offer to take thee, too? Never mind, little one, cariad anwyl. Thee shalt stay with Shân and Ianto, and, when Ieuan is a grand gentleman in London, we'll all three go and see him one day."

Mifanwy laughed, and Ieuan joined with her; both were conscious that there would be some sort of impropriety and awkwardness in the proposed visit, though they were too inexperienced to give their reasons.

At last the eventful day arrived, and the Eisteddfod tent at Caer Madoc opened its flapping canvas doors to admit the eager crowd that, gathered from every part of the country, had thronged the streets since the early morning. There was a murmur of music on the air, different competing choirs going over their glees and choruses for the last time, in any chance corner in which they might find room to assemble round their conductor. In the Lamb parlour the Abermere choir were singing the "Hallelujah Chorus." In the yard outside, a juvenile choir of boys gathered round their leader, a mere boy of two and twenty himself, who, seated on the top of a pig-sty, baton in hand, drilled them over and over again in the difficult passages. In the square by the market-place, where the "Stocks" stood, crowded a number of young girls, who were humming in an

undertone their different parts, craning their necks to look over each other's music ; while on the "Stocks" themselves sat their conductor, a red-faced, burly man in tight corduroy leggings, giving them the key-note from his tuning-fork, and suggesting improvements and embellishments ; the Italian terms used in the music all rolled out in the accent of his strong, rough Welsh.

"Now then, sopranos, stop that chatter and attend to that *Adagio*. Howyr bach. What do you mean galloping off like that? *Adagio*, I tell you, and *pi-ano*, now—*pi-anissimo*, and don't forget the slurr."

Every face beamed with pleasure, and when the brass bands began their competition, and the blaring sounds were heard through the canvas walls, all felt that the real business of the day had begun. Jolly farmers jostled up against delicate ladies ; dissenting ministers actually walked side by side with clergymen of the Established Church ; groups of sailors from the coast villages, little old women with crutched sticks, "witch hats," and scarlet mantles or scarves, drawn tightly round their shoulders, crowded the field in which the "Steddfod" tent had been erected, eagerly pushing their way in.

There was a slight commotion in the field when a fine carriage, drawn by a splendid pair of bays, approached, scattering the crowd in all directions. A burst of laughter followed, when a country cart, taking advantage of the clearance, dashed up close behind the carriage at a spanking rate.

Sir Glynne Meredith and Lady Glanarvon, the occupants of the carriage, joined heartily in the laughter, while they drove up to the entrance of the tent, for all was jollity and *bonhomie* on the Eisteddfod day. The huge pavilion was thronged with an audience of Welshmen of every class, all eagerly awaiting the coming competition, in which every one was interested ; gay ladies with fluttering fans and

bright ribbons; bonnie lasses from the hills, with their broad-brimmed, high-crowned hats; stalwart farmers and reistering sailors, all sitting with eager eyes fixed upon the platform, upon which a choir of a hundred voices was preparing to compete.

"One—two—three," from the conductor, and there was a breathless pause, upon which broke the first chords of the "Hallelujah Chorus."

Every bar was followed and critically appreciated by the immense audience; not a tone of effective phrasing was allowed to pass unnoticed; and, when some of the most familiar passages were delicately rendered, shrewd winks and nods of approbation were exchanged between many a rough and ruddy-faced peasant; and, when at last the final chord was sung, there was a loud storm of applause. Then the competing choir filed off the platform on one side, while the next competitors entered at the other; and so on, choir after choir, until the morning was well advanced, and still every eye was eager and no ear was tired.

Ieuan Gwyllt, the shepherd boy whom Sir Glynne Meredith was going to adopt, was watched for with eager expectation; and, when, at last, the three children followed Rhys Morgan on to the platform and ranged themselves side by side in front of the piano at which he was to accompany them, there was another pause.

Ieuan, quite unconscious of the interest felt in him, looked around him with the coolness of one who knows he has no important part to play; but the two girls seemed confused, and for a moment frightened. Laissabeth soon regained her self-possession, and, while Rhys Morgan considerably lengthened out the prelude, she nodded to her friends in the audience with perfect composure, her pretty pink and white face looking charming, surmounted by a new hat with its white feathers and trimmings. She presented a gay contrast to Mifanwy, who hung her head a little

shyly until it was time to begin the trio, and, when she raised it, her dark skin and hair made no favourable impression. As for Ieuan, though all his tattered and buffeted straw hat might be discerned—so confident was he—the respectable “broad cloth” and shining beaver hat of London life; while poor Mifanwy’s brand new frock and shoes, and even the hat presented by Mr. Rhys Morgan, could not efface from the minds of the audience her ordinary tattered blue petticoat and bare feet and crook.

Mr. Rhys Morgan’s prelude ended, Laissabeth, quite unembarrassed, went through her part; every note was true, clear, and crisp, and her perfect rendering of the music was not lost upon the musical ears of the audience, who cheered and clapped loudly. After the final bar, she withdrew to the back of the platform, well pleased with herself and her performance. Then Mifanwy took her place, to be received with a cold silence, that Ieuan, peeping from the background, instantly resented, and the girl herself felt deeply.

The first notes of the recitative came rather slowly and tremblingly, but she had scarcely sung two bars when she was seized with a fervid uplifting of spirit, and became oblivious to everything around her.

“Oh! didst thou know the pangs of absent love,
Acis would ne’er from Galatea roam!”

Every eye was fixed upon her with eagerness, every ear was strained to catch the melting tones, and when she dropped into the graceful flowing melody of the aria, she took possession of the warm Welsh hearts, and held them in her grasp until the last tender note had died away.

For a moment there was silence, and Mifanwy seemed to awake from a dream to the reality of the scene before her; she turned simply to Rhys Morgan, with a glad smile of happiness, for she felt that she

had "spoken the truth" in her rendering of the music. He took her hand protectingly, and then a perfect storm of applause filled the air and shook the flapping sides of the great pavilion. The women waved their handkerchiefs, the men stood up and shouted "Etto! etto!"¹ and a group of enthusiastic sailors rushed to the edge of the platform to shake hands with her.

It did not matter that the words had been in a foreign tongue, the music had laid hold of them, and the little shepherd girl, who had begun in fear and trembling, was now the idol of the crowd; her bosom heaved with delight and pleasure at the consciousness that so many hearts had responded to her singing; but, when Mr. Rhys Morgan called her attention to the frequent cries of "Etto, etto!" and explained that she was expected to repeat the song, she shook her head artlessly, and said in Welsh: "I cannot indeed." Then running to the side of the stage, she joined Ieuan, and they both rushed unceremoniously out of the tent, never stopping until they had reached the Lamb Inn.

This unceremonious departure tickled the audience immensely, and the storm of applause was soon drowned in shouts of laughter, only silenced by the arrival of a third competitor, who was listened to respectfully, but with no show of enthusiasm.

Meanwhile, Ieuan and Mifanwy waited in the Lamb yard.

"Oh, Mifanwy," said Ieuan, "thou art an angel of song!"

"Well, indeed," she answered, suddenly growing serious, "perhaps it was an angel who sang through me. Sometimes I feel as if it were not myself singing, but somebody else who used my voice and my mouth."

Ieuan laughed heartily; then he, too, grew serious.

¹ Again! again!

"Poor Laissabeth!" he said, "art not sorry for her, Mifanwy?"

"No," replied Mifanwy; "I have tried to be sorry, but I can't, because I'm very glad, and I hate her."

"Well, indeed," said Ieuan, "I am sorry, for thee'st sung much better than her."

"Dost hope she has gained the prize?"

"H'm—m!" said Ieuan, looking thoughtfully down at the upturned sole of one foot, which he held in his hand, "well, I would wish there were two prizes."

At this moment Mr. Rhys Morgan entered the yard, holding carefully between his thumb and first finger a tiny bow of satin ribbon, from which was suspended a dainty bag, also of white satin, enclosing three sovereigns. He held it out to Mifanwy.

"Here, child," he said, "the prize has been awarded to you, and very justly, too; but why do you look so sad? And you, Ieuan? What has brought that colour to your face?"

Mifanwy, at first, made no reply. She took the bag slowly, and with downcast eyes; then she opened it, and handed one of the shining gold pieces it contained to Mr. Morgan.

"Will that pay for the shoes and hat, sir?" she said.

"Oh, more, much more, child; I should have to return you twelve shillings; but will you not take them as a present from me?"

"Oh, no! sir," answered Mifanwy, her Welsh pride taking alarm at once. "I could not bear to think I had not paid for them."

Rhys Morgan smiled, but sympathised, and gravely counted out the twelve shillings into her palm.

She took them calmly, but returned the little bag containing the two sovereigns to Rhys Morgan.

"It is for Laissabeth," she said; "she tried and I tried, too, and I sang the best, but that is nothing. I will not touch the rest of the money. She can have it all; I do not want it."

"You are very generous, child ; your lovely singing springs from good soil. Here comes Elizabeth, so you can give it to her yourself."

Across the yard came Laissabeth, picking her way daintily between the mounds of straw and over the pools of dirty water between the cobble stones, her mother accompanying her with an air of offended dignity. She shook hands loftily with Rhys Morgan, and ordered Deio, the ostler, to bring out the car, which she had borrowed for the day.

"Your daughter sang beautifully, Mrs. Powys," said Rhys Morgan, "and I am sure the audience thoroughly enjoyed it, and she must not mind Mifanwy's having sung better still."

"Oh, dear, no, she doesn't mind it at all," said Mrs. Powys ; "perhaps next year, when she comes back from London, she will sing better than Mifanwy."

"Ah !" said Rhys Morgan, "we shall all be eagerly looking out for the London singer at the next Eisteddfod ; but Mifanwy wishes to divide the prize with her ; she thinks it is but right to do so. I'll leave the two girls to settle the matter, for I must return to the Eisteddfod ; I am adjudicator for the next competition."

Ieuan took the bag from his fingers and handed it to Laissabeth, while Mifanwy stood stolidly looking on ; she had ceased to take any interest in the prize.

Laissabeth's eyes twinkled greedily while she took the bag from Ieuan.

"Mifanwy says it is but fair," said the boy, "for you both tried, and she had the pleasure of winning."

"Yes, 'tis only fair," assented Laissabeth, eagerly opening the bag to see what it contained. When she saw the two pieces of gold, she took them out and quickly slipped them into her pocket, holding out the bag to Mifanwy.

"Here is the foolish old bag," she said ; "I don't want it."

"I will have that," said Mifanwy, and she placed

in it the twelve shillings she still held in her palm.

"It is not fair, though," said Ieuan. "You are a greedy girl; Mifanwy is generous and noble."

"Wilt have it back, Mifanwy?" said Laissabeth, putting her hand reluctantly into her pocket.

Mifanwy only shook her head silently, and turned away, followed by Ieuan. She was happy once more.

The sunny afternoon was drawing to a close when they entered their cottage home. Ieuan paused with his finger in the latch-hole ere he opened the door.

"Now," he said, "I will light the fire, and thou shalt put our supper ready."

"Yes," said the happy girl, "there is plenty of cawl to be warmed up, and the fresh barley loaf and the nice butter from Ty Gwyn. Oh, what a happy day it is!" and soon they were sitting down to the old oak table, hungry and tired, but full of buoyant, youthful happiness.

CHAPTER VII.

OGO WYLOFEN.

MOELEN, the best cow in the Maen Powys' herd had been ailing for several days, and John Ellis himself could not tell what was the matter with her, though he and his master had spent a whole hour in examining her, front and back and sideways.

"Don't see there is much the matter with her; think she could have swallowed a snail? I have known my grandmother's cow do that, and it killed her."

"Swallowed a snail!" repeated John Powys scornfully; "say something sensible when you do speak."

"Well, cows do swallow snails," averred John doggedly. "I would send her to the slope on Moel Mynach; change of pasturage will do her good, and the short grass there will be just the thing for her."

"Yes," said his master, "Mifanwy can watch her all night, and we'll see how she is in the morning."

And so it was settled, and Mifanwy meekly received her orders, and promised to keep her eyes and ears open to the slightest sign of uneasiness in Moelen.

"Come up at once," said John Powys, closing the cow-house door, "if you see her get up in the night and stand with her head down; d'ye hear, girl? And mind what I tell you, if that cow dies from any carelessness of yours, you pack off from here to-morrow. We shall keep her in one night longer, but to-morrow night you will be ready to watch her on the cliff slopes."

Mifanwy's heart sank within her, and she made up her mind to ask Ieuan to stay with her throughout the night.

The girl had often spent the night watches on the craggy sides of Moel Mynach. Towards the bottom of the slope lay the pasturage on which Moelen would be placed, and it was reached by a side path which led past the mouth of a chasm in the cliffs called Ogo Wylofen, or "the cave of wailing." Into this chasm or rift the sea rushed at all times with boiling force, but at spring tides it evidently reached some obstacle that checked and chafed its furious inrush, and caused the curious sounds that gave the cave its name. Few people passed over this part of the cliff except the shepherds, and Mifanwy and Ieuan approached it only when they were compelled. Sometimes, hand in hand, they ventured step by step nearer and nearer to the chasm, holding their breath the while, and preparing to fly when the weird sounds should become too awful. Thus the prospect of a whole night spent alone within sound of the Ogo was terrible to the girl.

After they had finished their meal of cawl, on their return from the Eisteddfod, Mifanwy doffed her new clothes at once, and arraying herself once more in her frayed blue petticoat, took from its peg in the earthen passage the old red cloak which had sheltered her through many a storm.

Shân and Ianto were waiting each on their separate hills for the return of the children. They had taken their way to the slopes in the early morning, after Shân had given the finishing touches to Mifanwy's toilet, with many injunctions from the girl and boy.

"Mifanwy got the prize, Shân," shouted Ieuan, when they were within speaking distance, and, taking off his tattered straw hat, he waved it round his head.

"Dear heart! didst thou indeed?" said Shân. "Well, well, I knew thou wouldst. Gwai fi! Oh! that thy grandmother could know of it, child. How

glad she would be! and thy mother, too! but thy grandmother was the grand singer! Why, here on this very hill she watched her sheep, and we lads and lasses from the village would come up and sit round her while she sang and sang, till you could hear her voice echoing from Moel Hiraethog;” and she drew her hand caressingly over Mifanwy’s black hair, and looked lovingly into her thin, dark face, while she continued in a dreamy voice, “Yes, we often sat here in the old time, and the sun would go down, and the moon would rise, and still Madlen sang on, and we could not go home. Ah! dear anwl! dear anwl! I shall never hear such singing again on this side of the grave!”

“Well, indeed, Shân fâch,” said Ieuan, “if you had heard Mifanwy sing to-day at the Eisteddfod, I believe you would have thought it was Madlen come back again.”

Shân smiled indulgently, but shook her head; then Ieuan left them to climb up Moel Hiraethog, and relieve Ianto.

“You will find the bowls and spoons washed, and the cawl keeping hot,” said Mifanwy, preparing to take up the charge of the sheep and of Moelen, who had been driven into the fresh pasturage early in the day. She held Shân by her red petticoat for a moment longer, while she drew from her pocket a red and white cotton handkerchief, in the corner of which she had safely tied up the bag containing the remainder of her prize money.

“I gave part of the prize to Laissabeth,” she said, “and paid Rhys Morgan for my hat, and here’s the rest.”

“And, after all, thee hast all that to spare!” cried Shân, raising her hands, and opening her wrinkled eyes. “Well, indeed, indeed! There’s riches!”

Ianto now joined them, and was equally impressed.

“Here’s a beginning,” he said; “who knows but they’ll ask thee to sing in the anthem at Bethesda

now!" The division of the prize with Laissabeth particularly pleased him. "Of course, of course, child, thee couldn't do less—but what a lot remains! Twelve shillings! Well, well, Shân, let's go home to supper, and find some safe place to put it in till Mifanwy wants it." And the two old people disappeared over the brow of the hill, the excitement occasioned by Mifanwy's success having completely driven from their minds the thought that the boy and girl were to spend the night beneath the stars.

When their voices had died away in the distance Mifanwy turned to caress Topper, who had been for some time endeavouring to attract her notice by pushing his cold nose into her hand, and wagging his tail vigorously.

"Oh! Topper, bach! it has been a lovely day, and the people liked my singing, and everything was beautiful; only it was bad to have shoes on!" Topper licked her hands. "And yet, I am not happy, Topper, oh! dear anwl!" She bent over his glossy black head, and looked with yearning in his faithful face, and her eyes were full of tears.

But it was time to fold the sheep; so she had to dry her eyes. Soon Topper was scouring the hillside, and barking joyously, as though delighted to resume his faithful service. The stars came out one by one in the cloudless evening sky, and the heaving bosom of the great ocean stretched out into the soft mysterious distance with whispering sighs and murmurs.

Mifanwy had watched it many times, and knew by heart every tint of sky and ocean. She closed the hurdle on the last sheep, and then sat down by Topper's side at the door of her little hut, to gaze solemnly at the face of Nature. The beauty of the scene impressed her. The events of the day had aroused feelings to which she had hitherto been a stranger. That intense pleasure, given to but a few, of being able to interest and sway a large concourse of human beings, the delight of being able to live

utterance to the music that was in her soul ; but, above all, the haunting shadow that had hung over her ever since fortune had shone on Ieuan ; all these combined had awakened feelings hitherto dormant in her heart. The hour that followed was a crisis in Mifanwy's life, though she sat in stolid silence, almost breathlessly listening to the mysterious sounds of Nature that night brought down upon the world.

"What was this great pulse throbbing through it all ? Where did those stars come from ? Where did she come from herself ? and why was she not happy ?" An inarticulate prayer rose in her heart, but she sat on motionless and silent, looking out into the growing darkness, until Juno's short yaps disturbed the stillness, and she knew that Ieuan was at hand. The sounds roused her from her trance-like quiet, and a feeling almost of regret came over her, so fully had her soul been flooded with the beauty of the night ; but, at the approach of her companion, whistling, she rose, and went to meet him with a smile of calm content born of that hour of solitude and thought.

"Ogo Wylofen is more alive than usual to-night, Mifanwy ! Dost hear it ?" asked Ieuan.

Mifanwy started. "Oh ! anwl, I had forgotten it, and I have not heard it at all. Yes, indeed, I hear it now. In half an hour it will be dreadful ! I can never get over my fear of it."

"Let us sit here," said Ieuan, "and by and by we will go and look down ; I am not afraid." And sitting down side by side upon a boulder, they listened while the strange sounds came fitful'y on the air, as the breeze rose and fell.

No wonder was it that the country people avoided that part of the cliff, and no wonder that the boy and girl shuddered while they listened. There was the long swelling roll of the waves as they entered the mouth of the cave, and then an ominous silence, when they found an easy passage between the smooth walls of the chasm ; then came a panting and sobbing that

swelled into a sound of weeping and wailing, so like the cry of a human being in distress, that it was almost impossible to believe that the cave held nothing of living misery. The water found its way out through some underground passage, with many mysterious rumblings and grumbings, to begin once more its series of moanings and wailing.

"Moelen is lying quietly," whispered Mifanwy. "John Powys said I was to go up to Maen Powys, if she stood up and hung her head. Oh! I hope she won't. Those cries would follow me all the way."

"Oh! as for that, I would be with thee," said Ieuan; "but indeed, Mifanwy, thou'rt too foolish about it. It is only the sea after all, and hasn't the sea been with us always?"

"Yes; but, Ieuan, I have *looked* into the cave, and that is what has frightened me so. Oh! listen to that moaning! I used to wonder what it was saying—but now—I know—it says thou art going!"

"Looked into the cave?" said Ieuan; "well, I have never been near enough to look down, but what didst thou see, Mifanwy? Let us go and look down now." And, laying hold of her hand, he drew her shrinking figure towards the edge of the abyss.

For a moment they listened, standing hand in hand; then, trembling in every limb, they ventured to peep over the cliff. While the water forced its thundering way into the dark chasm below them, they stood their ground with tolerable courage, but when, after a spell of silence, the rush of waters, returning through some narrow channel underground, sent forth the wailing and weeping sounds that gave a mysterious horror to the place; and when, to add to their terror, a faint, white mist rose from the seething waters and seemed to take human shape, as it glided into the dark rift, they turned in abject fear, and ran breathlessly until they had reached the boulder.

"Didst see it wringing its hands?" said Mifanwy, "and its long white hair waving behind? I have

often seen them ; they come in from the sea with the rushing waves, and wring their hands and moan and shriek as they pass up the cave."

"Twt, twt," said Ieuan, "it was only the spray blown in through some narrow crack ; if it were daylight we should not see them."

Mifanwy shook her head. "Sunlight, or moonlight, or twilight, they are just the same," she said, "for I have seen them. How know I ? How knowest thou what they are ? Spray or mist perhaps indeed, but oh ! anwl, to me they are the ghosts of the drowned, and they weep and wail for the troubles that are coming upon us, their poor brothers and sisters ; to me they seem to say, 'Weep, weep, Ieuan is going away, away, away !' Hark, Ieuan, I hear them now." And the girl shuddered and drew her red cloak around her.

Ieuan passed his fingers through his brown curls, and looking at Mifanwy with wide open eyes, replied, "What fancies thou hast in thine head, Mifanwy ; yes, and in thine heart, too ! I am not going away for another whole year, and, as I said before, we shall be older then, almost grown up ; thou'rt getting very tall now ; and, as for going away, Mifanwy, thou know'st very well that I cannot live long away from thee and dear old Cymru. I will make this agreement," the lad went on, pounding one fist into the palm of the other hand, "that I am to return here whenever I please ; and more than that, that thou art to come and join me as soon as ever I have got money enough to keep thee."

Mifanwy threw back the hood of her cloak and gazed at him earnestly, with clasped hands. "Oh ! Ieuan, dost think he will let thee ?"

"Of course," said Ieuan ; "why not ? I will have it so."

"Wilt indeed ?" she said, looking dreamily out over the sea. "That would be happiness for me, but I know not how it can be ; and yet, Ieuan, I

know, if thou dost promise, that thou wilt keep thy promise."

"I promise," said Ieuan, bringing his fist with a thump down on his knee. "But see, Moelen is standing up."

In a moment they were flying over the dewy grass to find that Moelen had but risen to change her quarters, and lie down again upon a still softer bed of wild thyme.

"And see," said Mifanwy, "she is chewing the cud ; she will soon be well again."

"Now," said Ieuan, "thou canst safely go to sleep in the hut, for thine eyes are drooping, and I will watch here."

"I am sleepy indeed," said Mifanwy, "but so art thou, Ieuan."

"Me sleepy !" laughed the lad, "not a bit of it ; trust me to watch, and I can sleep to-morrow in the sun."

Almost before he had finished speaking, Mifanwy had thrown herself on her bed of heather, under shelter of the rough hut, while Ieuan sat at the open door and watched. He, too, saw the bright stars overhead, and the heaving ocean stretched out before him, and to him, too, came strange thoughts and dim anticipations : forms of beauty he would carve one day ; hours of delight, when his dreams and imaginings should all be realised in the bright future opening out before him. Each day he would take note of the new marvels the great city should have disclosed to him, and on his return home in the evening he would tell Mifanwy—but, no ! there would be no Mifanwy ; a shadow fell over the radiant dream, and he tried to imagine what life would be without her. He turned to look at the sleeping form in the hut, dimly lighted by the rising moon, and felt that as hitherto their lives had been blended in one, so in the future, life would be impossible without her.

"I will go," he said ; "I will become a great man

like Sir Glynne ; I know I will, then I shall be rich,
and shall come and fetch Mifanwy ; *I will, I
will !*"

And Mifanwy smiled in her sleep, though a tear
stood on her long eyelashes.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHADOWS.

As the winter came on, the two children spent much of their time in their huts, to avoid the bitter winds, and as the gales increased in violence, Mifanwy drew her red cloak more closely around her, and Ieuan tied his straw hat firmly under his chin, and both walked more carefully on the steep slopes. They seldom met in the stormy weather, until the darkness had fallen over land and sea. When the sheep had been safely folded, both wended their way, with head bent against the bitter wind, across the moor, gladly dropping into their cosy, thatched home in the hollow. Then the long winter evenings brought their own delights. Shân's budget of news from the village, given to the accompaniment of her fingers and glistening needles that never ceased their busy work; Ianto's monosyllabic remarks, and Ieuan's and Mifanwy's never-ending talk of the glories of London, and the wonderful grandeur that was coming upon the lad. The old people listened with intense interest and simple wonder.

"Wilt thee have fine clothes, I wonder?" said Mifanwy.

"Not until I can earn them for myself," replied Ieuan sturdily.

"Right," put in Ianto.

"I will work for Sir Glynne, do all the hard chipping for him, and he shall pay me if he likes, but give me my clothes, *no*; I am not a beggar!"

"No, indeed!" said Mifanwy, tossing her head, and

the two proud children of the hills, with only twelve shillings and their scanty earnings between them and starvation, drew themselves up, and resumed the discussion of their plans complacently.

"But thee must have something to go in."

"I have shoes," said Ieuan, "and Shân is knitting my stockings."

"And my twelve shillings will buy thee a suit," said Mifanwy.

Ieuan was silent. Then: "That is the worst part of it."

"That is the best part of it," said the girl. "Oh! there is plenty that is bad, but that is good. What could I do with so much money?"

Here Ianto brought his fist down on the table, so that the bowls and platters clattered audibly.

"That shall never be," he said, with emphasis. "Mifanwy's money shall be spent for her alone. I stand in the place of thy father, whoever the villain was."

Ieuan blushed hotly. It had gradually dawned upon him that to be the son of a "trampess," whose husband, if she had one, had never been heard of, was a stain upon him his own sturdy honesty and pride could never remove; and he had often envied Mifanwy her knowledge of her simple though unfortunate parents.

"You don't know that he was a villain," he said, digging his hands into his pockets, and stretching out his legs, which were becoming terribly long for his tattered trousers; "he may have been a respectable man."

At these words Ianto laughed heartily, and Shân joined.

"Oh! he might have been a king; but, anyway, he treated thy poor mother badly, to let her tramp along the roads till she died in John Powys' barn. Poor thing! poor thing!" said Shân, meditating; "they say she came in the *Aden y don* from North Wales, so far away!"

Ieuan's brow burnt hotly.

"If I ever meet him, I will thrash him within an inch of his life. Poor mother, poor mother!"

"Well, never mind that now," said Ianto. "I think if thou ever dost meet him, thou wilt have too much onnore to let him pass without a drubbing. But about this suit," and again he brought his fist down on the table. "I have spoken to Will teilwr about it already; he will make thee a real good suit of the brown frieze that came home from the weaver's this summer; three fine white shirts and collars and ties; there! I have been saving my money for years. Shân has it safe in a hole in the chimney, and we have often puzzled our brains while we sat here, waiting for thee and Mifanwy, to settle what we could ever do with it. It is nearly ten pounds," he whispered to Ieuan, "and I am setting thee up for life, boy."

Ieuan stood up and shook himself, as though dismissing an unpleasant remembrance, and, speaking in rather an unsteady voice, he said:

"And I will repay you the money, Ianto, if I live. I will pay you over and over again; but, there! I never can pay you for all your kindness to me. What would have become of Mifanwy and me if we hadn't been brought up by the kindest and best man and woman in Wales?"

"Oh, anwl! what indeed?" said Mifanwy.

"Twt, twt," said Shân, lifting the steaming crock of uwd off the hooks, and pouring it into a huge wooden bowl on the table. "Twt, twt, no more of your flattery, but come to supper."

And when they gathered round the black shining table, lighted by its one rush candle and the glow of the peat fire on the stone hearth, no traveller over the stormy moor outside, where the wild west wind was blowing the scudding clouds across the face of the moon, and bending down the withered rushes, would have guessed that within that tiny thatched hut dwelt so much of human happiness and interest.

The winter sped on, the spring-time came again, and still Mifanwy and Ieuan haunted the same craggy slopes, and ever, as each month brought its tokens of returning life and beauty, Mifanwy grew more silent. She had grown much during the past year, her form had filled out, and the figure that was once painfully thin and gaunt, had now the symmetry of healthy youth.

Ieuan, too, had grown much, both in mind and person, and, when the two young people walked over the moor in the early morning light, Shân, watching them from the garden hedge, had no reason to be ashamed of them.

One day, when the evening shadows were falling, Ieuan ran breathlessly up Moel Mynach, and, flinging himself on the sea-pinks, cried excitedly :

"What dost think, Mifanwy? The little sea-crows have their first brood out under the cliff here; I saw them plainly from Moel Hiraethog; let us crawl to the edge and look over."

Mifanwy, full of interest, instantly lay flat on the grass, and both crawled face downwards to the edge of the cliff, where they lay side by side looking down over the seething, foaming waters below. Half way down the cliff, on a ledge of rock, the jackdaws, or the "little sea-crows," as they were called on the coast, had built their untidy nest of twigs, and were now flying from crag to crag, cawing happily, and enticing their little ones back to the nest after their first flight.

"See how they flutter," said Mifanwy. "To-morrow they will fly down to the beach, and the next day they will keep thee company on Moel Hiraethog. I have noticed that all the birds that live on Moel Mynach fly over to Moel Hiraethog to spend their day, and those which are fledged on thy rocks come over here."

"Discontented," said Ieuan, "like human beings,

always thinking there is something better where they are not."

"Well, indeed," said Mifanwy, "I am not like that; I want only to be here all my life." Then there was a long silence, while they watched the young brood return to their nest under a sheltering tuft of grass, and, after much cawing and shuffling, settle themselves down for the night. Suddenly Ieuan spoke.

"Thee looked at the crows as solemnly as if thee wert at a funeral, Mifanwy! What is it grieves thee?"

"Nothing," she said; "only I was thinking that, this time next year, when the little sea-crows bring out their first brood, thou wilt not be here."

"No," said Ieuan, with a dreamy look. "I shall be in London, far from the sea-gulls and the little sea-crows, and far from thee, Mifanwy. It will be lonely for thee here, but thee wilt have the sea, and the sheep, and Shân and Ianto; while I will have nothing, nothing, but my carving. 'Sculpture,' Rhys Morgan says I ought to call it."

"Sculpture! what a hard word," said the girl; "but thee wilt have learnt to talk English by that time; but I, oh! it will be lonely! I will have to answer Robert the Mill when he shouts out from the mill door, else I will forget how to speak."

"Robert the Mill! oh, yes, thee canst talk to him. I expect thee wilt not miss me much then." And Ieuan pulled up a handful of sea-pinks and dropped them down over the cliff.

Mifanwy was silent and thoughtful.

"I don't see how it's going to be," she said slowly. "Will the grand gentleman and lady let thee come back to fetch a poor shepherdess, dost think? and, if thou shouldst come back, what wouldst do with me? No, no, Ieuan, I see it all, we are not children now. Thou art taller than Ianto, and I am as tall as Shân, and I know that thou must go, and I must stay; God wills it."

"Yes, I must go," said Ieuan.

They both stood up at the edge of the cliff, and Ieuan laid hold of her hand, as if to draw her away from danger. "But, Mifanwy, *I will come back*, I cannot live without thee; dost believe me, lass? hast ever found me break a promise?"

"No, of course not," said Mifanwy, bending her head over a sea-pink, while Ieuan held her other hand; "and I know thou wilt keep this promise; but I know, too, that when thou comest to fetch me, I will refuse to go with thee, for thou wilt be a fine gentleman then, and to have a poor shepherdess for thy sister will disgrace thee in that grand London."

Ieuan, still holding her hand, was silent for some time, and his brow was troubled.

"I wish Sir Glynne had never spoken to me," he said; "it is all dark before us. Only one thing I know and that is, *I cannot live without thee*. Wilt trust me, lass, and not take up with Robert the Mill? Wilt wait for me?"

Mifanwy drew her hand away gently, and, casting a scornful look towards the distant mill, where Robert's white figure could even now be seen at the door, replied, "I will never take up with Robert the Mill, and I will wait for thee, lad, till I die."

Ieuan seemed only half satisfied, and remained silent, while they returned to fold their sheep. The sun was sinking in splendour of gold and crimson over the sea when they turned their steps homeward, facing the cool evening breeze, that flew across the bare, grey mountains.

"It will be rain soon," said Ieuan, "if this south wind continues. Who is that coming down from the top? It is Laissabeth." And both turned to watch the fluttering pink figure of the girl, who now ran down to meet them. She held her straw hat in her hand, and on reaching them, panting with the exertion of running, she stretched out her arms to steady herself.

"Oh! stop me, stop me!" she cried, with an affectation of fear, and Ieuan was obliged to open his arms to catch her. She fell in a little heap at their feet, laughing and panting. He raised her up gently.

"You are not so much used to the slopes as we are," he said. "Mifanwy can run down there easily."

Laissabeth held her hand to her side. "Oh, Mifanwy," she said contemptuously, with a nod at the girl, "she is a shepherdess; I am not, and I hate these slippery slopes."

"Why did you come down then?" asked Mifanwy.

"Only to say good-bye. I am going away to-morrow; Miss Gwynne Ellis is going to take me with her; she has promised my uncle to take me safely to school. See my new frock, Mifanwy! and my new hat. I am going to be grand, I can tell thee, and am going to learn singing. Dost not envy me?"

Mifanwy did not answer; she did not wish to say, "Yes," and "onnore," as Ianto would have said, forbade her to say "No!"

"Mifanwy will come to London, too, one day," said Ieuan; "for I will come back and fetch her."

Laissabeth tittered. "Oh! well indeed!" she said, "that will be fine! And for thee, Ieuan! Perhaps we shall meet in London. My uncle has had a letter from Lady Meredith, and she says I am to go and see her sometimes; and Sir Glynne wrote to my uncle, too, to say that he is coming down to the Hall next month, and will take thee back with him; so, good-bye, Ieuan, but not for long." And she held out her little dimpled hand, which Ieuan grasped warmly. She had grown into a lovely maiden. The golden plaits which had formerly hung down her back had disappeared, and her hair had been gathered in coils at the back of her head.

"Good-bye, Mifanwy," she said; "perhaps I shall see thee in London, too; I shall know thee, of course, by thy red cloak." And, dimpling and smiling, she turned again to bid a last good-bye to Ieuan.

Mifanwy breathed a sigh of relief when she had disappeared over the brow of the hill.

"How pretty she is!" said Ieuan. "I don't think in London they can find a prettier face. She is like the pink and white inside the sea-shells!"

"Yes," said Mifanwy; "and I am like the brown sea-weed."

"Twt, twt," said Ieuan, "I never remember that thou art so dark except when Laissabeth is with us; she has not thy beautiful figure. Thou art beautiful too, in another way, Mifanwy, and it is the way I like best," he whispered in her ear; "dost hear, lass?"

Mifanwy already had her finger in the latch hole of the door, but she turned round, and, laughingly shaking her head, replied:

"Yes, I hear, but oh, anwl! I don't believe."

I was too late to argue the point, for she had already entered the cottage, where the usual cosy fire was awaited them.

"Oh! news," cried Shân, "news! wonderful news!"

Powys has been here, ach y fi! I was frightened by his sour looks. He came to tell us to put thee ready, my boy, for the grand gentleman will come now to fetch thee." And with her apron she wiped the tears from her eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

CATRIN'S TACTICS.

THE weeks slipped by swiftly. To Mifanwy they seemed to fly, and the last of all had come. Sir Glynne and Lady Meredith were staying at the Hall, and had several times visited Ieuan's hut. Ieuan had no new work to show, having spent all his spare time latterly lying on his face on the grass, leaning on his elbows, studying a dog-eared grammar, geography, or history book; and Sir Glynne was pleased that it should be so.

"You have done exactly what I should have advised you to do, my boy. You have tried to improve your mind, and to leave your sculpture to my tuition. Well, you will have less to unlearn, perhaps. Come down to the Hall to-morrow evening, and I will tell you finally what day I shall be leaving. But—h'm, ha! about clothes, my boy. It won't do to appear in London, you know, in your country garb—picturesque though it may be—so we will take a journey to Caer Madoc together, where, I have no doubt, there is a good tailor, who can make you a plain suit of clothes. After you come to London, my wife will see you well set up."

Ieuan coloured, and stammered awkwardly:

"If you please, sir, I want to say something; first, thank you for being so kind. I can't say much thanks in English, not what I am thinking to say, but when I am with you all the time, I will have the—the—the—"

"Opportunity," suggested Sir Glynne.

"Yes, sir, the opportunity to show you my thanks ; but I want to say, sir, that there's two things that I hope you will be agreed to them. I have got a nice new suit of clothes ; iss Ianto iss give to me, brown they are, and a brown cap ; and so I don't want new clothes until I have earned enough money to pay for them myself. I will work for you, sir, with the stones. I will do the hard work, and anything that you will show me ; and, if you will pay me as you would pay any other poor boy, I will save my money till I can buy a suit of clothes."

"Well," said Sir Glynne, smiling, "I like your independence ; but let us settle our business in our own tongue." And giving up the English, he continued the conversation in Welsh, much to Ieuan's comfort. "And what is the other request you have to make ?"

"It is this, sir," said Ieuan, "that you will let me come back to see Shân and Ianto whenever I like."

"Whenever you like !" said Sir Glynne, opening his eyes in some surprise ; "my dear boy, that would be rather a rash promise to make. You might be wanting to come down every month."

"Oh, no," said Ieuan ; "but perhaps every year, sir ; and, when I am old enough and rich enough, I must come to fetch Mifanwy, for I have promised."

"Mifanwy !" exclaimed Sir Glynne in blank astonishment. "Who is Mifanwy ?"

"My sister, the shepherdess, on Moel Mynach."

"But you have no sister ! I thought you were an orphan, without brothers or sisters."

"She is not really my sister ; but we have always lived together with Ianto and Shân ; and so, sir, you see, of course, she cannot live without me, and I cannot live without her."

"Oh, I see," said Sir Glynne, laughing heartily ; "a little love affair. Well, I think I may safely promise that, when you have grown old enough and rich enough, and have seen London life, been with me

to Rome, etc., if you want to come back to fetch the shepherdess, you can do so."

"Thank you, sir," said Ieuan in a tone of relief. The look of anxiety cleared away from his brow, and, after walking part of the way over the hill with Sir Glynne, he hastened down to the shore, passing the mill, where Robert was standing at the door as usual, and across the sands where the Sethin was sparkling down to the sea. He was soon running up Moel Mynach, where Mifanwy stood watching him. He told her what had passed between him and Sir Glynne, and they returned home silently side by side, more thoughtful than usual.

"You are rather silent, children," said Shân later in the evening, when the supper was over, and the shining black bowls and the spoons and platters had been washed and put away. "Come, let us have 'Aderyn Pur.' My mother always said, 'There is no thought so black that music will not silver its wings.' Come, Mifanwy, begin."

The girl began. Her voice was not so steady and strong as usual, but the plaintive air lost none of its sweetness for that reason. Ieuan joined in, and Shân soared around with innumerable quavers, while Ianto's sonorous bass voice lent depth and harmony to the music; and soon the cottage walls resounded with melody.

"That was good," observed Ianto. "Now let's have 'The Blackbird.'" And again the untaught musical voices followed Mifanwy's clear treble in that most exquisite of all Welsh melodies, "Y Fwyalch," or "The Blackbird." And so they sang until the peat fire was dying on the hearth, and the moon was shining through the little window, throwing a square patch of silver light on the earthen floor.

"Now to bed, children," said Shân; "I must be busy to-morrow finishing thy last pair of stockings."

Ieuan laughed heartily as he climbed up the ladder to the loft.

"How many pairs of stockings am I to have, Shân?" he said; "dost think I am going to walk to London?"

Late one evening in the following week, in the kitchen of The Ship Inn, Catrin and Dan Howells were engaged in a conversation evidently very interesting to both, although Dan's remarks were confined for the most part to a grunt or a single word. Catrin frequently broke off the colloquy to stroll to the tiny window, which, although cleaned every morning, grew dim towards evening from the mist of the sea spray that always seemed to fill the air at Abersethin. After several vain attempts to see through the glass, she sauntered out to the low doorway, and from habit, shading her eyes with her hands, peered up at the frowning top of Moel Hirathog.

"What can have become of the laddie?" she called back to Dan; "dost think he has forgotten?"

"H'm, no," said Daniel; "shouldn't wonder if that old mule, John Powys, refused to let him come to-night."

"Perhaps, indeed! but then, thank goodness, John Powys has nothing more to do with him. Sir Glynne has taken possession of him now. Oh, anwl fach! what a lucky boy! Indeed, Dan, that was a clever thought of thine to give the letter to the boy before he goes; and he's such a scholar, he'd read it off to us at once."

Another saunter to the door, where the twilight still lingered, though the old kitchen was getting darker and darker.

"Here he comes!" she said, and she turned back from the doorway; "here he comes, and Mifanwy with him of course. What that lass and laddie will do when they are separated I can't think; but I must get rid of Mifanwy somehow, for it wouldn't do to tell her."

"Humph, no!" said Daniel.

Here Ieuan entered alone; he was greeted by one

exclamation after another, having donned his new clothes, shoes, cap, and all, in honour of the occasion ; for to be invited down especially to see Catrin Howells was an honour at Abersethin.

"Caton pawb!" cried Dan.

Catrin raised her hands in astonishment. "Well, well!" she exclaimed. "Merciful goodness! What shall I say?" and she twisted Ieuan round to look at him from all points.

It was an awkward moment for the lad, but he stood his ground well, digging his hands deep into his trousers' pockets with his old habit, and laughing merrily, he tossed his hair from his forehead.

"There's broad shoulders he has! and, anwl! look at his long legs; indeed, indeed, they'll find it hard to show a handsomer young fellow in all London. Sir Glynne will be proud of thee, lad."

"Oh, Catrin!" he said, "thee'st laughing at me, or thou want'st to drive away my nervousness; but I am frightened to death about it all, and sometimes I think to run away. A poor lad like me, with nothing in the world, not even a name of my own."

"Twt, twt," said Catrin, "thy name has been good enough for thee hitherto, and very suitable. Ieuan Gwyllt, what could they call thee better? But I am going to give thee a new name to-night, and perhaps thee won't like it so well. Sit down, my lad, whilst I get thee a bowl of brezi; thou art too young to begin with the 'cwrw' yet; and when the fine gentlemen in London drag thee into the tavern and say, 'Come and have a glass, lad,' and here she emphasised her words with her fist on the little round table, "then remember Catrin Howells' advice, and don't thee touch it, my lad."

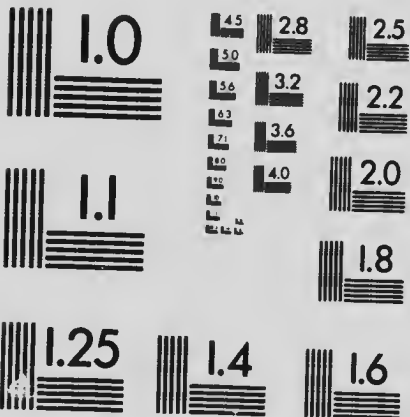
Ieuan laughed. "Not likely, Catrin; I hate the stuff, though I like brezi; besides, it isn't likely that the fine gentlemen in London will ask a poor boy like me to drink with them."

"Poor boy like thee, indeed! thee'st going to be a



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fine gentleman, and, if I don't make a great mistake, a rich one too ; eh, Dan ? ”

Dan grunted and nodded, while Ieuan opened his eyes.

“ Here, drink the breoi, boy, while I hunt for the letter,” said Catrin, and she fumbled in her capacious leather pocket, and at last drew out a crumpled letter, that much excited Ieuan's curiosity.

“ Here, take it, boy ; I have waited sixteen years to hear that letter read.” And still withholding it from Ieuan's eager hand, she told him the history already known to the reader, of the advent of the *Aden y don*, on that stormy day in March, when the letter was entrusted into her keeping.

While she proceeded with her tale, Ieuan's eyes grew more and more excited ; his face flushed, and his heart beat tumultuously.

“ Will I hear who my mother was ? ”

“ How do I know ? ” said Catrin ; “ read the letter, and read it loud, for Dan to hear ; I should never have thought of giving it to thee ; it was Dan who thought of that.”

Meanwhile Ieuan had opened the letter with trembling fingers ; then, with a parched tongue and husky voice, he read as follows :—

“ MY DEAR JOHN,” (“ I thought so,” put in Catrin) —“ for you are still dear to me, in spite of all the unkindness with which you have repaid all my tender love and undying affection. How is it that I love you still—you who have deserted me, and so cruelly wounded me ? But it is true, John, I love you still, as I did on that June morning only eighteen months ago, when, a happy and innocent girl, I left Mrs. Wilson's school to be with you, as I thought, for the rest of your life. Oh, John, do you remember that happy day ? Do you remember all your promises of love and faithfulness ? Do you realise how much I left and lost for your sake ? Why did you insist

upon so much secrecy? Why did you cause me to break my parents' hearts, to lose the respect and love of the dearest and best of brothers? It is true I was wickedly ungrateful to them all, and basely willing to give them all up for *your sake*."

"Stop, my boy," said Catrin; "take another drink of brei, 'twill steady your voice."

But Ieuan only shook his head, and went on:

"How could I guess that in so short a time you would have tired of me? When you first left me in that lonely cottage in the North Wales hills, I could not and would not believe that you had really deserted me, and as the months passed by, and the small sum of money you had left with me dwindled away, and I began to realise that you would never return to me, my life became almost unbearable, and I grieve to say that more than once I was on the point of ending it. Oh! that dreadful lake! by the side of which we used to walk lovingly, arm in arm, in the first weeks of our honeymoon. How different it looked to me in less than a year, for only so long did your love last. I have tried hard to give you up, John, even as you have given me up, and I do not write now only to reproach you, but to explain why I have thus sought you out again.

"You knew, John, when you left me—and, oh! how this adds to the bitterness of my sorrow!—that I was likely before long to bring into this cold and cruel world a child, who should have been the pledge of our love, but, alas! will come unwelcomed by its father. What is to become of my innocent child, John? You cannot, you will not thrust me from you; at all events you will take care of my child—of our child!

"I write this letter, and entrust it to kind Catrin Howells, to be delivered to you in case of my failing to see you, for I feel a strange misgiving that my life is drawing to a close.

"I have not made myself known to Catrin Howells, and shall continue to regard your wishes in

that matter until after the birth of my child ; but after that, John, should you still discard me, I shall seek out my beloved brother, and see whether he will forgive me, and extend to me that kindness and love I hunger for, and which you so cruelly deny me. Oh ! dear John, what has made you hate me, and tire of me ? It is true, I could never take the interest I ought in your business projects, and often asked for money when you had none to give me, but I am young, and would improve. What would have become of me I do not know, had I not happened to meet an old hawker who came to the Cribwr Mountains to sell his wares. He told me of your having come into your father's property, and that you were living at Maen Powys, while I was starving on the North Wales hills. I have suffered so much, and travelled so far to see you, so that my child may be born in his father's house. Do not deny me that kindness, John. I am too weary and ill to write more, but shall now leave this note with Catrin Howells, and try to reach Maen Powys, and, oh ! to think that I shall pass my beloved home a deserted and broken-hearted woman.

"Good-bye, John, and may God forgive you for the cruel wrong you have done me. I am, still as ever,

Your loving and faithful

"MARY."

When Ieuan had read the last word, the letter slipped from his fingers, and he stood staring at Catrin.

"John Powys !" he cried. "Oh, Catrin, I cannot bear it ; that hateful man who has been so cruel to me and Mifanwy. I have the marks of his strap now on my shoulders."

"Caton pawb !" said Catrin indignantly, "what does the boy mean ? A beggar boy like thee to complain because he finds that the richest man in the parish is his father."

"But my mother!" said Ieuan; "oh, my poor mother!"

And all the old stories he had heard, the scraps of information eagerly gathered by the child, when no one had thought that he was listening, the sad appeals for love and protection he had just read, the picture so often drawn by Shân of that silent, white form in the barn, when she had laid his little red cheek on his mother's dead lips, all crowded in upon the lad's mind, and, dropping into a chair, he covered his face with his hands, and sobbed.

"My mother—my poor mother!" was the burden of his cry.

And Catrin, in sympathy, wiped her eyes with her blue checked apron.

"She was a sweet lady, and gentle; too gentle for John Powys' cruel ways."

"A lady!" said Ieuan.

"A lady, yes, a real lady. Eh, Dan?"

Dan grunted and nodded several times.

"A real lady, though her boots were tattered and her gown was thin; her long, black cloak was a good one. I wonder what became of that?"

"Oh, I wonder," said Ieuan. "If only I had one scrap of even the ragged dress, how I would treasure it. Will I never know more about her than that her name was Mary?"

Well," said Catrin, "now we are coming to business," smoothing down her blue apron, and well pleased to feel that she had so interesting an affair to manage. "If thou art afraid of John Powys, *I am not*. I have known him since he was a boy, when I was his good mother's servant. Many a cat and many a little bird I have saved from his cruel grip; yes, and many a cuff I have given him, too, and I would like to give him a few more; but it will be better than any cuff, when I go up to him," and she stood up with her arms akimbo, nodding her head emphatically, "and when I say, 'John Powys, I have found you out; I

know now that what I suspected is true ; I have read the letter I told you the wind had blown into the broken partition ; I have found it again, John Powys, and it tells me that the little shepherd boy, Ieuan Gwyllt, to whom you have been so hard a master, is your own son, and the son of that poor young lady who came through the storm in the *Aden y don* ; and now, what are you going to do for the boy ? ”

“ Oh, stop, Catrin, stop ! ” cried Ieuan, jumping up. “ Never, never, never, will I have anything to do with him, and if I cannot find out any more about my mother, except by asking John Powys, then will I never know more than that her name is ‘ Mary. ’ Mary is a dear name, Catrin. ”

Catrin did not answer ; she was filled with astonishment and indignation.

“ Well, indeed, indeed ! if ever I heard such a thing ! Here’s a fine gentleman ! Because thou art going with Sir Glynne Meredith thou art become too fine a gentleman to be beholden to thine own father ? ”

“ Oh ! it isn’t that, Catrin ; but don’t you see, I hate him so ; besides, I have vowed to give him a good drubbing the first time I meet him ; only I am waiting till I am a year stronger and bigger. I have promised Mifanwy to pay him for every bruise on her body, and if I acknowledged him as my father how can I do that ? ”

Catrin laughed, and Dan chuckled.

“ Well, indeed ! ” she said, “ there is something in that, too ; and thou wilt only give him what he richly deserves, so take thine own course, my boy ; I won’t interfere with thee ; only I don’t promise to hide entirely from John Powys that I know his secret ; a hint now and then will keep the gentleman well in order ; but there is something else that I want to advice thee about. Now, there’s Mifanwy ! Look here, my boy, Mifanwy and thee have been brought up like brother and sister, and thou must drop her now. If thee hadst continued to live here, it puzzles

me to think what would become of thee and Mifanwy; but indeed the ways of Providence are cleverer than ours, and it is all settled very nicely. Thou wilt go away with Sir Glynne, and, of course, thou wilt know no more of Mifanwy; she will fret a little at first, no doubt, for I think the girl has a heart, in spite of her dark skin; and 'tis but natural, seeing you have spent your lives together on those lonely hills; but that is all over now, Ieuan, and thou must drop her; dost hear, lad?" and again her fist came down on the little round table.

Poor Ieuan stood before her, twirling his new brown cap in his hands, pained and bewildered. The world—his world—seemed to be turning topsy-turvy, and his brain was a jumble of confused reflections. To be always dressed in his new suit, to be pressed by London gentlemen "to have a glass with them," to be expected "to drop Mifanwy," to know that John Powys was his father; all these things together oppressed and bewildered him; but in his confusion two things were clear to him: he could never drop Mifanwy, and he had the dear mother whose name was "Mary," to think of, to treasure her memory, and to avenge her cruel wrongs.

"I must go now," he said, passing his fingers through his hair; "thank you, Catrin, you've been very kind to me; I will never part with this letter, but I will never claim relationship with John Powys; I am ashamed of my father, but I am not ashamed of my mother," with a toss of his head, "whatever her faults may have been."

"What's become of Mifanwy?" said Catrin. "I saw her running down the hill with thee; remember my words, and tell her nothing."

"Indeed, I cannot promise that," said Ieuan; "Mifanwy and I have never had a secret from each other, and I won't begin to deceive her now."

"Well, well, we may leave that to time; when thou'st been to London and seen all the pretty ladies

there, thou wilt forget Mifanwy, and thou wilt be quite right ; remember my advice, Ieuan, and, when thou leavest Abersethin, *drop Mifanwy*. Good-bye, lad ; I wish thee well, and, when thee comest to Abersethin, don't forget that Catrin Howells and Dan are thy friends."

Half way up the hill, Ieuan found Mifanwy waiting for him ; she was leaning idly against the rocky side of the road, half sitting on the bank, her shapely bare feet stretched out before her, her straw hat slung upon her arm, and the pale golden light of the rising moon shining full upon her ; her large brown eyes with their heavy fringed lashes with the faint "sepia" shadow beneath them, looked lustrous and beautiful in the moonlight, and, when her smile of welcome disclosed a row of pearly teeth between the full red lips, Ieuan saw and felt that there was some great charm in her appearance, in spite of her swarthy skin and shabby clothes.

"What had Catrin to tell thee ?" she asked, rising and joining him in his steady tramp homewards.

"Oh ! Mifanwy, much that will surprise thee," he replied. "It will take too long to tell thee now, but to-morrow at noon I will come to Moel Mynach, and thou shalt hear all about it."

When they reached home, they found all excitement in the little cottage. Sir Glynne had been there, to say that he had been hurriedly summoned to London, and would have to leave early the following morning, and would expect Ieuan to join him at the corner of the road, where it branched off to the Hall.

Ianto was unusually serious, and Shân tearful, while she tied up the modest bundle of Ieuan's belongings in a blue cotton handkerchief. Ieuan gazed meditatively at it.

"I wonder whether that will suit Sir Glynne's grand carriage ?" he observed. "I am afraid not."

"What ? not that beautiful blue handkerchief, the

brightest I could get in the shop! I should think it would, indeed! Art getting proud already?"

"It is very nice, Shân fach," said Ieuan, "only I know gentlemen are odd."

Mifanwy whispered, "I will wrap it up in the rush basket I have made for thee; it is pretty, and will look like a fishing-basket."

Ieuan nodded confidentially, and the little family separated for the night, with hearts oppressed by the shadow of the first parting.

CHAPTER X

PARTING.

IN the early grey of the next morning, Mifanwy was up and busily engaged in preparing breakfast; the ham was taken down from the large oaken chimney, and the frizzled slices heaped upon Ieuan's plate; the boy ate silently, and soon finished his meal.

"Come out a moment, Mifanwy," he said; "I want to show thee the dangerous gap in the fence on the edge of the cliff; we can see it from behind the garden hedge."

When they had reached the place, he pointed towards Moel Hiraethog, where the sheep had not yet been unfolded.

"Wilt go to John Powys, and tell him how suddenly I have been called away? He has a shepherd from Rianon ready to take my place, but thee'll unfold the sheep this morning for me, and keep them from the gap, Mifanwy."

"Yes," she answered in a whisper, trying to still her throbbing heart, and to banish the terrible pain of "hiraeth" that was already clutching at her heart strings. "Oh, yes, I will see to the sheep."

There was a long silence, both gazing out over the sea, that lay in a leaden haze, as yet untouched by the sunrise.

Ieuan took her hand, that was hanging listlessly by her side.

"Wilt give me a kiss, lass, at parting?"

But she hung her head, and, drawing a little away,

blushed so vividly that it was visible even through her dark skin.

"No?" he said inquiringly, and pressing her hand. "Well, next time we meet; thee won't refuse then, Mifanwy?"

She did not answer, but, drawing her hand from his, she buried her face in both hands, and the panting bosom and heaving shoulders showed the sobs that were convulsing her.

Ieuan struggled hard to preserve his calmness.

"Mifanwy, lass, try to bear up; I feel the same, but I must not show it," he said in a hard, determined voice.

"No, no!" said Mifanwy, dropping her hands, and raising her face to the sea-wind. She had wept so often alone lately, that her eyes had become accustomed to tears, and soon dried up, and showed no traces of her weeping, as eyes do to which tears are familiar.

"Come in; Ianto and Shân will be waiting for us," and the girl led the way bravely into the cottage.

When Ieuan took up his blue bundle, Shân broke down completely, and was loud in her lamentations; while Ianto snuffled and drew his cuff across his eyes.

"Good-bye, machgeni, be a good, honest boy, and have too much onnore to do anything in Sir Glynne's back that thou wouldst not do in his face."

"And write to us sometimes," added Shân; "though we can't read thy letter; but Mr. Rhys Morgan will read it—only I hear he is going to London too. Good-bye, my boy bach!"

Ieuan wrung their hands. "I will write," he said, "and, please God, I will soon begin to reward you for all you have done for me."

Mifanwy stood silently by, and apparently stolidly callous; but when, at last, the rumbling wheels of Sir Glynne's dogcart were heard approaching, she turned deathly pale, and when Ieuan grasped her hand at parting, he saw her lips move, but could not catch

the sound of her farewell. There was a long, lingering hand-clasp, and while Sir Glynne stopped and spoke cheerily to the tearful old people, Mifanwy surreptitiously pushed the blue bundle into the rush basket, and placed it in the carriage.

Ieuan was going to get up at the back of the dogcart, but Sir Glynne said decidedly, settling the question for ever in the mind of the disturbed groom :

"No, in front with me, Ieuan ; when Lady Meredith is not here, you will always take her place."

And with more good-byes, and much waving of hands, the dogcart rolled away in a cloud of dust.

Later in the morning, Robert the Mill came panting up Moel Mynach.

"Where's Ieuan ?" he said. "I see Will Rianon watching the sheep. Where is Ieuan ?"

"Gone !" said Mifanwy in a cold, hard voice

"Gone where ? not with Sir Glynne ! I thought they were not going for another week."

"Yes, they went this morning early ; there came a sudden message from the Queen, or the Parliament, or something ; indeed, I don't know which, and he has gone." She paused for a moment. "Ieuan is gone !" she said again, going over the words to see how they sounded. Yes, she could repeat the words over and over again, but she could not realise the fact.

"Well, he's a lucky chap !" said Robert ; "there's no mistake about that ; my father said so last night, and everybody else says so ; but for thee and me, Mifanwy, it will be lonesome, especially for thee. I must come and cheer thee up sometimes ; perhaps thee'll deign to say a word to me now ; at all events, thee may say 'good-bye' to Ieuan, for, if he ever does come back, he will be a fine gentleman, and it isn't likely he will take up with a shepherd girl, nor yet with a miller's lad like me."

Every word fell like molten lead on Mifanwy's

heart ; she saw their reasonableness, and feared their truth.

"I am thankful to say," said Robert, with a pompous air, "that I can do without his friendship ; my father says I can hold up my head with any lad in the parish ; I am his only son, and the mill and the farm will both be mine, for all thou wilt never cast a word at me !" and he turned away with but a curt good-bye to Mifanwy.

That night her usual short "pader," taught her by Shân as a baby, and nightly repeated without much thought, was considerably lengthened, and, if "Ieuan ! Ieuan !" was too much the burden of her prayer, is it to be wondered at ? She rose slowly from her knees and lay down on her bed, exhausted by the events of the day, and soon fell into a deep sleep.

With the early dawn she woke refreshed and eager, forgetting all that had happened the day before ; but instantly, at the sight of the sea, she remembered everything, and the light died out from her eyes, the life and energy from her limbs ; and, with a heavy, aching heart, she began another day, a day bereft of all its usual interests and pleasures.

About a fortnight after his arrival in London, Ieuan wrote to Shân and Ianto. They had already been informed of his safe arrival through Lady Meredith, who had walked down one afternoon across the moor, to see Shân and to set her mind at ease. But a letter ! Really written by Ieuan himself ! Coming straight from London and directed to Shân herself !

"Shân Thomas,
" Pantêg,
" Abersethin."

It was a treasure to be carefully guarded so long as she lived. But, alas ! when it arrived, there was no one in the cottage who could read it. Robert the Mill had brought it up to Mifanwy on his return from

the village one morning, and she had flown over the moor at evening, so soon as she had folded her sheep, arriving breathless and panting just when Shân and Ianto were sitting down to their supper.

"Oh! Shân! a letter! a letter! from Ieuan! What shall we do?"

"Give it to me," said Shân, and, eagerly clutching it, she narrowly examined every portion of the envelope and the seal; all were admired, and especially the handwriting.

"I always thought he was wasting his time down there with Rhys Morgan, learning to write and to count, and things; but now I see how wise he was!"

"Shall we open it?" said Ianto.

"No, indeed," said Shân, "what's the use? I will take it to Rhys Morgan to-morrow, and he shall open it. It would be a pity to spoil the look of it before he sees it."

"That's it," said Ianto.

And Mifanwy was obliged to agree. So it was placed carefully in the leaves of the Bible until the next afternoon, when Mr. Rhys Morgan would be disengaged.

Shân knew that in the morning there was to be a wedding in the Rock Church on Ynysoer island, but in the afternoon she donned her best attire, her Sunday "gwnbach," her scarlet scarf and tall black hat, and, carrying the letter folded up in a pocket-handkerchief, she walked with much importance in her gait and countenance over the moor and down to the village, where she found Rhys Morgan sitting on a long bench outside The Ship Inn, Catrin and Dan seated one on each side of him.

When Shân appeared, Catrin greeted her with much warmth; they had been friends from childhood, and were properly interested in each other's affairs.

"What can she want?" said Dan.

"Why, a letter from Ieuan, of course," was the

shrewd woman's answer, "and no one to read it at home; so she brings it to Mr. Rhys Morgan."

"Yes, indeed!" cried Shân, sitting down on a wooden stool that Betto had run out with.

"And there's lucky we are," said Catrin, "that Mr. Rhys Morgan is here. Wake up, Dan; art listening?"

Shân deliberately took out of her pocket her handkerchief, and produced from its folds Ieuan's letter.

"Here it is, sir; I would not let them open it—what was the good?—until you had seen it. Such a pretty seal and such beautiful writing, sir, and that is thanks to you."

And she rose and made a bob curtsey before she sat down to listen complacently, while Mr. Rhys Morgan opened the letter and began:—

"MY DEAR SHÂN AND IANTO AND MIFANWY,—
How can I begin to tell you of all the wonders I have seen! and here is the greatest wonder of all, that I—Ieuan Gwyllt—am in London, and writing to you on a fine mahogany table and with ink from a silver inkstand! I am very happy. Sir Glynne and Lady Meredith are so kind to me, and Mrs Jones, the housekeeper, is kinder still! I sleep every night on a soft feather bed, and oh! Shân fach! I wear shoes and stockings *every* day, and the nice brown suit you gave me every morning. Oh! the English are strange people, and do many things we never even heard of in Abersethin; they have so many things on the table at meal times that are not used, and they change their clothes every evening when it is nearly time to go to bed. I do not sleep any better on the feather bed than I did on my straw bed in the loft at home, and I do not enjoy my meals any more from the silver spoons and forks than I did from our bowls and platters at home. But oh! there's happy I am in the studio with Sir Glynne. The studio is a large room, where he carves his beautiful figures; he lets me help

him a great deal, and he pays me a lot of money. I am ashamed to tell you how much. I send you £2, and will send you a great deal more. But at first I have had to buy many new things. Mind to keep my old ragged trousers and jacket and cap; for, when I come down next autumn, I will wear them and go with Mifanwy to watch the sheep. I am thinking of that happy time continually. Please give my love and thanks to Mr. Rhys Morgan, and to Catrin and Dŵn Howells, and tell them I will never forget them. Almost every night I dream of you all, and now I say good-bye, and with my thanks for all your kindness, and my undying love to you all, I remain,

“Your affectionate son,

“IEUAN GWYLLT.

“Mifanwy fach! I have bought a beautiful red ribbon for thee, to tie thy hair.”

CHAPTER XI.

TEA AT THE SHIP INN.

WHEN Shân left her cottage with Ieuan's letter in her pocket, she fully *intended* to take tea at The Ship Inn, but, after the perusal of the letter, and it had been duly commented upon by each of the party in turn, she began to smooth her rough plaid apron with her wrinkled hands, and said: "Well, I must go."

"Go!" said Catrin; "not before you have tea, Shân fach; it is so seldom we see you; and now you must stay to tea."

"Tea!" echoed Shân, lifting both hands from her knees in astonishment. "Caton pawb! how can I stay to tea with Ianto at home waiting for me, and the fowls all straying about under the very nose of the fox, and the pig! he's calling for me already, you may be sure. No, no, no, Catrin fach, I cannot think of such a thing!" and Shân stood up and drew her red scarf tighter round her arms.

"But Mr. Rhys Morgan will be going soon, and Betto has had time to make light cakes while we have been sitting here, so I will stay, of course," were her real thoughts.

"Certainly you will stop to tea!" said Mr. Rhys Morgan. "You and Catrin are old friends, I know, and must have much to say to each other; so, good-bye, I am going across to the island, where one of the Bullets is ill with the measies," and, nodding familiarly to the three old people, he left them to settle the

controversy in the way in which all such disputes are settled in Wales.

Catrin laid her hand on the red mantle. "Come in," she said. "Betto has been making light cakes; I can smell them."

"Not to-day, Catrin fach," said Shân, sniffing the aroma of the cakes, and more than ever resolved to stay. "I am bound to go home to-day. One day next week I will come down and have a chat with you; but not to-day, not to-day."

"One day next week!" cried Catrin; "one day next year, you mean, and we may all be dead and buried before then."

"True, indeed," assented Shân, relenting a little; "and certainly Ianto can feed the pig, and shut up the hens in the loft," and she suffered herself to be gently pulled in by Catrin, while Dan, from behind, seconded the motion by sundry little thumps on her back, as he followed the two women under the low-pitched doorway.

Betto rushed wildly about in the excess of her hospitality, clattering the teacups, and raking the fire together on the hearth. When they were seated at the table, she placed in the middle a towering pile of light cakes, and, delightedly hovering round, enjoyed the meal as much as if she had herself been seated thereat.

Shân spread her pocket-handkerchief on her knees. "Well, to be sure," she observed, "I never dreamt of stopping to tea when I came out, but I could not refuse you Catrin fach!"

"Of course not," said Catrin, though she had known all along that Shân would stay. Even Dan soon became more sociable under the influence of the steaming cups of tea and the delicious light cakes.

"Well, Betto fach, you *can* make light cakes," mumbled Shân, with her mouth full. "I suppose now Ieuan has these for tea every day, lucky boy he has been."

"Dost know at all who his mother was?" asked Catrin tentatively.

"No," said simple Shân; "only that she was a trampess who died in John Powys' barn; she lies buried in Pemynydd churchyard."

"And his father; I wonder who was he?" mused Catrin aloud, keeping a shrewd eye on her old friend, who mumbled something about "So long ago now, I never troubled my head to ask; some tramp, I suppose," and she complacently helped herself to another light cake. Catrin positively thirsted to tell her all she knew, but was held back by her promise to Ieuan, and a strong feeling that, by postponing her punishment of John Powys, she would render it more unpleasant to him and agreeable to herself.

When, at last, Shân wended her way up the steep road that led from the village to the moor above, she had time to think over the contents of her precious letter, and she endeavoured to recall every word while she toiled slowly up the hill.

Suddenly from a furze bush Mifanwy rose up.

"Oh, Shân!" the girl said, with a tremble in her voice, "what was in the letter? It does seem so long to wait for—oh! what a pity that I cannot read myself."

"Well, come along, child," said Shân, dipping down into the hollow in which her cottage was buried; then, sitting down, she spread the letter out at once on the table, Ianto and Mifanwy listening hungrily.

"Well, first," said Shân, "let me see—what's this?" and she put her shrivelled fingers on the date. "I don't believe Mr. Rhys Morgan read this bit. Well, then, he begins:—

"MY BELOVED MIFANWY, IANTO, AND SHÂN,—
I am very sorry that I have not written to you before, but I have been too busy, and—and—let me see—yes, 'I am thinking of you all continually. Sir Glynne and his wife are very kind to me, but not

kinder than you, dear Shân.' Yes, indeed, he said that," she said, with tearful eyes. "'And we have silver spoons instead of wooden ones, but I do not enjoy my uwd¹ and cawl² half so much as I did in the old bwthin.'"

"Well!" exclaimed Ianto and Mifanwy breathlessly, when she came to a full stop.

"Well, yes—let me sec," she continued, drawing her finger along the lines, "yes, it was just here.

"I sleep on a feather bed every night, but I like my old straw bed at home the best. I am very busy cutting stones, same as I was at home; and Sir Glynne is very busy cutting stones too.'"

And she stopped to laugh and remark: "Well, indeed, to think such a gentleman could do such a foolish thing."

Mifanwy stood clasping and unclasping her hands. "Is that all, Shân?"

"Well, indeed, there was something about Mifanwy and the cliffs, and he said, 'Mind and keep my old clothes, for when I come home next autumn I will wear them and go with Mifanwy to watch the sheep, and there are for thee—Ianto—two pounds.'"

She spread the notes on the table. "And he will send us much more. Think of that, Ianto!"

"Well, what next?" asked Mifanwy.

"Tha's all," said Shân; "here's his name, Ieuan Gwyllt. That's the end of the letter, of course."

"Here are two lines more," said Mifanwy.

"Yes," said Shân triumphantly, "I remember even those. 'Tell Mifanwy I have bought a beautiful red ribbon for her hair.'"

With the first beams of the sun next morning Mifanwy was walking lightly over the moor towards the cliffs, a buoyancy in her step and a brightness in

¹ Porridge.

² Broth.

her eye that had been lacking for many a day ; her heart was light as her step ; her thoughts were evidently pleasant, for she smiled when her eyes caught the first glimpse of the sea from the crest of the hill. She sat down to think before she began her way down to the sheepfold. How different everything seemed in the light of this morning's sun from what it had looked under yesterday's ! How beautiful the bay was, lying in its soft grey haze, not yet touched by the rising sun ! How white the surf broke upon the beach ! How sweet the scent of the wild thyme ! Surely she was the happiest girl in the world ! Surely there could be no more beautiful bay than Abersethin, no happier home than the thatched cottage at Pantég, no flowers more beautiful than those which were now studding the soft turf around her ; and then, could there be a more delightful occupation than watching the sheep ? It was true she was getting too tall and too old for the small pittance paid her by John Powys as shepherdess. Catrin Howells said she ought to go to service, where she could easily earn two pounds a year ; but to be shut up in a house with mice and rats and cobwebs, not to breathe the fresh sea-breeze, not to smell the sweet wild flowers, no sheep, no Topper, and, perhaps, no Ieuan ! No, the thought was unbearable ; at all events, she was too happy to-day to find room for it in her heart. Then beginning her way down the slope, she sang with voice so loud and clear that her notes echoed from hill to hill, and flooded the valley below with song. And all these fancies and all this music were strung upon a little knot of red ribbon !

And as week succeeded week, the happiness deepened in Mifanwy's heart, the light in her eyes grew brighter ; and the months slipped by like a string of pearls, each one more complete and more beautiful than the last, until the long summer days were merging into autumn, and the heavy crops of grain grew golden in the sunshine.

"'Twill soon be harvest, Shân," she observed one evening. She was sitting on the old oak stool at the cottage door, while Shân was busily "shooing" in her fowls for the night. She scolded them loudly, and the hens scolded in return, the while they scuttered and fluttered in at the door, and up to the rafters above. When the last refractory hen had been driven into the doorway, Shân sat down on the low hedge that divided the "cwrt" from the garden.

"No wonder," she said, shaking the feathers off her apron, "they call a silly woman a 'dicky-head'; hens *have* no sense. Yes, the harvest will soon be here; and, let me see, what do I owe? Two days to John Powys of course, as usual," and she counted them on her wrinkled fingers; "then a day to Twm Tim for thatching, and two days, at least, I have promised to Catrin Howells. That's five, and by then I shall be ready for bed," and she laughed jovially, showing her gums, in which a few yellow teeth still remained.

"What a pity I can't leave the sheep," said Mifanwy, "to help you, Shân."

"Yes," said Shân, "if thee had any other work, thee couldst help me well at the harvest now. Thou must go to service soon, Mifanwy; thou wilt never be any taller than thou art now, and I am sure, in the new petticoat I gave thee, thou look'st quite a woman."

"It is nice," said Mifanwy, looking admiringly down at her brick-red petticoat; "but new, Shân? You said it was forty years old to your knowledge."

"Well, and what's forty years for a good cloth petticoat? 'Tis forty years since I saw my grandmother in that petticoat (she only wore it to funerals, or to chapel, or to a 'bidding'), and how long she had had it before I can't tell; but see," holding the cloth between her finger and thumb, "how good it is; not a hole or a tear, nor even a fray round the edge. Oh, they don't make such petticoats now," and she shook her head solemnly. "Everything is changed. The

crops are not so good, the hens don't lay so well, and I don't believe the moon shines so bright as when I was young. And the pride of the people, Mifanwy; it makes me ill. Think, there's Madlen the Mill's youngest child christened 'Margaret Lewis,' if you please; in my day, none but the gentries would think of calling a child 'Marged,' indeed, as if 'Peggi' wouldn't do, or 'Betto,' or 'Shân' But no! now it must be 'Marged,' or 'Laissabeth,' or 'Jane,' ach-y-fi! Fancy calling me 'Jane'!"

Mifanwy continued to look down thoughtfully at her two hands, that lay clasped upon her knees. "Shân!"

"Well?"

"What is the reason that my skin is so dark?"

"Caton pawb! there's a question," laughed Shân; "why, because the Almighty made it so, I suppose."

"Well, then, why did He make my skin so much browner than Ieuan's or Laissabeth's?"

Shân wagged her head from side to side, and looked at Mifanwy over her thick brass-rimmed spectacles.

"Have I Indian blood in me? When the lads are angry with me, they say that."

"Indian blood, indeed! anwl fach! Indian blood! not a drop of such a dreadful thing in thee, merch fach i! Thy mother had black hair, sure enough, and eyes black as the darkness of night, but she was fair as a lily; and as for thee, child, when I first took thee, thou wast a show of whiteness; and that's what puzzles me; babies are often red, or even yellow, skinned; but thou wast so white, and soft skinned as satin. Many times I showed thee to Catrin Howells. 'Look at my cream and roses,' I used to say, for thy little lips were like roses, and thy skin was as white as the sea foam. Catrin always called after me when she saw me. 'Well, how is thy "cream and roses" getting on?'"

Mifanwy sighed. "How is it. I wonder?"

"Well, now, there's many strange things in this world," said Shân, "and that is one of them, that thee, the very whitest baby I have ever seen—and I have seen a good many—should grow up to be the brownest girl. Thy grandmother was the same. But I think, if thee went to service somewhere, and wert shut away from the sun all day, the 'cream and roses' would come back. But what does it matter, child? Thee art better as thee art," and she went in to prepare the supper, leaving Mifanwy still gazing sorrowfully at her brown hands, and thinking of the "cream and roses."

When August came it was a busy month. Every scrap and corner of the cottage was scrubbed and cleaned, Mifanwy rising before the sun, and working late in the evenings, at the labour of love. Ieuan was coming, and everything must be in order. Even the old black rafters were brushed and polished, the pink counterpane was washed and dried on the furze bushes, the rough sheets and blankets were hung out to dry in the sweet summer air, and the earthen floors polished till you could see your face in them. She spent several hours on her knees, marking out an elaborate pattern as a border, using for a tool the stalk of the fox-glove, which left dark stains as she drew her pattern. The shelf running round the loft was specially overhauled, every treasure of seaweed or shells, or birds' eggs, carefully dusted and replaced; the tiny window was cleaned and polished; and the bed re-filled with golden-yellow straw.

"'Machgen anwl i! my beloved boy!" said Shân, rubbing away at the legs of the oak table, "can it be that my old eyes will see him again? Ianto bâch, will he be too grand to stay with us, while the doors of the Hall are open to him?"

"Not he!" replied Ianto promptly; "he has too much onnore to turn his back on his old foster-parents!"

At last came September, the month of months to

Mifanwy. She had counted the weeks, the days, and almost the hours, and only waited now to hear, but without asking, what day Sir Glynne and Ieuan would arrive at the Hall.

The month had already brought her one grand event. She was called to work at the harvest in John Powys's fields, for the golden crops were thick and heavy, and every hand was pressed into the service of the corn fields. Will Rianon undertook to watch both Mifanwy's and his own flocks for the time, and for the first time in her life she accompanied Shân to the harvest; and as she walked beside the old woman, her lithe figure and graceful shapeliness made an impression upon the loutish country minds of the reapers which they felt without being able to define.

"Put on thy reaping gloves," Shân whispered, while they were passing through a gap into the field; "they won't see how small thy hands are then, and keep close to me, and do exactly as I do."

It was a grand day for Shân; she knew every twist and turn of the wrist and knee used in reaping; she was bringing a "fresh hand" to the aid of the reapers; and, moreover, she knew that she and her foster-children would be the subject of conversation in the reaping field. Mifanwy's voice was known and admired from Wern Goppa, at the north crescent of the bay, to Traeth yr Adarn, at the south point; and Ieuan, his adoption by Sir Glynne Meredith, and his expected home-coming, were the theme of gossip on every hearth, and at every gathering.

Mifanwy, drawing on the reaping gloves, looked shyly at a group of women standing near, and waiting to form into the line of reaping. The younger women stared at her, and glanced at each other with a smile in their eyes, if not on their lips.

"Well, my little daughter," said an old woman, advancing, "who art thou, and what is thy name? Who is she, Shân fach?"

"She is Mifanwy, of course," said Shân, "my nursling; hast never seen her before?"

"Never," replied the old woman; "but I have heard her voice from the valley, and that was enough, it was Madlen come back again."

"Of course," said one of the girls, drawing nearer, "of course; she's 'cream and roses,' isn't she?" and the remark was followed by a general laugh.

Mifanwy heard it and understood. They were laughing at her, at her brown skin, her awkwardness with the sickle. She knew it, and felt the hot blood rush into her face, while she stooped in rank and tried to bend on one knee and to bind her sheaf exactly as Shân did in front of her. Next behind her came the kindly old woman who had addressed her, and Mifanwy was thankful to be separated from the bevy of young girls working behind her. For a little while she was frightened and subdued by the novelty of her position, but she soon learned to bind a sheaf with ease, and the spirit of happiness, which had gilded her life of late, took possession of her again; and when, at ten o'clock, the reapers took a rest under the shadow of a hedge for their early lunch, she was no longer frightened, and, sitting down beside her old friend, known to everybody as Modryb Gwen, ate her "uwd" with a hearty appetite.

In the afternoon Mifanwy was greeted by a familiar voice; Robert the Mill was reaping before her.

"Hullo, Mifanwy! is it thee?"

"Yes," she said, smiling, glad to hear a friendly voice; and, for the rest of the day, she enjoyed herself thoroughly, until, when the evening shadows were lengthening, the reapers left off working.

At the gap in the hedge a 'not of lads and lasses were gathered together, and, when Mifanwy drew near, she remembered the "cream and roses," and was going to pass without speaking; but one of the young men addressed her.

"Art tired, Mifanwy?"

"No," said the girl, and there was a long pause, Mifanwy shyly examining her reaping-hook, while the young man, who had a freckled face and a shock of red hair, shuffled awkwardly.

"I thought perhaps thee wast, being first time; but if thee isn't, wilt sing for us?"

The girls drew nearer at the prospect, and Mifanwy brightened up, and threw her sickle down; then, sitting by the side of the hedge, she asked:

"What shall I sing?"

"Oh! 'Serch Hudol,'" and we will sing the chorus."

Mifanwy took off her hat, forgotten the brown skin, forgotten the "cream and roses," forgotten everything but the divine passion of song, which was so strong in her.

"Far o'er the plain
Loudly again
Sounds the trumpet's warlike strain,
A signal to depart,"

sang Mifanwy, and the chorus was taken up by the others. Tenor, alto, bass, soprano, joined in harmony, and, before she had finished her second verse, the whole company of reapers had gathered round her.

"But, dearest, when I'm far from thee,
In death, defeat, or victory,
Thy form alone will ever be
Still nearest to my heart,"

sang the girl. Heads wagged, and feet marked the time, and "Etto, etto!" was the universal request. Over and over again they sang the chorus, until the answering echoes flew from hill to hill, and filled the air with throbbing melody.

"Ah! how she sings," cried one of the lasses. "It is as if her soul were singing!"

And so it was, for Mifanwy had given herself up to

1 "The Allurement of Love.

the happiness of the hour. The soft evening air, the sweet smell of the corn, the song of the lark above her, the delightful power of swaying the hearts of her hearers, the admiration which she knew her voice excited, all these together were an experience to her new and delightful. It was a second Eisteddfod! Every eye beamed upon her with pleasure, every heart throbbed in sympathy with her own, and a rich tide of life and happiness coursed through her veins. Her heart was almost too full of joy while she sang the final words; and, after she had ended, there was a sigh of relief, as though the listeners had held their breath to listen.

"Oh, anwl!" said a woman, snatching up her toddling child, and relieving her feelings by hugging it tightly to her breast. "Oh, gwae fi! that my little one might sing like that one day!"

"She is the 'Queen of Song,' she is our own nightingale; and, to show her how much we prize her, let us give her a new name to-day," said one of the reapers, stepping forward, pushing back his hat, and with his thumbs in his armpits, constituting himself the spokesman of the meeting. "Let us call her 'Ein Eos Ni.'"¹ There were loud shouts of approval from the men, even joined in by the girls, who had at first flouted Mifanwy; and "Hwre! hwre! Ein Eos Ni!" now woke the echoes, while Mifanwy was coming down to earth, and waking to the fact that all this love and admiration was hers. Was it happiness or the spirit of music that had so transformed the girl? Her red lips parted, her white teeth showing between, her eyes shining with the bright light of triumph and joy, she looked more beautiful in her dark swarthy skin than the fairest of the fair girls surrounding her; and when at last she and Shân passed through the gate into the highroad, the old woman's eyes still wet with tears of happiness,

¹ Our Nightingale.

Mifanwy could still hear behind her loud cries of "Ein Eos Ni!"

Shân took the girl's hand lovingly, and they walked silently along the white, dusty road. Suddenly, round a turning between them and the glowing west, came a carriage drawn by a spirited horse, which seemed to be somewhat beyond control. The prancing horse, now close upon them, so bewildered the girl and her companion, that for a moment or two there was a flutter of confusion in the road, while they hesitated which side to take. Mifanwy rushed to one side, but Shân, less agile, fell on the dusty road. The driver pulled back his horse upon his haunches only just in time to prevent his trampling on the prostrate woman. Mifanwy, with a scream, flew to her assistance.

"Ach y fi!" said the man; "what wass the matter with the pippie? For what are you not keeping out of the way?"

And Mifanwy recognised Owen Pritchard, one of the Hall servants, who, like most of the domestics connected with a large establishment in Wales, thought it his bounden duty always to express himself in English, though his knowledge of the language was very limited.

"Here you, Robin Groom," he said, addressing a younger man who sat beside him, "jump down and see who was the 'ole ooman' whatever. Hello! Shân Pantêg, iss it you?"

Slân had already gathered herself together, and, being frightened, was only anxious to get behind the dog-cart, and well out of the fiery animal's way.

Robin Groom helped Mifanwy to shake the dust off the old woman's skirts, and, while doing so, he said in Welsh:

"Well, Mifanwy, how art thou? Hast heard the news?"

Her heart almost stopped its beating.

"Sir Glynne and Lady Meredith have both gone to

I-tally, and taken Ieuan Gwyllt with them ; there, my lass, she is as clean as a new shilling again," and Robin Groom, jumping up by the driver's side, the impatient horse was given the rein, and soon passed round another corner of the road, leaving the two women looking silently after the flying carriage.

"What did he say?" asked Shân in a weak and broken voice ; her fall had frightened her, and she seemed a little dazed.

Before she answered, Mifanwy gazed around her. Was it the same world that had seemed so bright and joyous a few minutes ago? Was she the same? Was it her heart thumping so loudly in her ears, where even now the sounds of "Ein Eos Ni!" seemed still to linger?

"The master and mistress are gone to I-tally and have taken Ieuan with them, that's what he said."

Her voice was hard and husky.

"That's what he said," cried Shân, awaking from her stupor ; "and thou canst tell me that without a bit of feeling in thy voice? Dost not understand, child, that he is my beloved boy, and that I have been hungering to see him? Oh! Mifanwy, thou art a hard-hearted girl. Thou canst bring tears to other people's eyes with thy singing, and thou hast not a tear to shed for my bitter disappointment."

"Shân fach," said Mifanwy ; "I am disappointed, too."

"Disappointed!" said Shân, unreasonable in her grief : "disappointed indeed! What hast thou to be disappointed about? Thou hastn't been counting the days and hours as I have been. Thou hastn't been mending his clothes, and thou hastn't been up all hours of the day in the loft to dust it, and clean it, and smooth his pink quilt. Oh, dear, anwl, anwl!" and the old woman broke down completely, and, sitting down by the roadside, sobbed aloud.

Mifanwy stood looking at her, her hands hanging listlessly down at her sides, a hard stolid look on her

face, her heart aching with intolerable disappointment.

"Come, Shân," she said presently; "he will come another time; crying will not bring him; let us go home to supper; Ianto will be waiting."

"Let him wait," said Shân, still moaning and rocking herself backwards and forwards; "or go home thyself; thou hast no heart, to talk of supper, indeed, when my heart is breaking for my boy!"

But she slowly rose, and, taking her reaping-hook, followed Mifanwy silently towards home.

Ianto's disappointment was almost as great as theirs. He sulked over his supper. The crock of "uwd" was put away almost untouched, the bowls and platters were washed and placed on the shelf in silence, and then Shân sat down to her knitting, and to nurse her sorrow in the chimney corner.

And what did Mifanwy do? Having seen the supper things put away, and swept up the hearth, she went out into the open air.

"I will go and see if the sheep are folded," she said.

Her heart was aching, and her eyes were burning with unshed tears. One spot in the world she desired to reach, and in the evening shadows she turned her face towards the sea-breeze, and, having seen that the sheep were safe, diverged a little to the left, going along a path that led to Ogo Wylofen. Here she knew she would be unobserved, alone with Nature, free to sob and moan. Her usual horror of the place had left her, and she now felt that it was the one place in the world that accorded with her present feelings. She threw herself face downwards on the grass.

"Oh, Ieuan, Ieuan!" she moaned, and the weird voices in the Ogo moaned with her. "Oh, Ieuan, my brother, come back," and the moaning and wailing rose higher, and Mifanwy's tears, once unloosed, fell fast and faster. She saw the white misty figures ris-

ing in the cave, and they seemed to be wringing their hands, and waving their long hair. Mifanwy stretched out her hands towards them over the edge of the cliff. "Oh! you, you know what sorrow is," she cried; "pity me, comfort me, send Ieuan back to me."

A heathenish prayer truly, but where could this child of Nature, this untaught, inexperienced creature, find an explanation of the yearnings and instincts that fought within her? She craved for happiness, and, in her untutored manner, had asked God for it. Many times she had besought Him, and now He was denying it to her, crushing her with a relentless cruelty, so she turned with a passionate cry to the familiar forms of Nature that had been her life's companions. She lay on the grass until the night dews were falling heavily, and the golden harvest moon was shining, and, when at last she had no more tears to shed, no more words in which to pray, she rose slowly, and turned towards the shepherd's hut, feeling it impossible to sleep and rest shut up within the walls of a house. Here, sitting alone and silent at the door, she passed the night under the broad vault of heaven, and, as once before, she gazed and gazed on the glittering stars that kept their watch above her, while the placid moon rode silently on her path.

CHAPTER XII.

NEWS FROM ROME.

FOR many months after that evening in the corn-field, Mifanwy's life was shadowed by bitter disappointment and extinguished hopes; wearily she led her sheep out in the morning, and sadly she folded them at night, returning home silent and cheerless, rising heavy and listless in the early dawn, no smile on her lips, no song to awaken the echoes. But, at last, there came a letter for her.

“Mifanwy Owen,
“Shepherdess,
“Abersethin.”

Robert the Mill gave it her with a sulky look.

“I got that at the post-office when I passed through the village. It is from Ieuan of course.”

“Yes,” she said, placing it in her bosom, “of course; who else would write to me?” And she hurried away to open it, for she could not read it; to look at the writing, and oh, delightful happiness, to draw from its folds a knot of red satin ribbon! She was breathless with admiration and excitement. “Oh, the beautiful, smooth satin,” she said, as she laid it against her cheek. She fastened it on a furze bush to gaze at it, and while away the time until evening should come. When, at night, she reached the cottage, she was in luck's way, for she found Shân and Ianto in animated conversation with a dapper young shopman from Caer Madoc, who had called in to see

them on his way to his mother's cottage. Mifanwy came in breathless, holding Ieuan's letter in her hand.

"A letter for me, mother," she said, "and, oh, how lucky we are! Now Lias will read it."

The young man was delighted to show off his learning.

"Of course," he said, spreading 't out, while Shân and Ianto listened with as much eagerness as Mifanwy.

"VILLA AMALFI,
"ROME.

"MY DEAR MIFANWY,—It is your turn to have a letter now. The last letter I wrote in a great hurry, and left for the servants to post; I hope they did so, and that it reached you safely. It was to tell you of our sudden visit to Rome. Of course you have never heard of Brindley Moor, the sculptor, but in England his name is as well known as Sir Glynne Meredith's, and they are great friends. I told you in my letter that we were going to Rome with him next spring, but it was suddenly settled that we were to go at once. Sir Glynne was very kind to me, and offered to let me go down to Wales instead of going to Rome, but I saw that would be a great disappointment to him, and a great loss to me.

"But I need not say all this again; I have explained it before.

"My thoughts are often with you all, especially I think of thee, Mifanwy. My days are full of pleasures, and I am too busy with my studies and my sculpture to be sorrowful, but in the evening I always think of the sunset at Abersethin, and I long to tell thee all I have seen in the day.

"Oh, Mifanwy, gwae fi! would that thou couldst be in London to see the beautiful sights, and to hear the beautiful music! Sir Glym gives me plenty of money—I hope Ianto received the £5 I sent in

my last letter—and couldst thou hear the beautiful music, the singing, Mifanwy, indeed thou wouldst rejoice ; not that I ever heard any voice more beautiful than thine ! but, indeed, teaching can do wonders for even a poor voice ; and even I, Mifanwy, am learning to sing ! Who dost think I sang with one day, before a score of people in Lady Meredith's drawing-room ? who but Laissabeth ! Miss Powys, as they call her in London.

"As for Rome, I will not tell thee anything about it until I tell thee sitting on the slopes of Abersethin. We shall be back in London next month.

"And now, with my warm love to Shân and Ianto, I bid thee farewell, Mifanwy, and am ever

"Thine affectionate brother,
"IEUAN GWYLLT."

Not a word about the red ribbon ; but somehow Mifanwy did not mind this ; not even the vision of Ieuan and Laissabeth singing from the same page of music could spoil her happiness. Shân and Ianto were jubilant once more. But trouble was in store for Shân, for in a few days John Powys called at the cottage to tell her that Mifanwy would be no longer wanted as his shepherdess, for that Will Rianon would watch the two flocks together.

"What shall I do, mother, what shall I do ?" wailed the girl despairingly. She had chafed under the loneliness of her life lately, she had wished with unutterable longing that she could fly away to Rome, to London, anywhere, to find Ieuan and be at rest.

"Thee can go to service like other girls," suggested Shân. "Why shouldn't thee go to 'the Works' ?"¹

The idea found acceptance at once by the three members of the family.

"Only, how shall I get there ? and where shall I get clothes ?"

¹ The colloquial name for Glamorganshire.

"Oh, that I will take care of," said Shân; "thou shalt be well set up; good strong shoes."

"Ach y fi! how shall I wear them?" said Mifanwy.

"And stockings I have plenty, ready knitted, and a new brown frock I will make from my mother's; thy hat and jacket that thou hadst at the Eisteddfod are ready in the coffer; but oh, my child! what will old Ianto and Shân do without thee? the last yellow chick of the nest! and now I was hoping thee wouldst help me with the harvest."

"I will send you all my wages."

"Caton pawb!" cried Shân. "No, thou wilt not send me thy wages. Ianto and I are getting too rich; the hole in the chimney won't be large enough to hold much more."

And so it was settled; and in a few days Mifanwy's belongings were tied in a small bundle, and after a tender farewell to Topper and her old haunts, and a still more tearful and sorrowful one to the old people, she began her trudge along the high road to Caer Madoc. Thence the carrier would take her all the way to Glamorganshire, and, once in Merthyr, the El Dorado of the Welsh peasants, she would be all right.

"Go straight to Salem chapel," were Shân's injunctions, "and tell Price the preacher that thou art Shân and Ianto's child; he knows us well—wasn't he one of my first nurslings? and he will find thee a place, and will write to tell us thou hast reached him in safety."

And with this vague programme, the young girl was launched on the sea of life, with nothing but her innocence and purity to guard her from all the dangers and temptations that lay in wait for her.

CHAPTER XIII.

DEPARTURE.

THE grey shadows of evening were closing over the little country town of *Caer Madoc*, when a slim girl, looking rather tired and dusty, approached it late on an autumn day. The cold wind blew in icily from the sea, that lay two miles to the west, and the darkening sky, with its evening shadows and its threatening of winter, hung like a heavy pall over land and sea. The girl was *Mifanwy*, who, shivering and rather home-sick, drew near the town.

"How smoky and dark the air is!" she thought, beginning unfavourably to compare her new surroundings with those she had left behind; but presently on the quiet evening air there came the sound of music, borne on the wind in fitful throbs. Her sharp ears were instantly alive to the delightful sounds.

"Music!" she said, and she stopped to listen; and again on the fitful breeze came a louder strain of melody.

She quickened her steps, and, guided by the sounds, she soon reached the straggling suburbs of the town, one of the first houses in which belonged to *Simon Siencyn* the carrier. His wife *Peggi* was an old friend of *Shân's*, and she welcomed *Mifanwy* with true Welsh hospitality.

"A bed, *merch fach* i? Why, of course, and clean and comfortable, fit for the judge or the mayor, but not too good for my old friend *Shân's* child. But stay! you are not really her daughter, are you?"

"No," said *Mifanwy*, "only her nursling."

"Yes, yes, I know," resumed Peggi. "Sit you down here, my little one, by the fire; the nights get very cold now. Tea, merch i? Well, well, I should like to see Shân again. Bread and butter? Only barley bread though. Yes, yes, I remember, you are poor Watkin Owen's child! Well, you could never have a kinder mother than Shân—but not your own! not your own!"

Mifanwy, tired and hungry, ate her simple fare with an appetite that delighted Peggi, and, when the meal was over, she began to seek for information from her hostess.

"When does Simon start?"

"Tuesday he comes back, and he starts on the following Friday."

Mifanwy did not answer; she was listening intently to the strains of music that still floated on the air.

"Where is it, Peggi? Can I go nearer?"

"Oh, as near as thee likes, child. At the corner of that street is the gate leading into the field, and there thou wilt find the show. Been to it? Not I! I should be turned out from my chapel. Besides, I have no taste for such foolish things; elephants and horses and trumpets and silly women in spangles. But thou canst go and look at it, child. Oh, yes, thy bundle will be quite safe."

Mifanwy was already at the door, and listening eagerly to the seductive strains that fell on her ear and drew her on. On turning the corner of a street, she came in full view of the show, and she hastened to the gateway that opened into the field. Numbers of people were already thronging it, and pressing in for the evening's entertainment.

At the further end of the field was a large round tent or pavilion, bearing the words, "Pomfrey's Grand Circus," emblazoned in gold and scarlet and blue. In front, on a temporary raised stand or balcony, was the band, a medley of many instruments, trombones, cornets, flutes, violins, and a huge drum.

Mifanwy had never heard such sounds before, except at the Eisteddfod, when the music had been of a different kind, more severe and more classical. She stood with the throng in absolute delight, listening to the inspiriting tones of a waltz, by no means badly played. The time and rhythm of the music were new to her, and entrancingly delightful; and, when seven o'clock struck on the old church tower close by the field, and the band ceased playing and disappeared into the tent, the people thronging after them and leaving the field empty, she followed too; and when at the entrance she was asked for payment, she willingly untied the corner of her pocket-handkerchief and produced sixpence from it. It happened to be right, and she passed into the tent in a dream of blissful anticipation.

And, oh! what an evening she spent! How the two hours flew by! The splendid horses, so sleek, so clean, and so lovable! She longed to put her arm round their necks, and kiss their soft noses, as she often kissed the cows on Moel Mynach. The wonderful sight of the elephants passing round so close to her that she could even touch them if she wished; the spangled men, and the fairy forms in tarlatan, the music of the band, the lights, the smell of the turf trodden by the hoofs of the horses; all these combined to form a vision of delight that all the pleasures and triumphs of her after life could not efface.

At last the delightful performance drew near the end, and in compliment to the nationality of the audience, the band struck up "The March of the Men of Harlech," and the excited throng joined in with an impulse irresistible. Mifanwy, especially, who had been standing all the time, forgetting her fatigue, sang with all her heart.

Near her, but inside the circle of the arena, stood a young man holding an emblazoned flag, over which a fairy-like sylph in blue was bounding, while her horse galloped beneath it. He was Tom Pomfrey, the

eldest son of the owner of the circus, but not at all above taking an inferior part in the entertainment. Sometimes he was the chief rider of the evening; sometimes he received the money at the entrance; sometimes he acted as clown; and, at a push, was not at all a bad hand at the cornet or violin. In fact, he was a man of many parts, appealed to by all the employés, grumbled at by his father, the confidant of his mother's worries, and the friend of all the children connected with the circus. Never cross; never sulky; always ready to help every member of the troupe! No wonder he was popular and beloved.

The music of the band was flat and stale to him. He knew every tune by heart, but to-night the unusual strains of the Welsh melody aroused his fancy, and, while he stood holding his banner carefully, and watching the approach of the blue fairy, he joined in the martial air. He was soon struck by the voice of the girl who stood close to him, outside the barrier; he looked with interest at her dark skin and dark flashing eyes.

"By jove!" he thought. "What a voice! These Welsh *can* sing, but I have never heard one like this girl!" and he listened intently, while Mifanwy, unconscious of any auditor, sang out her heart, not keeping always to the tune, but roaming, as it were, around it, with trills and runs of melody, but always in perfect harmony with the music.

This march finished the performance, but she still stood with clasped hands, and a happy smile on her lips; her thoughts had flown to Ieuan. "Where was he now?" In that far off foreign town did he think of her? In some such scene as this perhaps! It could not be more beautiful. And while the crowd pressed by, she remained lost in thought; she was much startled when a hand was laid on her shoulder.

"My girl," said the owner of the band, and Mifanwy started indeed; it was the grand gentleman

who had stood near her all covered with gold spangles; she could only stammer out:

"Sir."

"You know how to sing any way!" said the young man, looking into her face, and thinking what a pity it was that she was not pretty.

Mifanwy's English was extremely limited; every word required thought, and she could only say in return:

"Iss, sir, a little bit."

"A little bit! A big bit, I think! Where do you live?"

She could only answer with a shake of her head.

"Me not know, sir."

"Where's your home? Haven't you got one?"

Mifanwy again shook her head.

"Well, then, do you want a place? A place, you know, a situation—servant girl, you know—mistress?" And he went through the pantomime of a good scrub on the boards of the ring, that Mifanwy instantly understood.

"Oh! iss, sir, indeed!" she said, "me's want to go servant, me's want to go to the 'Works.'"

"The very thing!" said Tom Pomfrey, slapping his velvet leg; "plenty of work here. You want a place; mother wants a girl. You can come with me."

A less simple and innocent girl would have hesitated to follow the young man, but Mifanwy, with perfect confidence, did so at once, and was led through a narrow passage with canvas wall into a smaller tent, one corner of which was occupied by an open van, which was evidently Mrs. Pomfrey's domestic store-room. It was raised three steps from the ground, and up and down these three steps the good lady was for ever passing; indeed, it seemed as if her daily life were spent upon those three steps.

"You go to bed, Totsie and Willie; her, your night things," and she trundled up the three steps,

and, flinging a bundle at two little spangled figures, she trundled down again. "Bless'd if that baby ain't awake again! Whatever is the matter with 'im I can't think!" and, muttering something about his "drops," she trundled up and down again, and stood with arms akimbo, while a man from the stables addressed her. "Well I never! Sultan lame! That's bad. 'Ere's the embrocation." And up and down those three steps again! Panting, she plumped her fat figure down on a scarlet painted box, and, when Tom Pomfrey and Mifanwy came on the scene, she was preparing to administer the "drops" to the baby. "There! there! there! drat the child! Oh! Tom, is that you?" She gazed in astonishment at Mifanwy, who stood staring at her in return, with intense interest, not unmixed with awe. "Whatever 'ave you got with you?" she inquired, turning the baby face downwards on her jogging knees.

"Servant girl for you, mother. Didn't you say you wanted one?"

"Yes, but—" said Mrs. Pomfrey, looking Mifanwy over from top to toe. "She looks respectable enough," she thought. "What's your nime, my gal? What they call you?" she explained. "Mary, or Pollie, or Betsey?"

"Oh," said Mifanwy. "No, no—Mifanwy Owen iss my name."

"Well I never! What a nime! And can't you talk English?"

"Iss, me talk very little bit," said Mifanwy. "Iss me work, iss me take care the baby."

"Oh," said Mrs. Pomfrey, turning to her son, "she'd never do for me with that gibberish she talks. What do I want with a foreigner? I don't want no one as can't speak the English language. Mifanwy Owen indeed! Take off your velvets, Tom; here's your things." Another trundle up the stairs and down again. "And take that baggage away," she said; "I don't want her."

"Well, mother," said Tom, drawing nearer, and speaking a little below his breath, "you should hear her sing. She's got the voice of an angel, I tell you, and no mistake. She'd make the fortune of the show, singing with that heavenly voice."

"Go long with you, Tom, and your 'eavenly voice. What good would that be to me to 'elp with the baby and the washing and that?"

"Well, I believe, mother, she'd do all that, and sing, too. Don't you see it would be a saving? We could get rid of Harriet Long, who sings as flat as ditch-water, and is getting beyond all control; there's no living with her."

"That's true," said Mrs. Pomfrey; "but what's made yer take such a liking to this 'ere girl? She ain't pretty! I'm not going to 'ave no larks, mind, in my department."

"I'm not thinking of larks, mother."

Mrs. Pomfrey was pacified, and deigned to look again at Mifanwy, who had already made friends with a little toddling child, who, dressed in a pair of pale blue drawers and silver spangles, was sitting contentedly on a box munching a bun, pulling out all the currants with his finger and thumb, and dividing them between Mifanwy and himself.

Mifanwy was delighted to be engaged by this "grand lady" as nursemaid, and thankfully accepted the promise of £3 a year. And she went back to her lodgings along the dark street, congratulating herself upon the wonderful success of her first day in the world.

Peggi, not being quite so rustic as Shân and Mifanwy, demurred a little, but, "Sure, it was a very fine thing to be taken in hand at once by a lady like Mrs. Pomfrey, and an English lady, too! It will be fine for thee, Mifanwy. Thou'lt learn to speak English soon; but don't thee forget thy Welsh now."

That night Mifanwy's head was scarcely on the pillow before she had fallen into a deep sleep, un-

broken even by the morning sun, that shone brilliantly into her room. In dreams she had been roaming once more upon the mountain paths, and watching the sun while it sank behind the gorgeous sunset clouds of evening; Ieuan sat beside her, and his hearty laugh resolved itself into Peggi's rather unmusical voice.

"Mifanwy! Mifanwy! Art never going to wake, child? Breakfast is waiting."

She started up in a fright. "Oh, anwl! what time is it? Has the sun risen?"

"Hours ago," said Peggi; "and the teapot and bread and butter are waiting for thee."

"I have never slept so late before," said Mifanwy. "Oh, indeed, it must have been the feather bed; never before have I felt such a soft bed."

"'Twas thy long walk, child. But now make haste; here is soap and water and towel for thee."

She was quickly dressed and down in the kitchen, a queer ramshackle old place; the rafters hung thickly with bacon, bunches of herbs, bladders of lard, etc. Near the bright fire stood the little round table, and from a brown teapot Peggi frequently replenished the cups with fragrant tea.

"This bonnie brown egg thee must eat, child; my little hen lays one every day. Thee was smiling in thy sleep when I called thee; what wast dreaming, child?"

"Of home!" said Mifanwy, the tears welling up into her eyes.

"Twt, twt! thee mustn't think of home yet; that's what spoils the Welshman—it's always 'home, home,' with him. If you put him in the Queen's palace, he'd want to come home."

And Mifanwy tried to smile through her tears: but it must be confessed that, after bidding Peggi good-bye, and taking up her little bundle of clothes, it was a very forlorn and home-sick maiden who passed through the gateway into the circus field.

What a different scene presented itself to the eye to-day! Great van-loads of poles, boards, and canvas, surmounted by boxes and packages, the whole covered with tarpaulin. Two or three vans containing the wardrobe and paraphernalia; the splendid horses, now in undress, and yoked to the heavy cars; the two elephants laden and ready to start on their accustomed journey, each one drawing a light covered van, that held the children of the establishment, together with many of the smaller animals, the performing dogs, pigeons, etc.

The scene of confusion frightened Mifanwy, and she stood for a moment hesitating whether to fly back to the slopes of Abersethin to her sheep and Topper, or to fulfil her engagement with Mrs. Pomfrey.

"Ianto would say I ought to have too much onnore to break my promise, and so I ought," she said, turning towards a van which she thought she recognised as Mrs. Pomfrey's; and throwing hesitation to the winds, she followed the impulse that was urging her on. 'Tis true the happy home of her childhood lay behind; but before was London, in the future was Ieuan!

"Hello, Miss Mifanwy!" said a voice close behind her, "is that you? I was afraid you'd change your mind. Well, you are a plucky little thing! Coming with us to London, eh?"

"Iss, sir, if you pliss," replied Mifanwy.

"Come along, then; I will take you to my mother. You will go with her in that break, do you see? to take care of the baby."

"Iss, sir," said Mifanwy, smiling, and showing a very pretty mouth full of perfect teeth, which Tom Pomfrey took note of.

"She's a pretty little thing when you come to look at her, after all," he thought. "Where's Mowbray? Ah! talk of the devil—"

"Who the blazes have you got there?" said a coarse, boisterous voice, and a man approached, and,

with mock politeness, took off his hat to Mifanwy. "You coming with us, my girl?"

"Iss, sir," said Mifanwy, again disclosing the pretty teeth, but before the bold black eyes her own quailed, and were cast down. A burning blush overspread her face, and, turning to Tom Pomfrey with instinctive confidence, she said, "You's mother, sir, if you pliss."

"Exactly so, my dear," said Tom Pomfrey. "You come with me," and he led her up to where Mrs. Pomfrey stood, ready to step into a break, in which seven or eight "ladies" were seated on each side.

"Oh, here you are!" said Mrs. Pomfrey, carrying her baby, and two or three bundles. "Glad you are come, my dear, for this 'ere blessed child is almost too much for me. I declare 'e grows pounds 'eavier hevery di. This is my new girl," she explained to the rest of the company, and, after this introduction, Mifanwy was expected to take her share in the day's work.

But everything was strange to the shepherd girl. The hustling groups of men and women, all intent upon getting their things together in some order apparent to themselves, but to no others, for everything seemed in a hopeless tangle of confusion; the horses pawing the ground, impatient to be off; the coarse laughter; the loud voices; all helped to frighten and excite the simple girl. The bad language she did not understand, so it fell unheeded on her ears. Where were the "lords and ladies" of the previous evening? Where were the music and the glamour that had enlivened the scene?

"Come, look alive!" said Mrs. Pomfrey, and Mifanwy started from a dream. "Put your thoughts in your pocket, my girl, and just go and see in that there elephant car whether the children are all right. I do believe the girl is daft," she added, when Mifanwy stared helplessly from her to the elephant car. "Here, you get in then, and take the baby."

Mifanwy gladly took the child, and seated herself in the long break, while Mrs. Pomfrey rushed away to take a peep into the elephant car, where ten or a dozen children were squabbling over some cakes and apples that Tom Pomfrey had good-naturedly thrown in amongst them. During her absence, the man named Mowbray came sauntering up to the break with a pipe in his mouth.

'Good morning, ladies! we are going to have a fine day, I think. I see you have the little brown nightingale amongst you. Have you heard her sing yet?'

"Can she sing? Lor!" said Miss Hawkins.

"Good morning, miss," he said, turning to Mifanwy. "Hope you slept well?"

"Iss, thank you, sir," she answered.

Mowbray spoke his native tongue without the drawling twang so common among the lower classes of England, indeed, far too common amongst those of a higher grade. It was evident that he had been better educated than the rest of the troupe, and his shabby and dissipated appearance could not hide the fact that he must have "seen better days."

"Lor!" said Miss Hawkins again, with a titter, "she hunderstands you, Mr. Mowbray. Mrs. Pomfrey could not make 'er hunderstand! Ain't she a fright, too?"

"I don't agree with you," answered Mowbray. "I think when we have fleshed and polished her up a bit she'll make an uncommonly fine girl. Hope you will give us a song, miss, when we've started."

Miss Hawkins seemed much put out, and cast spiteful looks at the innocent object of Mr. Mowbray's attention. Her anger did not seem to make much impression on him, for he busied himself in arranging the seats and rugs to suit the new-comer's comfort.

At last everything was ready for the start. The first heavy vans passed into the street and through the gaping crowd, followed by the usual procession of

carriages and horses ; last of all came Mrs. Pomfrey's own break, with four beautiful piebald horses, Tom Pomfrey seated on the box, and driving the gentle creatures, who seemed to understand every motion of his hand and every tone of his voice. Mr. Mowbray sat beside him, with a pipe in his mouth, and his hat very much on one side.

At the last moment, when the break was leaving the field, an insignificant-looking, shabby little man, with a big paunch and a red nose, stepped into the break and took his seat, without speaking, close to the door. He was Mr. Pomfrey, the owner of the circus, a man of considerable wealth, who had been born in a circus tent, and had lived in a circus all his life. He was a shrewd man of business, just in his dealings with his employés, though always keeping an eye to the main chance. A splendid organiser, his shrewd and active mind was the spring of action that kept the whole affairs of the circus going ; without him, it would have fallen to pieces in a week, and yet he seemed to be of " no account " in the troupe, a circumstance which, though he was well aware of it, did not seem to affect him in the least ; for he was satisfied with the knowledge that he was " the boss," and that, when he chose to assert his authority, his word was law.

Behind the break came the van, the last of the procession, containing the band that had so delighted Mifanwy the evening before. When she passed out of the town, seated in the break, with the delicious sound of the band playing a martial air, she thought, indeed, that her fortune had been made, and wished only that Ieuan could see her, and Laissabeth ! What were school, pink frocks, and satin ribbons, compared to this glory ?

CHAPTER XIV.

EDUCATION.

FOR the first hour or two the drive in the break with the circus troupe was unmixed pleasure to Mifanwy. The beautiful horses, the new sights and sounds that greeted her while she rolled along the romantic roads of South Wales, sometimes following for a mile or two the course of some clear swift river that tumbled over the rocks like a boisterous child, or glided smoothly along like a sleepy maiden, or caught a glint of the blue sky on its brown surface; sometimes they climbed over the ridges of the barren hills, and sometimes passed through a tiny hamlet or sleepy village, whose every inhabitant turned out gaping to see them go by. All—all was delightful and refreshing to the girl whose life hitherto had been so uneventful. How wonderful it was to think that she, Mifanwy, the shepherdess, should be taken in hand by these grand people, and that the path from Abersethin slopes to London and Leuan should be made so easy and so beautiful! She did not understand the pleasantries of Mr. Mowbray, who frequently turned round from the box seat to address her, or the sarcastic remarks of the women who drove with her; but she did understand that Mrs. Pomfrey was troubled by her baby's fretfulness, and that she, Mifanwy, possessed some soothing power over the restless little creature that its mother lacked, and she cooed and chirped, and patted and jogged, until at last the little one slept, and there was a long calm in the break. Mrs. Pomfrey was pleased, and congratulated herself

on having secured a "good girl," and even Tom Pomfrey and his companion were conscious of an agreeable change.

"'Pon my word, my dear, we owe you thanks," said Mr. Mowbray, "for this peace; and something more than thanks you shall have when we get to a town, a bonnie red ribbon to tie up that bonnie black hair!" And he turned his bold black eyes upon Mifanwy, who, wholly unconscious of his meaning, blushed and smiled.

Tom Pomfrey flipped up his horses, and, when they reached the top of a hill, passed the rest of the carriages, leaving them to come on at a slower pace, while he and his companions tooled along on the road to Swansea.

It was well known by every member of the troupe that, although old Pomfrey was "the boss of the show," yet a word from his eldest son weighed much with him, and generally influenced his decisions; accordingly, no one willingly offended Tom; thus it was that Mifanwy, who was evidently a favourite of his, was treated with less familiarity and coarse attention than were the other young women of the establishment. Her days were spent with Mrs. Pomfrey and the children, for the most part in the small tent in which all domestic arrangements were carried out. Dressing and undressing the children, nursing the baby, and tidying up generally, kept her hard at work till the evening performance had commenced, and the baby was asleep in its cradle. Then she would creep along the dark passage with canvas walls and floors of sawdust that opened out into the large tent, where the lights were flaring, the horses prancing, and the country yokels staring; while through and around all, floated the strains of some delightful waltz tune, that seemed to sway and guide Mifanwy's senses as they did the horses, who curved and swerved and bounded in time with the music. Here she would stand in a corner, unnoticed by the

throng of spectators or actors in the evening's entertainment, for actors they were—she had found it all out now; that was Jim Rawlings dressed up as the "Brigand Chief," and there went George Wilson in those blue velvet tights; but none of them noticed the slim girl with the large dark eyes, in the plain brown dress, who stood there hidden by that pillar, with its flapping red and white drapery, except, indeed, Tom Pomfrey, who, as he galloped round on his dappled steed, balancing himself on one toe, and performing all sorts of wild feats of horsemanship, still never forgot, when he passed that flapping corner, to look at the little brown figure, and throw her a genial smile.

"Oh! there's handsome he is indeed! and good! he's like a brother to me! What iss this town, Tom?" she asked, when, the circus business over, Tom came into his mother's tent for supper.

"Why, Merthyr to be sure! Don't you know your own Welsh towns?"

"Towns!" said Mifanwy; "me know the towns! Ach y fi! No, indeed, I not know them! But Merthyr! Oh, anwl, I was promise to write to Shân from here. What will I do? 'cos I can't write."

"Can't you write?" said Tom Pomfrey.

"No, and not read, too," she said sorrowfully. "Oh! I will be glad if somebody will learn me to write and read!"

"I will," said Tom; "I'll write your letter for you to-night, and to-morrow night I will teach you to make pothooks."

And after the supper of cold beef and bread and cheese had been cleared away, Mifanwy fetched from the wonderful van, up and down whose steps she made almost as many pilgrimages as Mrs. Pomfrey, the materials for writing a letter, and Tom spread them out before him on the large packing-case, used as a table. He dated his letter

"MERTHYR,
"October 20th.

"MY DEAR MOTHER."

"MY DEAR SHÂN," corrected Mifanwy; "she's not my mother, I not got a mother."

"Oh! I didn't know that," said Tom apologetically, beginning another sheet.

"DEAR SHÂN, will that do? Now, what shall I say?"

"DEAR SHÂN,—I am here since yesterday, and I like it very much. I have a good place; Mrs. Pomfrey is very kind to me, and the little children I love almost like the dear sheep on Moel Mynach. Mr. Pomfrey is the master of us all, like John Powys, you know, only, oh! so different! and Mr. Tom Pomfrey is like—is like—"

"Well," said Tom, looking up anxiously.

"Like Topper," said Mifanwy.

"Topper! who's Topper?"

"My dog, the sheep dog, you know."

"Well!" said Tom, "you are complimentary!"

"What's that?" said the girl.

"Oh, never mind; go on."

"Now you are angry," she said. "But, indeed, indeed, now, if you knew Topper."

"Oh, I have no doubt," said Tom, "Topper is all right, and, after all, I think you are right. You can call me 'Topper' if you like."

"Oh, no," said Mifanwy; "there's only one Topper in the world."

"Oh! well, go on. What next?"

"Where were we? Oh! like Topper—quite so good, quite so true, and quite so—" She hesitated again.

"Fond of me?" inquired Tom.

"Kind to me," corrected the girl.

"Sha'n't I put fond of me?"

"No, that wouldn't be true. You don't know how fond of me Topper is."

"But I can guess," said Tom.

Mifanwy's thoughts had already strayed from Topper and Tom.

"I wonder whether Ieuan has written to you again."

"Who's Ieuan?" asked Tom.

"My brother," said Mifanwy. "Not my brother exactly, you know; but Shân's nursling, like me."

"Oh! that's different," said Tom. "Where is he now?"

"Oh! that's what I want to know; because of that I want to go to London. Ieuan will be glad to see me!"

"Where does he live?" pursued Tom.

"Oh, anwl! I don't know; but he is with some grand gentleman, whatever. Sir Glynne Meredith is his name. He took a fancy to Ieuan, and took him away with him, and left me alone at Abersethin. Ach y fi! I couldn't bear it. The waves and the wind and the crows were saying to me the whole white day, 'Where is Ieuan?' and so," she added, clasping her hands, "I am nearly break my heart, and now I am coming to London to see Ieuan, and there's glad we will be!"

"Sir Glynne Meredith!" said Tom thoughtfully. "I've heard his name somewhere; seems quite familiar to me."

"Familiar! What's that?" asked the girl.

"Oh, seem to know him, you know, but can't remember him."

"Oh, indeed; we'll go out in the street, and ask everybody where is he live? Here's the paper with the name." And she drew from her bosom a little packet containing the red bow and a little crumpled paper.

It was now Tom's turn to say, "What is that?" at the sight of a bit of glistening red satin.

"Oh, nothing," she said, hastily replacing it, and handing him the paper. Tom looked troubled, but took the paper, and silently smoothed out the creases.

"No. 1, Marbrook Gardens, Hyde Park," he read
"Phew! that's a swell part."

"A what part?"

"Oh, a grand part of London, where the 'upper ten' live, you know."

Again Mifanwy's awkward question, "What's that?"
But Tom never lost his patience.

"The grand people, you know--the dukes and duchesses, and the lords and ladies."

"I know! I know!" said Mifanwy; "the nice people like Lady Meredith and Mr. Rhys Morgan, and Ieuan, too, now. I am glad he is with nice people. I wouldn't like to go to him if they were nasty."

Tom looked dubious, but made no remark.

"What else?" he said after a pause, pointing to the letter.

"Mr. Rhys Morgan will read this letter just so well as if it was written in Welsh. I am going to learn to read and write, and, when I can write myself, it will be Welsh, the dear old Welsh."

"What else?" said Tom.

"Nothing else--only my kind love to you, dear Shân, and Ianto.--Your affectionate child,

"MIFANWY OWEN."

The letter was addressed in Tom Pomfrey's best writing, with many flourishes, and, of course, he had paraphrased her words, and it reached its destination safely, in spite of the mis-spelling of the Welsh names. Shân and Ianto were delighted beyond measure to hear of her safe arrival at Merthyr, for, though they had accepted the fact of her long silence with that pathetic meekness and patience which is so characteristic of the rustic mind, they yet felt relieved of a great burden of anxiety when Mr. Rhys Morgan had interpreted the letter to them line by line.

"I can't think," said Shân, "why Price the preacher didn't write to me in Welsh; but, dear anwyl, he has

been in Merthyr for many years, and I hear it is full of 'Saeson,' so perhaps he has forgotten his Welsh."

When the circus drew near Althorpe, a large town about fifty miles from London, all was excitement and bustle. It was the best place for "takings," Mr. Pomfrey said, along the whole route, and being the last town at which they gave an exhibition before reaching London, he always put forth his best energies to please the spectators, who were considered more critical than those of the country towns through which they had passed.

"Here's a go," cried Tom Pomfrey, rushing into the small tent where his father and mother were busily engaged in discussing a supper of steak and onions, Mifanwy hovering about with the irrepressible baby.

"Here's a go."

"What's the matter?" asked old Pomfrey, standing his knife and fork upright in both fists on the table.

"Here's Harriet Long taken ill, really ill; been up to her lodgings to see for myself, for I couldn't believe Mowbray, and sure enough, she *is* ill and no mistake."

"I'll go and see her," said old Pomfrey; "she's only tired with her journey, I expect. A good stiff glass of hot whisky and water and a night's rest will set her all right."

And he bustled away out of the tent, and up the street to Miss Harriet Long's lodgings, from which he emerged in a few minutes looking worried and anxious. Then he called at the doctor's to impress upon him the importance of getting her all right for the next afternoon's performance.

"What is it, sir?" he asked the doctor, when he had seen his patient.

"Can't tell yet, but, unless I mistake—typhoid; anyhow, quite impossible for her to get up to-morrow, or for many a long day; I will see her early to-morrow. Good-night."

"Good heavens, what's to be done? 'ere's a kettle of fish, 'Princess of Randelar' placarded all over the town, and no princess in the circus; what shall I do?" And Mr. Pomfrey bawled out, "Where's Tom?" as he usually did in any difficulty.

Tom and his mother were still discussing the situation.

"Whatever will you do?" said Mrs. Pomfrey; "there was a time when I'd have taken the part for you like a shot, I would."

Old Pomfrey only deigned to notice the remark by saying, "Go on," which Tom tried to soften by a good-natured laugh.

"It wouldn't suit you now, mother; I'm afraid short tarlatan skirts and spangles are not in your line any longer."

"Can't you suggest something?" said old Pomfrey; "what's the good of 'aving such an idjut of a son as can't suggest anythink when a man's in a pickle."

"When you are in a pickle, get out of it, is my suggestion," said Tom.

"And 'ow's that to be done?" retorted the old man, sitting down on a coil of ropes, and wiping his streaming brow, for, though he bullied his son ungrudgingly, he yet had infinite faith in his resources.

"Lizzie Hawkins take the part, eh? or Emma Long, eh?"

"Emma Long and Lizzie Hawkins?" said Tom scornfully, "wouldn't do, father; no, I don't deny you are in a bit of a mess; but, if you leave it to me, I believe I can help you."

"No one can 'elp me," said the old man despondently, "unless they can find someone to take the part of the Princess of Randelar."

"And that I believe I can do, father;" and, turning round on his seat, he pulled Mifanwy's dress to attract her attention. "Here," he said, placing her in front of his father, "here's the Princess of Randelar; now look here, Mifanwy, I've heard you sing that waltz

tune that Harriet Long sings while she rides Sultan round the ring; you sing it ever so much better than she does; in fact, father, I believe if she sang it, she'd make the fortune of the show. Now, Mifanwy, you sing up; that waltz, you know, you were singing last night to the baby."

"Oh! but I not know the English words."

"Dash it, but that spoils it all," said old Pomfrey.

"You not want me to sing in the circus," said Mifanwy, "and stand on that beautiful Sultan, and to wear those short clothes! oh! no, indeed, that can I never."

"Now listen, Mifanwy," said Tom, "I don't want you to stand on Sultan's back, and I don't want you to wear those short skirts, but I do want you to ride round on Sultan on a comfortable saddle; you shall have a long yellow satin skirt, Harriet Long's black velvet zouave and her scarlet satin cap; your hair must hang down, and you must sing the waltz in time to the music; but I need not tell you that, and Sultan will mind his own paces. You were singing Welsh words to the waltz last night, and I thought how much better they suited the music than those Harriet Long sings. Will you try, Mifanwy? You see what a bother my father is in."

The girl did not answer for some time; she was thinking—thinking what a wonderful thing had come to pass, that she, who had said, "Nothing can ever happen to me," should have suddenly stepped into such a position, to take the part of the Princess of Randelar, to ride round under those spangled banners and glittering lights, dressed in flowing robes of satin and velvet! "Am I Mifanwy?" she asked herself, "and can I do this?" and the answer was, "Yes, you can do it far better than Harriet Long." So, with a tremble in her voice, she said, "Indeed, I will try, whatever."

The anxious Tom looked and expressed himself much relieved, while the old man slapped his knee,

and said, "Well, I'm blowed if you arn't the cleverest chap to get one out of a mess. But I must see 'er re'earse before the hentertainment."

And so it was arranged; and the next morning, while poor Harriet Long was tossing about in a high fever, the band struck up in the empty circus, and Mifanwy "re'earsed" for the benefit of old Pomfrey. She was much relieved to find that Tom would walk beside her; "Only I don't want a saddle; I was used to ride all John Powys's horses without a saddle often up and down the steep slopes."

Round and round the circle she rode, Sultan keeping time with the waltz, and the girl, with her true and delicate ear, finding no difficulty in adapting the words of some old Welsh ballad to the rhythm of the music.

When the last tones had died away, and Sultan stopped his graceful canter, old Pomfrey clapped his hands vigorously, the band and Tom joining, while Mifanwy blushed with pleasure and delight.

"Well, I am blessed," cried the old man; "who'd 'a' thought that little brown sparrow were a nightingale?" And he hastened into the smaller tent to inform Mrs. Pomfrey of Tom's successful "coup."

"He's done it this time," he said; "she'll make the fortune of the show; why, her voice is like—like—melted butter."

There was great excitement in Mrs. Pomfrey's tent that afternoon, when the entertainment was in full swing, and Mifanwy was being dressed for her part.

"Well, I never; well, I never did," said Lizzie 'Awkins, who was lending a 'elping 'and, "who'd 'a' thought you 'ad such white shoulders; why, they are the whitest I 'ave ever seen, and you with such brown face and 'ands."

"Yes, indeed," said Mifanwy sorrowfully, "I don't know how it is whatever; but the sun and wind wass make me blacker than anybody else" And she sighed heavily.

"You ain't 'alf so black as you were any'ow," put in Mrs. Pomfrey. And, when Mifanwy was dressed, and entered the circus with a beating heart, Tom Pomfrey echoed the sentiment. "She's not half so dark as she was, and, any way, black or white, she's a winsome lassie."

Mifanwy, accustomed all her life to horses, vaulted easily on to Sultan's back, and, although the short skirts, and the powder, and paint were missing, the large audience seemed to take to the girl at once; her graceful figure, her simple manner, and beautiful voice made her part of the entertainment a complete success; and behold her now, a regular member of Mr. Pomfrey's troupe, and satisfied, nay, charmed, with her employment.

To think that she was entering London in this grand position, no longer the poor shepherdess!

Old Pomfrey, conscious of his good bargain, had increased her wages, much to her astonishment; and Ieuan would see that she was no longer the neglected and ragged shepherdess; her heart was full of buoyant hopes and delightful anticipations.

Sorrow and disappointment may be the soil out of which spring some of the noblest traits in the human character, for patience, meekness, and humility flourish in such a soil; but happiness and success are the garden in which are fostered the equally important graces of joy, and thankfulness, and delight. The various characters around her, the changing scenes, the anticipation of meeting Ieuan, all combined to deepen and strengthen the different shades of Mifanwy's artistic temperament, and, both in mind and person, she daily expanded, like a bud that opens to the sun. She was always ready, with a helping hand and a pleasant smile, to take her share either in Mrs. Pomfrey's worries, or old Pomfrey's cares; she became the confidante of all the "young ladies'" troubles and pleasures, and above all, the gentle soother of poor Tom Pomfrey's annoyances in his rôle

of "buffer" between his father and his employées. Her complete simplicity and innocence blinded her to the faults of those around her. If Mr. Mowbray swore, she was blissfully unconscious of the meaning of an English oath ; if the "young ladies" favoured her with some doubtful confidence or vulgar joke, though she was vaguely conscious of its coarseness, it did not seem to sully her ; her freshness and purity remained undimmed.

CHAPTER XV.

TOM'S LOVE.

"POMFREY'S grand circus" had returned from its tour through the provinces, to cheer and enliven the inhabitants of the Warkworth Road and its grimy neighbourhood. The front of the shabby building was placarded with notices of the fact, in all types of letters and shades of colouring, accompanied by gorgeous illustrations of the wonders and glories to be seen within; the most prominent being a huge picture of a black horse with curved neck, pawing feet and sweeping tail, ridden by a girl in a yellow riding skirt, with long black hair surmounted by a scarlet cap; described in flaring red letters as the "Princess of Randelar" on her Arabian steed, "both brought by Mr. Pomfrey from the 'Plains of Ind' at an enormous expenditure of time, trouble, and money, for the delectation of the British public." The "Princess of Randelar," it went on to state, "is by far the most beautiful woman, the most accomplished equestrian, and the most gifted singer who has ever graced a circus," with a great deal more to the same effect.

A large door in the hoarding admitted the public, and over it was erected a balcony as a "band stand," on which every evening the band, under the direction of Mr. Mowbray, stationed itself and discoursed sweet music to the surrounding neighbourhood.

The most delightful hour to Mifanwy was that which Tom Pomfrey devoted to her education. She could already read with ease and write with very tolerable neatness.

"Come, Mifanwy, here's the ink, and here's your copy-book," said Tom, one evening.

Mifanwy sat down on the opposite side of the table, and, pushing back her hair, took the pen in her hand, and looked inquiringly at Tom.

"The words were very long last time," she said; "couldn't we have something easier to-night?"

"Well, we'll try," said Tom, turning over his rustling newspaper, for Mifanwy's education, so far as Tom Pomfrey was concerned in it, was conducted chiefly through the columns of the newspaper. "Here's an article on music that seems interesting. Now, let us begin." And, slowly and plainly, he read it aloud, stopping at every difficult word, and looking inquiringly at his pupil, who wrote it on a slip of paper. Then, when the reading was over, Tom explained, with patience, and as clearly as he could, its meaning, and the ideas suggested by it. They were delightful hours both to the teacher and the taught.

"Oh, Tom," said Mifanwy, when, all the words explained, she wrote her lesson over again, "it's much plainer now; if you have patience with me, I shall know a lot one day."

"You will, indeed," agreed Tom, drawing a large atlas towards him, and beginning upon a geography lesson; "you'll know more than I do very soon, if you go on as you have done, and what shall we do then?"

"Then we can go on learning together."

"Yes, that will be awfully jolly; we can go on regularly now that we are settled at home."

"Yes," said Mifanwy, clasping her hands, "I am glad, indeed. To think we are in London! the real, true London! I can scarcely believe it, Tom!" And her eyes were moist with tears of joy.

"Well, now," said Tom, "what is it, Mifanwy, that makes you so very glad to be in London?"

"Well," she answered, looking down at her pencil,

"you are all so kind to me, and your father pays me such a lot of money; and then—and then, oh, I wanted to get to London so much!"

"Why, Mifanwy? That's what I was asking myself last night in the circus, while you went round on Sultan, and sang your Welsh words. It seemed as if your voice were full of laughter and happiness; and I said to myself, 'It is because we have got to London;' but I wonder why that is. Will you tell me?" And the honest fellow looked sad and anxious.

"Well," replied Mifanwy, "it is because of my friend, you know, that I want to see so much."

"Yes, er—er—" said Tom, "is it—is it—er, would it, now, be a young man—er—that you wanted to see? That young man, I suppose, your brother, you know?"

"Yes, yes," said Mifanwy, in her quick Welsh fashion, "but, indeed, Tom, you are getting very clever, whatever. How did you guess it was him?"

"Well, you see, you told me once, and I've been thinking of it off and on ever since."

"Anwl, anwl, there's foolish, you are; but, indeed, now, 'young man' is a grand word to call Ieuan; I will never know him if he's a young man. He was a boy—a boy, Tom, with bare feet and ragged trousers."

"You wouldn't think much of him, then," said Tom hopefully, and brightening up a little.

"Think much of him! Oh, Tom, I think everything of him! all—all! and constantly; I long so much to see him, and, if he were not in the world, I would long to be out of it, too."

Tom looked serious, and he scribbled unconsciously with his pencil on the paper. "And does he love you as much, Mifanwy?"

"Yes, yes," cried Mifanwy, "without a shadow of doubt, quite as much. If I were not in the world, the world would be empty to him, too."

Tom sighed heavily. "There is no hope for me, then?"

"Hope for you?" The girl suddenly awakened to the pain she had unconsciously been inflicting, for love is oftentimes selfish. "Oh, anwl, Tom, you won't go to be unhappy yourself now, and spoil my happiness, for it will make me unhappy to see you so."

"No, no, of course not," said Tom in an apologetic tone; "it was selfish of me; but, you see, Mifanwy, I hoped it would be different."

"How could it be different?"

"I had hoped you would have learned to love me."

"And don't I love you?" asked Mifanwy, turning up the palms of both hands. "Yes, indeed, indeed, better than anyone in the world, except Ieuan."

"Ah! that's it," said Tom; "he comes first, doesn't he?"

"Why, of course. Haven't I known him since I was a baby? Didn't he always carry me over the nettles and thistles? and didn't he try to bear my punishments for me? Of course I love him most." She looked with a frank smile at Tom, but instantly withdrew her eyes, for she was shocked to see the change in her companion's usually happy face. He was pale, and his lips seemed dry and parched.

"Oh, Tom, Tom!" she cried, "what is it? what makes you look like that? I will break my heart if I find that my coming here has spoiled your happiness. I am not worth it. If I were indeed the Princess of Randelar, it might be worth while for you to love me like that; but I am only a poor little shepherdess living here through your kindness, and upon your father's charity. Try not to think of me. No, I can't say that, too, for the world would be so cold and empty to me without you. I love you, Tom; indeed I do; but not as I love Ieuan."

There was a long pause, during which Mifanwy covered her face with her hands and cried a little.

Tom pressed his white lips together firmly, and,

beginning to fold up the papers, and put away the books, said, with rather a husky voice, "Enough lessons for to-night, Mifanwy; I am going to see to the horses."

She stretched out her hands after him. "Tom, you are not angry with me?"

"Angry with you?" he answered, clasping her hand, and looking steadily for a moment into her eyes. "No, Mifanwy, I wish I were,"—and he went out, and busied himself with the horses, but without his usual blithesome whistle. When it came to Sultan's turn, he patted the glossy neck, and smoothed the soft, tremulous nostrils. "Ah, Sultan, old boy," he said, "she loves us, but she will leave us both one day."

On the next afternoon, Tom was missing, and missed he truly was by almost everybody.

"Tom!" screamed Mrs. Pomfrey at the back door, that looked on to the circus stables. "Where can he be? 'ow can I make up these jackets for the 'Bounding Brothers,' if he ain't here to show me the pattern?"

"Where's Tom?" asked Mr. Mowbray, sauntering in with a cigar in his mouth. "Here's the 'trombone' and the 'flute' having a regular row about that new tune they are practising, and I want Tom to come and settle the point."

"Where's that blooming idjut of a boy?" inquired old Pomfrey; "'ow am I to make up these accounts?"

And "Tom! Tom! where's Tom?" was bandied about from mouth to mouth until late in the afternoon, when he appeared upon the scene.

"Where have I been? why, out for a little walk; thought I'd take a little turn towards the West End, and see how the 'upper ten' were getting on; saw the Queen driving round the Park; she asked very kindly after you, mother, and said she was coming to the circus to-morrow."

"Go 'long with your nonsense, and come to tea,'

scoffed Mrs. Pomfrey, trying to look cross ; "you've been a precious long time with the Queen any'ow."

Tom drew his chair to the table, and Mifanwy, sitting opposite, between Willie and Totsie, looked nervously across at him.

"Did you, indeed, see the Queen?" she asked, for the sake of saying something.

"Yes, indeed, indeed, as you say," was Tom's reply; "and if mother will let you come, I'll take you to the Park one day; you'd like to see the Queen?"

"Oh, yes," said Mifanwy; "what a letter I would write to Shân and Ianto then."

"Well, it can't be this week," said Mrs. Pomfrey; "for there's them new jackets to be made for the 'Bounding Brothers,' and a set of new dresses for the Cinderella play."

"Oh, any time will do," said Mifanwy, "if it will be some time."

Tom had been out reconnoitring. He had desired to learn something of the surroundings of his rival in the affections of Mifanwy.

He remembered the name of Sir Glynne Meredith, and that he lived at 1 Marbrook Gardens. He had not had much difficulty in finding the address, for Tom knew his London well. He had walked up the street, if street it could be called, with handsome mansions on one side, and leafy trees and grass and flowers on the other. They were all fine houses, but one only he had had eyes for. He had gazed at the closed door, as if longing to thrust it back upon its hinges, and enter the precincts that held the secret on which he thought his happiness hung. At last he had slowly turned away, and thoughtfully made his way into the Park, where he had sat for some time in a brown study, before again making his way eastward, to find himself in great request.

CHAPTER XVI.

VISIT TO THE WEST END.

ONE day in the following week, while Mifanwy was busy darning her yellow satin riding-skirt, Tom entered.

"Come along, Mifanwy," he said, "here's a fine day for a stroll in the West End. Let's go and see whether we can find the house where that young man lives."

"What young man?" asked Mifanwy, with brightening eyes and flushing cheeks.

"Why, Ieuan, your friend, your brother, as you call him."

"Oh, Tom!" was all the girl could answer, while she lifted her face from her work with palpitating breath; "will we go there, indeed? I have got his address in my box."

"All right," said Tom, when Mrs. Pomfrey, followed by Totsie and Willie, entered the room. "Mother, I am going to take Mifanwy, and show her about London a little. Hyde Park, you know; it's a pity she shouldn't see a bit about her."

"So 'tis," said Mrs. Pomfrey. "Go up, child, and dress yourself as smart as you can."

Mifanwy ran upstairs, and in a wonderfully short time was back, and standing ready dressed in the doorway. Tom regarded her with a critical eye and an admiring smile. Mrs. Pomfrey, however, did not share in his satisfaction.

"Well, if hever I did!" she cried; "going in that

old grey dress! Why didn't you put on your green?"

Mifanwy faltered, and held up her grey skirt in her neatly gloved hand.

"Will I, Tom?" she asked deprecatingly, with her head on one side. "Will I put on my green?"

"No," said Tom; "grey or green, you look very nice, and I'll back you against any of the fine ladies in the Park."

Mifanwy had never mentally followed the path of Ieuan's career, nor realised the difference between the shepherd boy on the Welsh hills and the protégé and favourite of Sir Glynne Meredith. She pictured him grown, of course, and altered, but still her childhood's simple, rustic friend. Some innate tenderness or delicacy had restrained her when she had unfolded her best dress of green merino. No, poor Ieuan would be taken aback, he would think she was changed, he would feel she was too grand for him. Would he know her? And, for a moment, she gazed at her image in the glass, with some anxiety, and she finally decided to wear a dress of grey serge. While she was fastening on her little brown velvet hat, her anxiety resolved itself into a pleased and happy smile, for what she saw in that crooked, unflattering glass was truly a pleasing and beauteous sight; the glossy black brown hair was drawn back from a face of exquisite contour; the skin, which, from its extreme delicacy, had felt so cruelly the scorching sun, had regained its pure and transparent fairness. She was very pale, and her dark brown eyes might have lent a shade of sadness to her face, had not the rosy red lips and glistening teeth told another tale; she could laugh as merrily as anyone, and, at such times, she had the unusual advantage of looking her best. To the beauty of many women a hearty laugh is a severe ordeal.

Tom felt proud of the graceful figure in grey beside him, and once more made a critical survey of the girl,

from the small brown velvet hat and brown muff to the dainty "best boots" that pattered on beside him.

The shops, the carriages, the trees, the fine ladies, altogether took Mifanwy's breath away, and she could only clasp her hands inside her muff, and ejaculate under her breath: "Oh, anwl! anwl!" But although she was charmed and elated by the wondrous sights that Tom had shown her—so that he almost hoped that they had banished Ieuan from her mind—deep in her heart lay the thought, "I shall see Ieuan to-day; I shall grasp his brown hand, and hear his voice. If he had but seen me in my yellow satin, riding on Sul!an! but perhaps, then, he would never believe I was poor Mifanwy!" And joy took possession of her soul.

Nevertheless, when Tom pointed to a square they were approaching, and said, "There's the house, Mifanwy," her heart beat nervously, and she looked with intense interest towards the handsome portico of the large, white house. While they were drawing nearer, a carriage drove rapidly past them, and stopped at the said portico. Then a smart footman jumped off the box, and opened the door of the carriage, and out of it stepped Sir Glynne Meredith, tall and stalwart as ever. He turned to help Lady Meredith, who looked unchanged, if not for the better.

Mifanwy recognised them at once, and was a little frightened by the gloss of the carriage and the champing of the horses. The footman still held the door open, and her heart stood still, when a young man, stooping his tall head, stepped out on the pavement, and turned round to assist a fair girl from the carriage.

A young man, broad-shouldered and tall, with crisp brown hair and honest grey eyes, dressed in fashionable, though quiet, apparel; his open brow and rather large, but well formed, mouth betokened a straightforward and honest firmness. A slight moustache shaded his upper lip, and his smiling

remark, when he handed his companion from the carriage, displayed a row of large, but white and even, teeth. It was Ieuan, but Ieuan improved and altered; every good point in his appearance had developed, and his manly bearing and refinement of looks and manner made themselves felt by all who set their eyes on him.

Mifanwy was startled, delighted, disappointed, and wounded. It was Ieuan, but not the Ieuan of her dreams. It was Ieuan, no longer the simple, rustic shepherd and carver of stone, but an ideal image to be thought of, and worshipped in the deep recesses of her heart, to be wept over in the silent watches of the night, to be longed for whenever a strain of music or a vision of beauty awoke some tender memories of the past. Who was the fair girl dressed in velvet, her hat lined with pink satin? Mifanwy did not ask herself the question; she recognised her at once. It was Laissabeth! Yes, it was Laissabeth, with all her charms increased tenfold—dimpling, sparkling, as of old. She cast a hasty, haughty glance at Tom and Mifanwy while she passed up the broad steps, the young man following her, with a roll of music and a yellow novel.

The door closed, the footman climbed up to his seat again, the carriage drove away and disappeared round the corner, and Tom and Mifanwy were left standing on the pavement.

"What shall we do? Would you like me to ring the bell, Mifanwy?"

"Oh, no, no!" replied the girl. "Come home, Tom, I am tired."

And they turned their faces once more eastward, Mifanwy with a dull pain gnawing at her heart, Tom unable quite to subdue his pleasure at the difference between the position of the young man and the drooping girl who walked beside him; he saw that she, too, realised this difference; but soon his better nature, which was never long asleep, awoke,

and he began to reproach himself for his heartlessness and selfishness, and he scarcely dared to cast a glance at the little trembling grey figure that walked beside him. The little "best boots," that had stepped out so gaily half an hour before, were now dragging wearily along, and both Tom and his companion were glad to hail an omnibus going eastward.

The shops that had delighted Mifanwy on her westward journey were the same, but now they had no charm for her; the streets looked faded; there was no brightness in them; everything wore a dull and tarnished look. And what had caused this sudden change? What had turned the hopes and visions of the last months—nay, years—into sudden gloom and frost and ashes? Who can explain the workings of a soul? Who can put into plain words the revelation of a moment, the instinctive knowledge that breaks in, with the quickness of a lightning flash, on a mind obscured with its own imaginings?

What came between Ieuan and Mifanwy in that momentary meeting in a London street? Society, status, fashion! The words were unknown to Mifanwy; the ideas conveyed by them had never dawned upon her mind, and yet the shadow of these ideas it was that had suddenly fallen upon her spirit, and loomed thick and dark between her and the friend of her early years, when she had stood on the pavement and looked at Ieuan and Laissabeth.

Had her nature been less sensitive, she might indeed have been dazzled by the fashion and grandeur of the scene, but she would not have felt the pain at the sudden revelation of the distance between her and her foster-brother, at the great gulf that lay between them. Without a word or even a look from Ieuan, she had become conscious that he stood many steps higher than herself on the "ladder of life," and that, if he should look at her at all, it would have to be a downward look. Jealousy, too, buried its cruel fangs in her loving heart. Laissabeth, who had wronged

her and caused her to suffer, to be near Ieuan, in the same carriage, probably holding daily intercourse with him! while she, unknown and unthought of, drew out her existence far from Ieuan, and perhaps forgotten by him. But no, this suggestion she would not harbour; that he could forget her seemed impossible, her whole nature revolted from the thought; and, for all her disappointment, a deep-seated trust in Ieuan held her heart.

"He is mine!" she said aloud on reaching her little bedroom. She bolted the door, and threw herself in a wild passion of grief upon her bed. "He is mine; he has promised!" Deep sobs shook her frame, sobs that gradually subsided into faint moans that came with every breath. "He is mine!" she said again, sitting up and pushing back her thick, black hair; "and I am his; he has promised." There was a long pause, in which she sat silent, with throbbing pulse, her eyes fixed upon empty space—"and, if he should forget his promise for a while, he is still mine; and what if he will never be mine till death comes and lays his cold hand upon him? well, never mind!" she said, rising and standing with raised head and clasped hands, "still he will be mine, mine for ever, I know it." And she hastily smoothed her hair, and bathed away the traces of her tears.

Tom was seated at the tea-table when she entered the room, and at once began awkwardly to make conversation with his mother, to hide Mifanwy's discomfiture; he had noticed the lagging footsteps and the drooping head on their way back from the West End; but, if he thought these signs of sorrow would continue, he little knew the force of pride in the Welsh nature. It is a very large factor in their daily life, a passion of immense energy in the Welsh mind, and, for good or evil, it exercises a constant and powerful influence over their characters and their lives. It adds bitterness to their poverty, it throws a glamour over their pleasures, it causes continual quarrels and

misunderstandings in their domestic life and affairs; and, though it is often the cause of their poverty, it sustains them under its privations, and prevents their falling into the degrading custom of begging, which they regard as a disgrace, almost a crime; and they will often suffer in silence, even to starvation, rather than have their pride wounded by receiving charity, however kindly meant and offered. It was this innate pride that sustained Mifanwy when she entered the little back parlour, and took her seat at the tea-table between Willie and Totsie; her eyes sparkled, her pale cheek flushed, and there was rippling laughter on her lips, while she recounted to Mrs Pomfrey the events of the afternoon.

"Oh, indeed to goodness!" she said, "you didn't tell me half what a lovely place London is! I used to think the streets were paved with gold, and to-day the sun shone so yellow on the pavement and on the shining streets that it really was like gold; and the horses' harness, and the shop windows, all glittering in the sun, oh! it was beautiful indeed; and we saw a grand house, Totsie, and a fine carriage stopped at the door, and ladies and gentlemen stepped out of it and went into the house, and one of them was—who do you think?—why, the little boy that used to watch the sheep with me on the Abersethin slopes!"

Tom looked at her in astonishment; his blunt and straightforward English nature could not fathom this hidden depth of Mifanwy's character.

"She can't feel it," he thought; "all the better for me," and he spread Totsie's bread with an extra thick layer of jam.

"Lor!" exclaimed Mrs Pomfrey; "did you speak to him, child?"

"Oh, anwl, no!" said the girl, laughing. "Would I be speaking to a grand gentleman like that? no indeed!" And again there was the light laughter that astonished, though it pleased, Tom so much.

For days afterwards, Mifanwy's voice was heard

more frequently singing at her work ; whenever anyone was near, she hummed or chatted continually, until at last Tom's anxious fears were completely laid to rest, and the little episode of the walk to Marbrook Gardens became a thing of the past, forgotten by everyone, except Mifanwy.

The winter months dragged heavily on. The circus still continued to attract and delight the "East Enders," but it was observed that Mifanwy's part in the entertainment was not so rapturously received as formerly. Her feelings had undergone a subtle change. Hitherto, the moving power of her life had been the delightful consciousness that she had stepped from the low grade of a shepherd girl into that of a real actor in London life, an admired and an envied woman, who had entered the ideal world of grandeur and charm her childish mind had always connected with the name of London. Had she not gorgeous dresses ? was she not called a "Princess" ? did not hundreds of men and women, "gentlemen and ladies," as she thought them, at least three times a week, stand for hours in gaping admiration, while she rode round and round the circus, singing to the strains of the band, and bowing gracefully in acknowledgment of the cheers that greeted her at every pause ? Now it was different ; her eyes were opened ; she had had a glimpse of the real thing. Ieuan and Laissabeth did not take off their fine clothes, and subside into ordinary hum-drum mortals at a certain hour in the evening. She saw the satins, and velvets, and tinsels in their true light ; she realised almost too vividly the frowziness and shabbiness of the whole affair, and she began to shrink with new-born fastidiousness from the broad and rather coarse suggestions of the songs she had before sung, without understanding their hidden meaning, for her knowledge of English was still far from perfect.

Mr. Pomfrey, the elder, had once or twice, too, shown signs of disapproval.

"Dunno 'ow it is," he said to Mrs. Pomfrey in a confidential conversation over his pipe one night, "but Kitty Killthorpe seems to please the people better than Mifanwy lately."

"'Ow's that?" rejoined his better half.

"Well, I dun' no. 'Er voice is more squeaky, but she puts more meaning into 'er words. Mifanwy never would wink when she came to that line in the second verse. Now, Kitty Killthorpe does; and it do take, I can tell yer! Didn't yer 'ear the roars of laughing last night? Tom, 'e encourages 'er in 'er nonsense, 'e does; but I shouldn't wonder if we 'ad to put Kitty in 'er place before next season."

"Lor! wothever should I do without Mifanwy?" said Mrs. Pomfrey; "I've grown that fond of the girl."

"Oh, it won't be just yet," replied Mr. Pomfrey reassuringly. "Mifanwy 'll do very well for the present; but, before next winter, you know."

Tom noticed the change in her, too, but did not rightly divine the cause. "She is finding out her powers," he thought, "and will not be satisfied to stay at Pomfrey's circus long. Well, she is right. She would make her fortune as an opera or concert singer; and so, Tom Pomfrey, you've got to manage it for her; you've got your work cut out."

Meanwhile, the subject of their remarks dragged wearily on through the drudgery of her work. She was possessed by a great fear; she, whose one unsatisfied desire had been that Ieuan could see her in all her glory at the circus, was now living in the continual dread that he might find her out. Now, her one desire was to hide herself away from him. She had too little experience of life to know that it was almost an impossibility that he should attend an East End circus, and it was always a relief to her when, her part in the entertainment over, she could ride out from the crowded building, and slip off Sultan, and

with many pats and caresses, whisper a few loving words in his ear.

"Oh, Sultan, if we were only out together on the hills, how we would fly away from these horrid scenes, and this cold country."

Sultan neighed, and rubbed his velvet nose on Mifanwy's yellow satin.

CHAPTER XVII.

OLD MEMORIES.

ON the day upon which Tom and Mifanwy had seen him alight at Sir Glynne Meredith's door, Ieuan followed Laissabeth, or Miss Elizabeth Powys, as she was now styled, up the broad staircase into the drawing-room, where Lady Meredith was awaiting them with loosened bonnet-strings, and gloves laid side by side on her lap. He went at once to the piano, and arranged the new music upon it, while Elizabeth chatted gaily. The young man seemed lost in thought, while he stood leaning his elbows on the piano.

"My dear boy," said Lady Meredith, "where are your thoughts? You stand there as if you were waiting to turn over the music for some invisible player."

Ieuan started, and crossed the room.

"I thought Elizabeth was going to try over her new music."

"Oh, after tea," said Elizabeth, as a servant entered and arranged a small table for afternoon tea. "Did you notice the man who stood and stared at us so when we got out of the carriage? He positively stood still to look at us."

"To look at you, most likely," replied Ieuan. "But I never saw him; I did see a graceful, ladylike girl, who was passing with someone."

"Graceful! ladylike!" sniffed Elizabeth, tossing her head, "with red ribbon tying her hair out of doors!"

"Isn't that quite *comme il faut*, then? I saw the red ribbon, but I thought it looked very effective with her grey dress; but she held her muff up to her face, so I could not judge whether she was pretty or not."

Elizabeth sipped her tea, murmuring something about vulgarity, while Ieuan made himself generally useful.

When the tea was over, and Lady Meredith had retired to take off her things, Elizabeth rose and approached the piano.

"You seem to be really getting on," said Ieuan.

"Thank you; you are very kind to say so, I am sure," replied the girl, with a shade of sarcasm in her voice.

"I mean," he resumed, "that you are really succeeding in making a name for yourself in your profession. It was only last night that Camperton was trying to persuade Miss Tufton to patronise next Wednesday's concert; but she seemed not to care for it until he said, 'Miss Powys is going to sing,' when she instantly changed her mind, and said, 'Oh, mother, we must go; Miss Powys is going to sing.'"

"And what did Lady Tufton say?" inquired Elizabeth, pacified.

"I don't remember exactly; but it was complimentary. Something about your being quite the best singer in London at present."

"Shall you be there, Ieuan?" she asked, with drooping eyelids and a blushing face.

"Most certainly; wouldn't miss it for the world," he answered readily, while he unrolled the music. "Here's Lady Meredith; now let's have this song."

Elizabeth took off her hat and her bracelets, and, sitting down to play her own accompaniment, began in clear, silvery tones, "Oh, didst thou know the pangs of absent love." It was evident that her voice had been thoroughly trained; to its natural power and clearness had been added the finish of brilliant execu-

tion. She sang with ease and with taste, and with perfect confidence in her own powers.

"Exquisite!" said Lady Meredith, as the air followed the recitative; but Ieuan said nothing.

The long-forgotten air fell upon his ear like the touch of a vanished hand; the pathetic notes made their way into his heart. They laid hold of the sleeping and half-forgotten memories, and before his mind's eye passed a vision of a gentle girl with brown face and dark eyes, who sang her soul out to the darkness in a little dimly-lit church beside the sea; and when Elizabeth's bird-like voice had ceased, and the last chords had died away, he woke up from his reverie to join in Lady Meredith's thanks and praises; but still, while Elizabeth sang song after song, the sound of the sea seemed to mix with it all, the feeling of the breezy wind in his hair, and the fluttering of a "knot of red ribbon."

Lady Meredith was delighted; her protégée bid fair to become a complete success in the musical world; her beauty, as well as her brilliant voice, was the subject of conversation in many a drawing-room, and latterly she had become the prime favourite of the public.

There were some, indeed, who felt that there was something wanting in the crystal clearness of the notes.

"Perfect tune, perfect time, perfect tone; what would you have more?" said Lady Meredith one evening to a musical critic.

"Madam, I allow you all those—they are all in Miss Powys' voice, and you may add perfect execution; but there is a want of soul. The expression is good, but it has been taught, and she has learnt her lesson well. We still wait for one who can combine all these excellencies with a musical soul; then we shall have found a perfect singer."

After dinner on that same evening, Ieuan left his host and hostess chatting over the drawing-room fire,

and retired to the smoking-room, and, having ensconced himself in a comfortable armchair, with his feet on another, he gave himself up to a "brown study." He held his cigar listlessly between his fingers, until it had to be relighted; then in the curling wreaths of smoke would appear the vision of a girl, bare-footed and unkempt, who ran against the wind on the edge of a cliff; of a boy who leant on his crook, and hallooed to her "to come quick"; of two heads bent together over a sea-bird's nest, while over the picture stretched the blue sky, and beyond it a rippling sea.

Oh, for a breath of that sea wind! oh, for a touch of that brown hand! and oh, more than all, for a look into those loving eyes! Where was Mifanwy? What had become of her? She must be grown and altered—not pretty, perhaps, with that brown skin; but certainly not ugly, with those pearly teeth and those loving eyes and that graceful figure. And what did she think of him? How solemnly he had promised to her, how earnestly she had looked into his eyes, how full of faith and trust she was!

A long pause and a deep sigh, and the cigar went out again; he took another pull at it, and, finding it dead and cold, threw it away impatiently. Then he rose and unlocked his desk, and from its depths rummaged out a letter, thumbed and dirty; he looked for, and found, a paragraph concerning Mifanwy.

"Let me see; what do they say?"

"We miss you and Mifanwy without ceasing; but we are proud to think you are both settled in good places."

He smiled, and went on reading.

"Mifanwy is gone to 'the Works'; she has a good place there, and has sent us money. Between you both we are getting rich; but when we are dead, it will all come back to Mifanwy and you."

"Mifanwy and you," he murmured, while he folded

the letter and replaced it in the desk. "Mifanwy and I! What would the dear old people feel if they knew that sometimes for days no thought of her or of them crosses my mind? How shall I fulfil my promise to Mifanwy, and behave like an honourable man to Shân and Ianto? I must go and see them; I must travel down to the old home, if Sir Glynne will let me. I must seek out Mifanwy and redeem my promise, and when I have found her . . ."

He paced up and down the room in troubled thought, picturing himself now meeting her with a rapturous embrace on the slopes of Abersethin—now walking beside her in awkward embarrassment through some fashionable street in London. No, that thought was unbearable! He put out the lights, and left the smoking-room, looked into the studio, and then made his way to his bedroom, with slow step and firm, set lips. How the events of a few hours had changed his feelings; and what events? Nothing but the notes of an old air, the tones of a silvery voice—such small things had shaded the last hours of the day. He tossed restlessly on his bed, but fell asleep towards morning, and overslept himself so much that Lady Meredith and her husband had sat long over their breakfast in an interesting *tête-à-tête* conversation, of which he was the subject, before he appeared on the scene.

"I wonder," said Lady Meredith, examining her teaspoon, "who his parents really were?"

Sir Glynne's face flushed; it was a subject he disliked; he loved Ieuan like a son, and had made up his mind to treat him as one, and to make him his heir.

"What does it matter?" he replied; "a beggar, I believe, a tramp, or something of the kind; perhaps that is what he is thinking of when he looks so 'dour' sometimes. I have never spoken to him about it, but I think I will."

"You might hear something about him," suggested Lady Meredith, "from old Catrin Howells, at Aber-

sethin; she always seemed to take a special interest in him."

"I might," rejoined her husband thoughtfully, "but I don't want to rake up old memories; I wish it to be forgotten that he is not really my son."

"Down there it will never be forgotten," answered Lady Meredith; "the story is too well known."

At this juncture the subject of their conversation entered the room.

"Late for once," said the hostess; "a wonderful thing for you, Ieuan."

"Sat too long over your cigar last night, my boy," said Sir Glynne.

"I did have rather a bad night. You may laugh, sir, but you would have been rather surprised had you met me last night, as you might have, after twelve, in the studio."

"By Jove! you wouldn't have caught me there at that hour; but what's up, Ieuan? Are you in love, my boy? Did the little siren's music keep you awake?"

Ieuan blushed, and Lady Meredith, noticing the heightened colour, drew her own conclusions, and, beginning at once, woman like, to lose herself in a labyrinth of "match-making," dropped the sugar into the cream jug instead of Ieuan's cup.

"She does sing beautifully," said Sir Glynne, while Ieuan attacked his breakfast with no lack of appetite, at all events.

"But, joking apart, Ieuan, Elizabeth would not be the wife I should choose for you."

Ieuan leant back in his chair and laughed heartily. "A wife for me, sir! let us speak of it ten years hence. I have much to do first; a name and a fortune to make."

"Well, you are a lucky dog," said Sir Glynne. "I shouldn't wonder if you made both some day. I expect your 'Invocation' will make your name; it is exquisite, Ieuan. You know how I have watched it

growing in beauty, and getting more and more instinct with life. Yes, it has been like a child to me for months, and I shall have to look to my laurels when Ieuan Gwyllt enters the lists against me. But come, if you have finished ; let us go and have a look at it."

And they left the room together, Sir Glynne affectionately linking his arm through Ieuan's, and Lady Meredith looking smilingly after them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DISCOVERY.

"I HAVE a favour to ask you, sir," said Ieuan, one evening on entering the studio.

"I am glad to hear it," said Sir Glynne. "The greatest fault I find with you, Ieuan, is, that you never ask me for anything, although I have told you that I look upon you as a son."

"And expect me to bother you accordingly. Well, indeed, sir, when you leave me with a wish ungratified I will promise to appeal to you; you see I am doing so now."

"And what is this great favour, my dear boy?"

"Well, will you allow me to go down to Wales to see my old foster-parents? I fear they think I have forgotten them."

"Why, of course," replied Sir Glynne; "we have all neglected Glanarvon shockingly of late; and, were it not for our coming pilgrimage to Rome, I would accompany you, and so, no doubt, would Lady Meredith. If we went now, we should not be back in good time for our private view on the second. But what's the matter, Ieuan? You look as glum as if I had refused your request."

"No, indeed, I was only thinking that, perhaps, I ought to tell you that it is not only to see Shân and Ianto I am going, but also, and principally, to see Mifanwy."

Sir Glynne gave a long, low whistle. "Phew! is that it? Mifanwy, your foster-sister, and why not? It is very natural that you should wish to see her."

"But, sir," stammered Ieuan, "she is not my sister; and I gave her a solemn promise that I would return to see her—to—to marry her."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Sir Glynne, "this is worse than Elizabeth. And, pray, how does your lordship purpose to support a wife and family?"

Ieuan burst out laughing. "Indeed, sir, I had never thought of such a thing. The idea is too absurd."

"But you said 'to marry her'?"

"Well, some time in the future," said Ieuan; "not now. Why, I am but little more than a boy; but just to see her and to tell her that I am prepared to keep my promise, if she desires it."

Sir Glynne took a few long whiffs at his cigar, and, for a few moments, there was a cloud upon his face that Ieuan, with a pang of grief, saw for the first time.

"This is perfectly unreasonable, and not what I expected of you, Ieuan." And, flinging his cigar into the fire, he got up hastily and left the room; but in a few minutes he returned, to find Ieuan still standing in the same position by the mantelpiece. Sir Glynne's eyes had a sparkle in them, and his mouth wore a pleasant smile, when he slapped him on the shoulders.

"Now, look here, old boy," he said, "just sit down and listen, while I lay the case clearly before you. Two children are brought up together on a desolate moor; they call each other brother and sister—very natural; they love each other, and quarrel and make up again—very natural. Years pass on, and these two children, who have been all in all to one another, are called upon to part; one remains on the windy moor, her ideas bounded by that black and bare neighbourhood; the other is taken to the very heart of civilisation. Before they part, they shed the usual childish tears, and make the usual vows and promises to cling to each other in spite of their present separation. Am I right so far? Very well; the girl grows

up in ignorance of everything that refines and beautifies life; she is wooed by the neighbouring clod-hoppers; she shares in the hard work of the peasants around her, in the hay field and corn field; she joins in their laughter, and hears their coarse jokes—Patience, Ieuan, am I not right again?"

"No, sir," cried Ieuan hotly; "Mifawwy could never—"

"Of course not, of course not," said Sir Glynne, with a superior smile and a wave of his hand; "but let me finish. The boy is taken by a friend, who has him educated, introduced to all the softening influences of social life. That boy, having a receptive mind, and no evil tendencies, utilises every advantage, and becomes a very fair specimen of a well-bred gentleman, with refined tastes and good manners. He remembers a boy and girl affair, and feels bound by a promise associated with it; he sacrifices himself to a foolish, quixotic idea of honour, and, in keeping a childish promise, he lasts his future career, and links himself for ever to a woman of low tastes, of vulgar ideas, and one wholly incapable of appreciating his higher ideal of life; and, added to this, he bitterly disappoints an old and tried friend, who expected a different return for his confidence and affection. Have I no claim upon you, Ieuan?"

"Oh, every claim, sir; I feel I wholly belong to you, for you have instilled into me new thoughts, new aspirations, and new ideas; I am almost a creature of your evolving; without your consent I will never go to Wales."

"Listen to me, then," said his friend, taking him kindly by the arm; "I will never forbid your going; you are perfectly free in my house; but now I am going to ask you a favour: will you defer your journey to Wales until after we return from the Continent?"

"Certainly, sir; your wish is my law. How long do you think we shall remain abroad?"

"A year probably; this time next year I shall absolve you from your promise."

Ieuan looked thoughtfully down for a moment before he answered. "You may depend on me, sir; but may I write?"

"Can she write?" asked Sir Glynne mischievously.

Ieuan flushed and stammered, "She was so young—no—she could not write then."

"And probably cannot now," rejoined Sir Glynne, "or she would have managed to write to you."

"Have I your permission to write as usual to my foster-parents, and to ask for news of Mifanwy?"

"Certainly—why not?" replied Sir Glynne.

"Well, sir, I give you my word of honour that I will wait until we return from abroad before I take any step in the matter."

"Then, let us drop the subject, my dear boy, and let us begin on another equally interesting to me, and that will keep us still hovering about the same dear place. I have never asked you before, Ieuan, but have you any idea who or what your parents were?"

Again Ieuan looked much disturbed.

"Don't think I care a button what they were, Ieuan; it would make no difference to me if you told me they were beggars."

"Or tramps, sir?"

"Or tramps."

"Well, I said that, because I had always been told my mother was a tramp, till the word tramp, tramp had branded itself on my brain. But she was not that," he continued, with growing confidence, "though she did arrive penniless and forlorn at The Ship Inn one night, when the sea was tossing high and the wind roaring. I have pictured it many a time."

"Where did you hear thus much?" inquired Sir Glynne, with great interest, that deepened while Ieuan told his tale. "Catrin Howells told you all this?" he asked, as the young man proceeded. "I do believe she told me a great part of this history, and

how I came to forget it I cannot imagine. Of course! I remember now her describing the poor woman's arrival in the *Aden y don* one stormy night, poor soul! poor soul! It would have comforted her, had she known how well her son would be cared for in the future."

"It would, indeed, sir; she was very young, I think—quite a girl—a poor, unprotected creature, who fell into the clutches of a villain, who had no pity, no feeling, no conscience."

"Do you know who he was too, then?" asked Sir Glynne, opening his eyes in astonishment. "How secret you have been! Why have you never told me, Ieuan? You might have known this would all be interesting to me."

"Well, you never asked, and the subject was always a sore one to me. I am not ashamed of my mother, though I do not know who she was, but I *am* heartily ashamed and grieved to tell you that my father is my old master, John Powys."

"John Powys!" gasped Sir Glynne; "by Jove! that old rascal! Indeed, I am not surprised at your not boasting of your parentage. If there is a man in the world I detest it is John Powys; but go on with your story; the plot thickens."

Ieuan proceeded with his tale.

"I have my mother's letter in that desk; for years I kept it inside my waistcoat, close to my heart, as well as I knew how; but," he continued, smiling, "sentiment must give way to a dress shirt; so now I have it safely in my desk. Would you like to see it, sir?"

"I should indeed," replied Sir Glynne, though with flagging interest.

He had heard more than he wanted to know when Ieuan had told him his father's name. But when, from the packets of letters and notes, one pale and faded was picked out and handed to Sir Glynne, and

his eyes first rested on the delicate handwriting, his face visibly paled.

"Good God ! Ieuan, where did you get this ? "

"It is my mother's letter to my father, written that stormy night at The Ship Inn, and given to old Catrin Howells, to be delivered to John Powys in case of my mother's death before she saw him. She did see him, met him in the oak avenue. What reception she met with we may guess from his former conduct, and from the fact that she was sent at once to the barn, where I was born in the course of a few hours, and where my unhappy mother died with only another stray tramp to attend to her. Can you wonder, sir, that I hate that man ? "

"No, no," replied Sir Glynne, still holding the letter in his hand unread ; he seemed strangely unnerved. "May I take it to Gwladys to read, Ieuan ? I will explain afterwards—or, come with me." And he hurried from the room, with Ieuan wondering much at the effect of his news.

They found Lady Meredith at work in the drawing-room.

"Whose writing is this, Gwladys ? " asked Sir Glynne breathlessly, handing her the letter.

"Oh, Glynne, it is dear Mary's. I should know those fine lines anywhere ; and here is the little scrolly line at the end of her name that I used to tease her about. Where, where did this come from ? "

"It is my mother's writing," Ieuan interposed. "Is it possible that you knew her, and that I shall hear something about her at last ? "

Sir Glynne began to read aloud, interrupted by continual exclamations from his wife, who looked over his shoulder, while Ieuan stood speechless, glancing from one to the other.

When he had reached that part of the letter in which the unfortunate woman appealed to John Powys for permission to die under his roof, Sir Glynne's

voice shook, and there was a moisture in his eyes, while Gwladys fairly broke down and sobbed.

"Oh, darling Mary, my old friend, my sister—what a fate! But who was this cruel wretch, this John whom she appeals to so pitifully?"

And Ieuan once more told his story as detailed to him by Catrin Howells.

"And who, then, was my mother?" he said.

"Mary Meredith, Sir Glynne's sister, long lost, but never forgotten. My old playmate and friend, Ieuan. Oh, what a delightful confusion it is altogether. Why, Ieuan! you are our nephew; think of that!" and she folded him in a warm embrace, while Sir Glynne took him by both hands, saying:

"My beloved sister's boy! This explains why my heart went out to you. But I cannot make it all out, my dear fellow. Why did you keep all this to yourself so long?"

"I never dreamt of such a thing as this," said Ieuan; "never thought anyone would take an interest in my poor story. But are you sure, sir? There are many Marys in the world."

"True," said Sir Glynne: "but there is but one 'Mary' who could have written that letter. Truly the ways of Providence are wonderful! To think that I should have adopted my own nephew, my dear Mary's son! And now, Ieuan, we have both our work cut out for us. We will hunt through every church and chapel registry in the land till we find the proofs of your father's and mother's marriage."

"Father and mother! Must I then accept that man as my father? Indeed, I see plainly I shall be balked of that delightful pommelling I have so often pictured myself bestowing upon John Powys. I suppose I must not pommel my father, sir."

"Call me 'uncle,' my dear boy."

"And me 'aunt,'" added Lady Meredith. "I begin already to feel the responsibility of the title."

"By Jove! here's another complication," said Sir

Glynne; "Elizabeth Powys, why, she's your first cousin!"

"Well, I hope she will appreciate the honour; but I doubt it."

And so the happy group sat chatting on till the silvery chimes from the mantelpiece warned them of the lateness of the hour, when they separated each to think over the strange discovery.

It soon became evident to Sir Glynne that very little could be done to elucidate the mystery of his sister's marriage before they started for the Continent. Their intention was to spend Christmas and the early spring in Rome, and to visit Norway before their return to England in the autumn of the following year. Before leaving England, however, a large party of their most intimate friends were invited to a private view of Sir Glynne's and Ieuan's latest productions. The former's "Fireman" was much admired, but Ieuan's "Hymn to the Rising Sun" received quite an ovation, and Sir Glynne felt delighted with his pupil's success.

"Upon my word, you'll have to look to your laurels, Sir Glynne," said a sculptor, whose name was as well known and held in as high estimation as Sir Glynne's.

"I shall, indeed, and I am delighted to think that, when I drop out of the lists, my nephew will take my place."

"Your nephew? ah! h'm, yes, of course, Mr. Gwyllt is your adopted son, or nephew, is he not?"

"He is my sister's son," replied Sir Glynne, "and as dear to me as if he were my own; thus you see it will be no pain to me, but a true pleasure, if his fame eclipses mine."

Ieuan was sitting on a table near, looking seriously and critically at his own work. He had been nervously fearful of the great sculptor's criticism.

Elizabeth was waiting in the drawing-room with Lady Meredith for the entrance of the party from the

studio, hovering between the piano and the tea-table sparkling with smiles, and endeavouring in every way to make herself agreeable both to her hostess and her guests. She was quite an acquisition to the party, and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity of a flirtation with Mr. Camperton and Ieuan, cleverly managing so to arrange her songs and pretty speeches as to please both her admirers. Mr. Camperton was honestly and deeply in love with her, and Ieuan, though he did not love her, still liked her sufficiently to be charmed by her grace and sparkle, her exquisite singing, and her dazzling complexion.

"She's a lovely little creature," he murmured to himself, as he returned up the broad staircase, after wishing her a rather tender good-bye. "We shall all be at the concert to-night," he had said; "I am longing to hear you sing again."

CHAPTER XIX.

OLD FRIENDS.

ON a wet and windy night in dull November, a thick-set, middle-aged man, with sandy hair and brown beard, dressed in the usual garb of a clergyman of the Church of England, was hurrying up one of the streets in the East End, that brought him round a corner into the Warkworth Road. He was met by a furious gust of wind and rain, that threatened to carry away the obstreperous umbrella which, with the persistency of a malicious sprite, had opposed his efforts to keep it open.

"Bother this Warkworth Road!" he said, still fighting manfully with his foe. "I scarcely ever choose this way home, and I never will again!"

He had just come up to a crowd of people outside a brilliantly-lighted arched entrance, when his umbrella was caught by another and more furious gust, and turned completely inside out. He was greeted by a guffaw of laughter from the crowd, who were not over and above partial to ministers of religion, and were glad enough to enjoy a laugh at his expense.

"Come now," said the clergyman, good-humouredly, "which are you laughing at? me or the umbrella? for I declare to you I don't know which of us is the conqueror. I have fought with him all the way from Bull Street. Now I appeal to you to settle which has gained the mastery?" and he flung it away.

"Dang'd if I don't think you 'ave, sir!" said a

burly man, fresh from the country, and believing that the clergyman wished to gain the entrance, he good-naturedly made way for him.

It was Mr. Rhys Morgan, who had been for some time settled in the East End. On nearing the lighted archway, he heard strains of music, accompanied by a voice, that struck responsive chords in him and made him quiver with awakened memory.

"Who is it singing?" he said to his closest neighbour.

"Woy! it is the Princess of Randelar. 'Aven't you 'eard 'er sing?"

Before he could reply, again the sweet voice reached his ear, and his heart too, for it brought before his mind's eye a star-lit sky and a heaving sea, a little church built in a cleft in the rocks, a girl with bare feet and ragged gown, who sang with folded hands and upturned face, as though she sang to listening angels.

"Mifanwy!" he said, "no one but she could sing like that!" and he began to edge his way manfully towards the door.

"'Ere!" said another member of the crowd, "let the parson go in; 'e knows a pretty girl as well as anyone, when 'e sees 'er!"

"You bet!" said another joker in the crowd; but only laughing good-naturedly at their gibes, the "parson" pushed forward and paid his shilling at the ticket office. He had no sooner made his way into the building than his ears were greeted with the first strains of the National Anthem, and he saw a jet-black horse with long, sweeping tail, ridden by a girl in a yellow satin skirt and a scarlet cap, disappearing through a side passage, the horse's hoofs resounding noisily on the wooden boarding. The audience were already moving from their seats, and preparing for a general stampede. The performance was over; the voice had ceased to sing, and Mr. Rhys Morgan was looking round him rather disconsolately, when he was

accosted by the clown, who strutted up to him with his hands in the pockets of his loose pink trousers.

"What's the next article, sir? What can I show you?"

"I want to see the girl who was singing a minute or two ago!"

"Well I never!" said the clown, "'e wants the best article in the shop. Won't anything else satisfy you, now?" he continued with a comical leer.

"Nothing less," said Mr. Rhys Morgan.

"Well, do you see that passage? Follow your nose, and, perhaps, you'll find her."

Rhys Morgan obeyed. The clown, close behind him, with his thumb to his nose, gave him a parting imaginary kick, which tickled the audience immensely, and caused roars of laughter and exclamations of "Good-bye, parson, and good luck to you, old fellow." But heedless of all, Rhys Morgan followed the clown's advice to such good purpose that he found himself at the entrance of a long row of stalls, each occupied by one of the beautiful horses, which had just taken part in the evening's performance. The grooms were busy rubbing them down, spreading the litter for their night's repose, and providing for each a liberal supply of hay or oats. Into the first of these stalls the black charger had just entered, and his rider, who had slipped silently from his back, was engaged, as usual, with her arm round his neck, in bidding him a loving "good-night."

"Good-night, Sultan, bâch anwl;" and she kissed his forehead, while he softly neighed in return.

Mr. Rhys Morgan was astounded. That lovely girl with all the grace of budding womanhood, with that pale, clear skin, that glossy shower of hair, these gorgeous garments; that Mifanwy! the little swarthy shepherd girl, impossible! But the Welsh words of endearment addressed to the horse decided him.

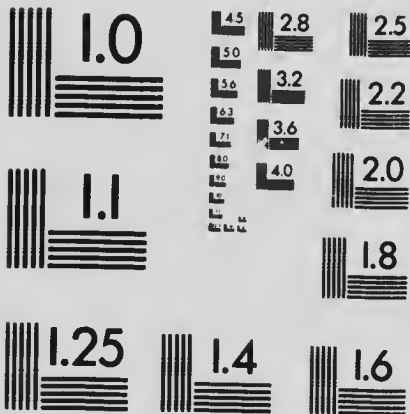
"Mifanwy!" he said, "is it you?"

The girl started violently; she had not heard his



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entrance into the stable. She turned round in astonishment, and the large black eyes she fixed upon him told him at once that it was indeed his old pupil. He held out both hands, but the girl's manner froze his warmth, and frightened him, for instead of placing her hands in his, she dropped them silently on the satin robe, and a vivid flush of red suffused her neck, cheeks, brow; then her head gradually bent lower and lower, and the tears welled up into her eyes.

"What is it, my child?" said Rhys Morgan in Welsh. "Oh, Mifanwy, what is it you are so ashamed of? What has brought that crimson blush to your pale cheek?"

The girl still stood with bent head, and arms hanging down, before him. Suddenly she placed her hands in his, though with head still bent down.

"Oh! sir, sir!" she said in her native language, "forgive me, for I did not know what I was doing; but now my eyes are open!"

Rhys Morgan's heart sank within him.

"I hoped you'd never find me, for now I know I ought not to be here; but indeed, indeed, I came here in ignorance."

"Tell me everything, Mifanwy. Of what are you ashamed?"

"Only that, sir, being here, what else could I be ashamed of?" And with a frank smile, that brought out the little dimple in her chin, she looked her friend straight in the face.

One look at these guileless eyes, and the reassuring tone, were enough to set at rest the tears of Rhys Morgan; so, pressing the little hand in his, he said joyfully:

"Now, I see Mifanwy! there is the old smile, there are the clear eyes, and I have already heard the sweet voice. I knew it at once, in the midst of that wind and rain, in that crowded street, and with that fiend of an umbrella to impede me; yet the long lost tones of your voice, child, drew me in like a magnet."

"Yes, sir," said the girl, "I know how music enthralled you, and I know how you always loved my singing."

There was not a trace of vanity in the remark, nor did Rhys Morgan ascribe it to her in his own mind. While they were still talking delightedly in their native tongue, a groom appeared, bringing Sultan's bed; but, seeing that most unusual sight—a parson in the stall—went out again in astonishment, to return almost immediately with Tom Pomfrey, who was still in his circus attire of flesh-coloured tights with crimson and gold adornments. Tom was as much astonished as the groom when he saw Mifanwy and Rhys Morgan in close and earnest conversation.

"What is the meaning of this, sir? What do you want here?" he asked rather sternly. "Strangers are not allowed in here."

Rhys Morgan began to apologise, while Mifanwy explained.

"Oh! Tom, this is my old friend, who taught me to sing, long, long ago, in dear Wales. And, oh, sir," she continued, changing to her own language, "this is Tom, my best friend here, who has watched over me, and been kind to me ever since I came here."

Rhys Morgan held out his hand, which Tom grasped at once. There was something in the parson's face that impressed all who saw him with his honest kindness; on his side he was greatly taken with Tom's open brow and clear, blue eyes.

"Beg your pardon, sir, I did not know you were a friend of Mifanwy's; and one has to be careful in London, you see!"

"I am only too thankful," said Rhys Morgan, "that she has a good friend to watch over her. I heard her voice by accident in the street, and recognised it at once."

"Ah! you would be sure to do that after once hearing it," said Tom; "but will you not come into the house, sir, and hear all about her coming here?"

"That is just what I should like to do, but it is so late, and my landlady is nervous. I will come to-morrow."

"Yes, that will be better," said Tom; "it is an off-day! If you will come in the afternoon, and take a cup of tea with us, we shall be very glad, and my mother will feel herself highly honoured. I don't believe she has ever had a clergyman to tea before. Good people generally fight shy of us 'show people.'"

"I shall be delighted to come," said Rhys Morgan. "Good-bye, Mifanwy, I sha'll see you to-morrow. We shall have much to say to each other."

Tom escorted him to the door of the circus, explaining that to-morrow it would be closed, "But our private house is in Temple Street, No. 18. It runs at the back of the circus, you see." And Rhys Morgan went his way.

"That's a good, honest fellow, I am sure," he said to himself, "in spite of the spangles."

And "That's a jolly good man, I'll be bound!" said Tom, "in spite of his long coat-tails."

On the next afternoon, Mrs. Pomfrey's excitement was intense. "A clergyman coming to tea!" It was an absolutely new experience for her, and she dreaded it exceedingly.

"He'll be finding fault with heverythink," she said. "I know 'em; we are wrong altogether. 'E won't like my earrings, nor your long pipe!"

"My pipe!" said Mr. Pomfrey. "I ain't going to stop 'ere to be lectured by no parson. I shall make myself scarce!"

"For goodness sake, Totsie and Willie," said the poor woman, "put them picture books away; arn't you got no little 'ymn books, or something of that sort?"

"Mifanwy gave them to us," said the children, looking scared.

"I don't care who gave them to you, but, I sez, put

'em away!" and she stamped her foot angrily, while she cut slice after slice of thin bread and butter.

Mifanwy laughed merrily when she saw the children's scared looks and the excited flush on Mrs. Pomfrey's face.

"Oh! well, indeed, if he ever comes again, you won't be afraid of him."

"Comes again," said Mrs. Pomfrey, wiping her brow; "let's get through this time safely first!"

And when at last a vigorous pull at the front door bell announced the arrival of the visitor, it was comical in the extreme to watch Mrs. Pomfrey's demeanour. She sat down, panting, and at one moment, in the character of hostess, wore a genial, not to say jovial, appearance, at the next, remembering her guest's sacred calling, she endeavoured to adapt her face to what she considered an appropriately serious expression. Tom, who had been prowling about the street door for nearly an hour to welcome his guest, and to see that he did not miss his way, here piloted him safely into the little back parlour, accompanied by Mifanwy, who was talking in Welsh.

"Here's the gentleman, mother. Mr. Rhys Morgan is his name, Mifanwy tells me."

"Yes, that is my name. Regular Welsh, you see," he said, shaking hands warmly with Mrs. Pomfrey, who looked so unnaturally serious that Tom could scarcely refrain from laughter. Willie and Totsie had fairly subsided under the table in their nervousness, and were with difficulty persuaded to come out and shake hands.

"What a jolly boy!" said Rhys Morgan. "I'll be bound he can turn a somersault already!"

"Yes, I can, backwards!" said Willie.

"Wish I could," said Rhys Morgan. "And Totsie," he said, drawing her towards him, "I am sure she can fly through a paper hoop!"

"Yes, I can," said Totsie, "if it's not too high!"

"There's for you, now," said the parson; "who

knows but you'll teach me both these tricks before we part company!"

"Totsie! Willie!" said Mrs. Pomfrey in horror, "'old your tongues, do!"

But the children, having got over their timidity, were soon busily turning the leaves of their picture books for the parson's admiration; and when they drew round the table, and the first cups of tea had been handed round, Mrs. Pomfrey had also overcome her nervousness, and her features had regained their usual smiling expression.

"Never saw such a nice man," she said afterwards, with astonishment; "'e made himself quite at 'ome with us, and I declare I don't care 'ow often 'e comes to tea!"

When tea was over, she and the children retired to the kitchen, leaving Mifanwy and Rhys Morgan to themselves. Tom hovered about for a little while, then saying, "I must go and attend to the horses. I will be back before you go, sir," he, too, left the room. Then in response to Rhys Morgan's questions, Mifanwy began to relate the story of her joining the circus and leaving Wales.

When she had finished, "My dear child," he said, "you have been mercifully protected. I am sure these are good, kind people, or I should not have found my little pupil the innocent, pure-minded child of old."

"They are good people indeed, sir! especially Tom."

"Yes, he seems a fine fellow; but, Mifanwy, surely you are not in love with him, engaged, or anything of that kind?"

"Oh, anwl, no," said the girl, blushing. "No, indeed, sir; I am too young for that, whatever."

"Well, I am thankful!"

"And why so, sir?"

"Because I want you to be wedded to your art. You must marry 'music' only!"

Mifanwy clasped her hands.

"Oh, if I could be that indeed, then, perhaps, I should be happy!"

"And are you not happy now, child?"

The girl hung her head, and did not answer. Her eyes filled with tears; Rhys Morgan saw a crystal drop fall on her lap, and felt deeply pained. His next question was startlingly irrelevant.

"Have you seen Ieuan lately?"

"Never, never, sir! only once in the street; not a word from him, never the tone of his voice!"

The floodgates were open, and the long pent-up sorrow found expression. She leant her head over her folded arms on the table, and sobbed with the abandon of a child. The parson drew his hand over her glossy hair, and did not speak for a time, but let the tears flow unchecked, and the sobs die gradually away, then he said gently:

"But I see him sometimes!"

The girl started from her chair with a frightened look.

"Oh no, sir, no! you don't see Ieuan, do you? You will not tell him you have seen me here; he would not like it, he would be ashamed of me, he would turn away from me, and *that* would kill me! No, no, no! I shall never be happy again, for I shall always be afraid that you have told Ieuan!"

"Do you never wish to see him again, then? you two, who were so inseparable."

"No," said Mifanwy, drawing herself up, "I never wish to see him again until I have left this place, and have improved myself, and raised myself to be his equal; that is my aim, sir, and if I die before I gain my end, I am willing; but I will never make myself known to him until I am his equal. Will you help me, sir, for the sake of the dear old times? Will you promise me to keep my secret, and never by word or deed let Ieuan know where I am?"

Rhys Morgan took her two hands, and looking steadily into her tearful eyes, said:

"Mifanwy, I promise! Do you want more than my word?"

"No, no, nothing more, sir; it is enough; but I was afraid you would not promise."

"Yes, I promise, child," he answered, in a slow, impressive tone, "and I agree with you, I think you are quite right, and, with God's blessing, I will help you. Mifanwy, you shall leave this place; I will find a home for you, I will have your voice trained, and I will put you in a position to earn your own livelihood, and, at the same time, to give the world the privilege of hearing your voice; and, as you say, 'for the sake of the dear old times,' and because I have always loved you, child; for the sake of our dear old country, where our fathers and mothers lie buried, and where the girl I once loved with my whole soul, and still love, lies sleeping peacefully under the old yew tree. 'Mae'n gorwedd yn dawel yn mynwent Llwyn On!'"¹

"I did not know, sir."

"No, you were too young, but now you know."

"Thank you, master," said Mifanwy, returning to her childish mode of addressing him, "my heart's best thanks, and, please God, I will repay you one day, and be a credit to you."

"Well, leave it all to me, and say nothing about our plans until I come and explain."

"May I not tell Tom, sir? and ought I not to tell Mr. Pomfrey?"

"Well, perhaps you ought, Mifanwy; you can do what you think right."

Here Tom came whistling into the house, and, with noisy step, approached the parlour; he guessed instinctively that the interview would be a trying one to Mifanwy, and so gave her warning of his approach.

"Well," said Rhys Morgan, "Mifanwy and I have had a long and interesting talk. She has told me of all your kindness to her; and, I am sure, if I judge

¹ "She's peacefully sleeping within the Ash Grove."

you rightly, I shall have your sympathy in whatever I can do to help her on her way."

"On her way! where, sir?"

"Well," said Rhys Morgan, rising and preparing to depart, "to fortune and to fame, for I believe both may be reached by her. But where is Mrs. Pomfrey? I cannot go without thanking her for her hospitality."

Mrs. Pomfrey came in beaming, and drying her hands vigorously on her apron.

"Good-bye, sir, and come whenever you like to see Mifanwy; there's always a cup of tea going at five, and, if you'll jine us in our 'umble way, we shall always be pleased."

"Thank you, thank you, I shall be glad to come again. Totsie and Willie gone to bed? Well, tell them next time I come they must teach me to turn a somersault!"

When he was gone, Mifanwy ran up to her own room, and, sitting on the side of her bed in the darkness, indulged in a good "think." "How strange it has all been, and how providential! Oh, I will repay him one day, I know I will."

It was strange that she did not disclaim her chances of gaining fortune and fame. Her voice was a gift which she herself held in sacred reverence, a power which she possessed to express the good and beautiful, and one which she felt it incumbent upon her to improve, and make the best of; but never a subject of conceited self-congratulation. Fame and fortune both were things greatly to be desired; but in Mifanwy's eyes they were of value only in so far as they would enable her to raise herself to Ieuan's level. This was the dream of her life!

CHAPTER XX.

GOOD-BYE TO THE CIRCUS.

IT was not many days before Rhys Morgan again appeared in Temple Street. Mifanwy had prepared her employers for her possible departure. Old Pomfrey grumbled a little at first, but Mrs. Pomfrey soothed him by reminding him that he had said himself that Kitty Killthorpe was well able to take the place of Mifanwy, and, indeed, pleased the audience better, and that, the two girls being somewhat like in face and figure, few people would notice the difference.

At this Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"If we were in Wales," he said, "they would notice the difference as soon as she opened her mouth to sing, but here, perhaps, they won't."

"Well, I don't hear the difference," said old Pomfrey, "and that wink of Kitty's goes down tremenjous well."

"Well, I shall miss her dreadful," said Mrs. Pomfrey; "she is always so willing and amiable like. I am sure I am as fond of her as if she were my own flesh and blood; but I won't stand in her way of getting on. La! when she comes to be a grand concert singer, we'll be proud to say, she began her kireer in Pomfrey's circus."

And so, when the parson appeared with well-arranged plans for Mifanwy's removal to a quieter and less public mode of life, the way was made smooth for him, and she had none but warm hearts and willing hands to help her on her way. Tom, alone, looked

sad and serious ; he realised thoroughly that the step she was about to take, under Rhys Morgan's guidance, was one that would remove her from any near companionship with him. He knew that she would never again be able to associate with him on the same familiar terms as of old ; but Tom's was real love—that pure love which prefers the happiness of the beloved one to its own gratification, and he rejoiced at her brightening prospects, although he felt that, without her, life would be a blank to him.

"How can I live without Sultan and you, Tom ?" she said, when she bid her favourite his last loving good-night.

Tom did not resent being bracketed with Sultan, and, even then, coming second ; it was something that she had said she would miss him, and that the lustrous eyes were swimming in tears.

"Are all those tears for Sultan, Mifanwy, or are some for me ?"

"Oh, some for you, Tom—most for you ! Indeed, I feel as if I were leaving my two best friends on earth. I wish I had not grown so fond of you both !"

Tom held one hand, while, with the other, she caressed Sultan.

"Will you never love me more, Mifanwy ; as I want you to love me—enough to be my wife ?"

"Never, Tom, never. I want you to understand that ; but I am sure, if you could look into my heart, and see the deep and true love I feel for you as a friend, you would be satisfied."

Tom made a gesture of impatience. "Well, good-bye, Mifanwy, I will be your friend for ever, so help me, God."

He longed to take her in his arms, and press one kiss upon her lips—the first, the last ; but, with a strong effort, he resisted the impulse.

Mifanwy, once more kissing Sultan's forehead, glided out of the stall ; she became conscious of the

storm that was working in Tom's breast, and the knowledge robbed her of her self-control. Placing her hands before her face, she walked slowly down the corridor, her yellow satin robe trailing behind her; at the end she turned to wave him a silent "good-bye."

When she had disappeared, Tom stood for a moment with folded arms, deep in thought; then, with an extra pat on Sultan's glossy flanks, he left him to the groom, went hastily to change his attire, and soon afterwards appeared at the supper table, the same bright, kindly Tom as usual.

Mifanwy, on the contrary, looked sad, and her eyes showed traces of weeping, which pleased Mrs. Pomfrey exceedingly.

"Cheer up, my gel, it's nat'el you should feel the parting a bit, and so do I, I am sure," she said, blowing her nose vigorously; "Tom, 'e don't show 'is feelings, but I'll be bound 'e's as sorry as sorry to part with you, as we all are."

Tom busied himself with the carving, while Mrs. Pomfrey continued:

"Well, London is a big place, but 'tain't so big as friends can never meet, and I ain't afraid as you'll cut us quite, Mifanwy; however grand you are, you'll come and see us sometimes, and you'll always find a friend in me, my dear, though a 'umble one."

Mifanwy was crying softly again—the warm Welsh heart had opened so freely to these kindly people—and now felt bitterly the parting, and launching afresh on a new course of life.

"Yes, indeed, indeed," she said, "I shall be glad to feel that I have kind friends here, whatever; and, however large London is, I will find my way here sometimes."

And so it was; Mifanwy *did* often find her way to that little quiet back parlour, where the solace of true friendship always awaited her, and where she was invariably greeted with delight.

The next day Rhys Morgan came, as arranged, to fetch her away, Tom and Mrs. Pomfrey accompanying her to see her safely settled in her new lodgings.

"I told Mrs. Roose to have tea ready for four," he said; "we'll all have tea together to-night, to give Mifanwy a house warming; and, if you have no objection, we'll ask Mrs. Roose to join us, so that Mifanwy and she may make friends."

Mrs. Pomfrey smilingly nodded, while she congratulated herself inwardly upon her forethought in having brought her best cap, pinned inside the skirt of her black silk dress.

"I know Mrs. Roose well," said Rhys Morgan, "she is the daughter of a Welsh clergyman; she married an Englishman, who died some years ago, leaving her rather badly provided for. She has now been in London for about twenty years, but she still speaks Welsh fluently, and is quite prepared to take you to her heart, Mifanwy; it is but two years since she lost her only daughter. I lodge with her sister, a few doors off, and am almost as often in Mrs. Roose's house as in my own."

Thus chatting, while the cab rumbled on, he strove to cheer Mifanwy's drooping spirits, for it was evident to him that she was feeling acutely this drifting away from her old moorings, and entering upon new and unknown scenes.

It had been arranged between him and Tom Pomfrey that they were to advance the sum necessary for Mifanwy's board and education, taking her own savings, which amounted to about £30, to satisfy the girl's scruples. She was too ignorant of the ways of the world to know that £30 would not go far towards her maintenance, but whenever she had said timidly, "Will it be enough?" they had answered reassuringly, "Oh, yes, for a time, and soon you will be earning money yourself."

Rhys Morgan's party was a great success; Tom was the brightest and cheerfulest of guests, while

Mifanwy, though pale and heavy-eyed, was looking pleased and interested.

Mrs. Roose, a quiet, nervous little woman, had succumbed at once to her charms, and, when not engaged in piling her plate with muffins or marmalade, sat gazing at her with a dreamy smile.

As for Mrs. Pomfrey, she was perfectly happy. She had had a secret fear of Mrs. Roose, but this completely vanished when she saw the nervous, retiring little woman, and she put on her best cap with a happy confidence.

"I ain't ashamed of it," with a knowing jerk of her head, "and I needn't be, by that frumpy one on 'er 'ead," she said to herself, as she followed that lady down the narrow carpeted stairs to the front room, which was in future to be Mifanwy's, where, under the influence of the steaming tea and the well-buttered muffins, she enlivened the company with an unfailing fund of repartee.

"Why, mother," Tom said, "I shall have to take you home if you make us laugh any more; I don't know what Mrs. Roose will think of us."

"Oh, she'll excuse me," said Mrs. Pomfrey patronisingly.

"Yes, to be sure," said Mrs. Roose. "I like to hear other people laughing, though I am not very lively myself."

"Oh, Mifanwy will brighten you up; she is the merriest little soul in the world when you get her to yourself. Many's the good lark we've had together, ain't we, Mifanwy?"

"Yes, indeed," she answered, "we have."

Mrs. Roose smiled indulgently at Mifanwy, whose heart went out at once to the quiet, sad-looking woman.

At eight o'clock the cab came to the door, and the visitors left with many hearty good-byes. Tom and Mrs. Pomfrey drove silently home, while Rhys Morgan made his way fully content to his own lodgings.

From this time forth began for Mifanwy the real business of life: the deep-seated thirst for knowledge, and the means of satisfying that thirst ; but, above all, the entrancing delight she found in the culture of her voice. Music was her absorbing passion, and she left no stone unturned to make herself proficient in it. She attended a class for French and Italian, and soon astonished her teachers by the ease with which she acquired those languages.

It is a curious fact that a Welshman learns a foreign language with great ease. Had her teachers known the strong motive that compelled the girl to exert all her energies for her own advancement, they would not perhaps have been so surprised at her rapid progress.

Rhys Morgan took her English education into his own hands, and it was a delightful hour to him when, the tea-things cleared away, and Mrs. Roose sitting down to her knitting, Mifanwy brought her well-prepared papers and lesson books, and, spreading them out on the table, sat down for an hour's hard study. He was delighted with his pupil, and he was frequently surprised by the ease with which she grasped an idea which he found difficult to explain in words she could understand. Certainly they had the advantage of two languages in which to clothe their thoughts, and often, when they discussed a subject of deeper interest than usual, they would glide unconsciously into their native tongue.

"Oh, but there's Welsh again! I can say much more in it than English, whatever."

"Yes—but you mustn't," said Rhys Morgan ; "you still have a slight Welsh accent, and we want to get rid of that before you begin to sing in public."

"Yes, indeed. Do you remember I used to say 'ass wen the dove'? I believe I will never be able to say it right."

And again, pushing back her hair from her temples, she would pore over her English history with serious, puckered brows.

"Well, indeed, Mr. Morgan," said Mrs. Roose, "I think the child is studying too hard; books—books, all day long, or copying music, or singing those ugly scales. Caton pawb! she will become an old woman before her time. Have you told Mr. Morgan, dear, that I am going to call you 'Belle,' my dear daughter's name?"

"A very good arrangement," said Rhys Morgan. "I was puzzled to find a good name for you as a professional singer—'Belle Roose' will suit exactly since you both agree to it."

Mifanwy laughed merrily. "Oh, if you only knew how happy I am!"

"But you must not work too hard, child; that would spoil everything. Now, enough history for to-night. Are you too tired to give me a little music?"

"Too tired to sing! Ach y fi! that will only be when I am dying—no," and she went at once to the piano, Mrs. Roose delightedly putting away her knitting to play her accompaniments; and, although she was no elaborate performer, she played well, and with sufficient taste and appreciation of the music to make her a good accompanist.

Rhys Morgan had already made some advances in a gingerly fashion towards M. Valpré, who, being by common consent the most successful teacher of singing in London, was much sought after, more especially by those who intended to make the operatic stage their profession. He was brusque and impatient in his manner, but was at heart a good honest man. Rhys Morgan's first attempts at procuring for Mifanwy the advantage of his teaching received so peremptory and severe a snub, that he was temporarily much disappointed and disturbed in mind, for here was a complete downfall to all his hopes. It would be useless to expect a success for any singer who had not been trained by Valpré; and he was just debating within himself whether or not to make

another attempt to persuade him, when help came from an unexpected quarter. Tom Pomfrey knew that Jack Mowbray—though only the leader of the band in the circus—was half-brother to M. Valpré, the celebrated professor of music, who was said to have, moreover, a great affection for his seedy and ne'er-do-weel brother. Learning from Mr. Rhys Morgan of the failure of his plans, Tom had applied to Jack Mowbray, and had entreated his good offices with his brother, with the result that one morning, to Mifanwy's intense delight, a note was received by Rhys Morgan from the professor, saying, "that, after some consideration, he had come to the decision to hear the Welsh girl's voice before he decidedly rejected her as a pupil."

M. Valpré having conceded so much, Rhys Morgan knew that his point was gained. And so it was, for, before another month had passed, Mifanwy was enrolled as one of his pupils, and evidently to the professor's satisfaction, as well as her own great happiness. It was not his way to give much praise; but it was observed by all his other pupils that he paid the shy Welsh girl great attention, shaking hands with her very warmly at the end of her lesson, and sometimes deigning to give a word of commendation which, from Valpré, expressed a great deal.

There was one thing that disturbed Mifanwy not a little, and that was the discovery that Elizabeth Powys was also one of his pupils; but she learnt with great satisfaction that the term of their connection as master and pupil would soon be at an end, for Elizabeth was shortly to enter upon her career as a public singer.

CHAPTER XXI.

SULTAN AND TOM.

THE winter weeks sped on swiftly and pleasantly for Mifanwy ; she was thoroughly happy, in spite of the unsatisfied desire that lurked in her heart, the desire to meet Ieuan once more, for she felt she was treading the path that would lead her to him.

"I am beginning to follow him up the ladder, and, when I get high enough, I will call out to him, 'Ieuan, it is I, Mifanwy ;' and he will come down to me and take me to the top with him."

It was thus she soliloquised in the night watches, when she allowed her thoughts to wander unchecked over the scenes of her early days, her varied experiences at the circus and her present prospects of happiness. No doubt of Ieuan's faithful attachment to the Mifanwy of the cliffs and of the moor assailed her ; the only thing that threw a shadow over the happy pictures of her imagination was the feeling that the outward Mifanwy was dead. The great change from the life on the breezy cliffs under the summer sun and the winter storms to a sheltered, indoor life, had so completely altered her appearance, that, when she stood before her looking-glass one morning in the early spring, tying up her abundant coils of brown-black hair, she paused with uplifted hands and parted lips to gaze at the reflection of herself ; at the dusky brown skin now changed to a soft, creamy fairness ; the unkempt locks, now brushed straight off the broad white brow and fastened in a thick coil at the back of her head—the little ripples

and curls softening the line between hair and forehead; the well-shaped neck and rounded arms; the graceful lines of the figure. Mifanwy noted all her charms, and a happy smile stole over her face; she leant her elbows on the dressing-table, and, peering curiously and closely at the reflection in the glass, she asked herself aloud and with a serious look, "Am I Mifanwy? Am I the girl who watched the sheep and roamed those dangerous paths in the daylight and the moonlight? Am I the same girl whom Ieuan loved? or am I so altered that he will not care for me?"

"No," she said, after a pause, "I am not altered; these people who flatter me, these scenes of town life, these fine clothes, this fair skin, are all outward things which cannot touch me, myself; I am Mifanwy, and my home is on the rocks with the sea-birds." She went down the stairs to her breakfast, humming an old Welsh air.

After breakfast, she sat down as usual for an hour's hard study, her fingers pushed through the thick tresses on her temples, ruffling their neatness, while she pored over a heavy atlas.

"Belle, dear," said Mrs. Roose's gentle voice, "such a curious thing—two lovely horses in the street; one is ridden by a groom and the other by a gentleman. One looks like a circus horse."

Mifanwy flew to the window. "Oh, Sultan and Tom!" she cried, and instantly was flying down the stairs and out through the front door without a hat or bonnet.

Tom dismounted.

"Oh, Tom, how kind you are to bring Sultan to see me;" and her arms were thrown round the beautiful creature's neck, to the great amusement of the people living on the opposite side of the street; but Mifanwy thought not of them.

Sultan whinnied and pawed with delight, and rubbed his soft nose on the girl's neck, while she,

holding both ears, pressed kiss after kiss on the white star on his forehead."

"Oh, Sultan bâch," she cooed, "here you are, as glossy and as sleek as ever! Do you miss me, darling?"

"Yes, that 'e do, miss," replied the groom, pulling his cap respectfully; "that I can tes-ti-fy. Every time as Kitty Killthorpe gets on 'is back, don't 'e fling up 'is heels, and put back 'is ears! 'Ain't 'e delighted?' sez Kitty Killthorpe. 'Oh, very,' sez I;" and he put his finger to the side of his nose and winked; "but I know who 'e's thinking of."

"Darling," murmured Mifanwy in his ear, and he snorted with pleasure. "Must he go at once, Tom? Can't you bring him oftener to see me?"

"Yes, as often as you like; but he must not stand longer in the cold. I am taking great care of him, and, when you want him, he is yours, remember. We must not stay now; but I have a wonderful piece of news to give you, too. Jack Mowbray has left the circus—married to a rich widow, and a very nice woman, young, and pretty, and very ladylike. M. Valpré, who is his half-brother, you know, is greatly pleased. Poor old Jack! I am glad he has had a stroke of good luck; I expect it will make another man of him."

"I am glad, indeed," said Mifanwy. "But you, Tom, will you come to-night to M. Valpré's concert? only a private concert for his pupils, you know, just to prepare them for public singing."

"I will, indeed, if I may," was Tom's ready answer.

"Yes; and to-morrow come to tea, and tell me what you think of Spohr's music."

"I am afraid it will be above me, Mifanwy; but I will come. Now you must go in; you will take cold. There's Mrs. Roose making signs to you from the window. I will come to-morrow."

"Good-bye, Tom. Good-bye, Sultan anwyl!" and, with a few lingering pats, she ran back to the door,

Sultan tossing his head, and looking after her, while Tom vaulted lightly into the saddle and rode away.

"Blamed if Mifanwy ain't purtier than hever," said the groom, "if possible."

Tom frowned.

"Miss Owen, if you please, Bill. She is no longer one of us, remember." And the groom rode on sullenly.

M. Valpré's concert that evening was the first of a private series instituted by him for the production of a high class of music, and for the practice and preparation of his pupils for their entrance into public life.

To Mifanwy it was an event of great disquietude, for the reason that she would unavoidably be brought face to face with Elizabeth, a meeting she had hitherto managed to escape, their lessons coming on different days in the week. Although, to Mifanwy, the name of Elizabeth Powys, in the list of pupils, was fraught with deep interest, to Elizabeth the name of Belle Roose suggested nothing.

To make it something like a concert, M. Valpré's intimate friends were admitted as audience, and most of the pupils had, by his permission, brought three or four personal friends.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Mowbray and Tom Pomfrey sat side by side with Rhys Morgan and Mrs. Roose, and Mifanwy's eyes frequently turned to that row of friendly faces. She was calm and collected outwardly, but inwardly she shrank, with a strong feeling of dislike, from meeting Elizabeth.

Spohr's "As pants the Hart" had been selected for the evening's performance, and Mifanwy had been chosen to sing the solos, to the great indignation of older and more advanced pupils; but, in his own concert-room, Valpré's word was law, as indeed it was almost everywhere where music was discussed.

Fortunately, Mifanwy was not conscious of the anger that M. Valpré's partiality for her roused in the hearts of so many of his pupils.

"This way, mezzo sopranos," and, when they had been placed for the opening chorus, Mifanwy found herself standing close to Elizabeth. At the end of the chorus she tried to avoid her by retiring to the back of the stage, and turning over a piled-up heap of music ; but it was not to be. While she was stooping over the music, she became conscious of a pink figure standing near her, and, raising her eyes, found herself face to face with Laissabeth. Her first thought was, "How lovely she is !" her second, "Will she know me?"

"Excuse me," said Elizabeth ; "I am looking for a copy of the Oratorio. I have been looking over my neighbour's ; but I hate that, don't you? Are you Miss Belle Roose?"

"Yes," said Mifanwy, rising, and making way for her to search the pile of music.

"You are fortunate in being a favourite of the professor's. It is curious how he takes fancies and dislikes. He is an eccentric man."

"He is a good musician," said Mifanwy, trying to withdraw herself, "and that is all that is important to us." But she felt enchained by Elizabeth's eyes, which were fixed upon her with a strange, dreamy look. Mifanwy bowed, and returned to the front of the platform, where they were already making room for her solo.

"Where have I seen her before?" was Elizabeth's thought ; and, all the while Mifanwy was singing, this question worried her. Suddenly, however, the truth flashed across her mind. "I know ! she is the girl who stood and stared at us when Ieuan and I got out of the carriage at Lady Meredith's ; and there's the very red ribbon and grey dress. So that was Miss Belle Roose !"

Meanwhile Mifanwy had forgotten Elizabeth Valpré, and the whole world. She was entering heart and soul into the lovely music, and M. Valpré, bâton in hand, was listening, well pleased.

"Brava! brava!" he cried; and the small audience joined heartily.

Tom Pomfrey sat entranced. The music itself was a revelation to him; coming from Mifanwy's lips, it seemed to speak to his heart. He had always been fond of music, but circumstances had confined his experiences of it to the charms of a brass band, the singing at a music hall, or, at the highest, the interludes at a theatre. Concerts of a higher class of music he had not had the opportunity of attending, so that the harmonious phrasing of Spohr's music was a new delight to him. He sat on, heedless of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Mowbray's little flirtations, intent only upon not losing a single note or cadence of the delightful strains; and, when the concert came to an end, Tom had unconsciously received an hour's education.

Valpré came up and shook hands warmly with Mrs. Mowbray and his brother, who introduced him to Tom as a very old friend, with a wink intended to make his brother understand that he had belonged to the former life, which was now to be forgotten.

"Well, Jack," said the professor, "every day I thank you more and more for my new pupil."

"Her voice is like a golden bell," said Jack.

"And the fair girl," said Mrs. Mowbray, "is the silver bell."

"Yes, it is very well, very clear, and very brilliant," assented Valpré, in a disparaging tone. It was evident that Elizabeth was no favourite; but this fact did not seem to depress her when she stepped gaily down from the platform, and, with a pert little nod to Belle Roose, left the hall.

Mifanwy, too, stepped off the platform and approached her friends, but rather nervously. She was not satisfied that she had acquitted herself well, but, could she have heard the comments of the different groups on the platform and in the room, she would have felt no uneasiness on that score. The men, as

was natural, were loudest in their praises, but they were not alone.

Tom was lost in a dream of pleasure; the music had awakened his tenderest feelings, and, when Mifanwy drew near with outstretched hand, he wrung it with warmth.

"Oh, Mifanwy," he exclaimed, "I have never known before what music was. Didn't know these classical composers made such music. Spohr for ever!"

Mifanwy laughed.

"Come every fortnight if you like, Tom, and hear other composers."

"My dear girl," said Jack Mowbray, shaking her hand in a familiar fatherly manner, "I am proud to think we have sprung from the same root, as I may say, and dwelt under the same tent, so to speak."

Mrs. Jack Mowbray, too, was very enthusiastic, and Mifanwy at last covered her ears laughingly.

"Oh, dear anwl," she said, "this is too much praise for me. You all want to make me vain, but I don't think you will do that, for I have never been able to shake off the old feeling I had as a child, that it is not I who sings, but some spirit of music within me, or some second self."

CHAPTER XXII.

SINGING TOGETHER.

WHEN Elizabeth Powys reached home after Valpré's first concert, she was in a decidedly bad humour. The fair brow was puckered into an ugly frown, her little white fists were clenched, and, while she turned and turned again, backwards and forwards with unconscious footsteps, an occasional murmur or mutter escaped her lips.

"Impossible, it cannot be, and yet that voice!" A long pause. "Then that girl who stared at Ieuan and me was Mifanwy!" And a cruel light gleamed in her eyes. "Well, I hope she enjoyed the sight! But how can it be? The black skin, those hideous hanks of hair, that bony face! And see her now; ach a fi! the horrid thing!" And, still walking up and down, she followed her train of thoughts in silence. "Mifanwy to come and thwart me here again; to be a spy upon me, as she was at Abersethin. I wish it had been herself instead of those stupid old sheep that had fallen over the cliffs. But where has she sprung from? How has she learnt to speak English? It is a mystery. And why does she want to hide herself? Ah! Miss Belle Roose, you thought to deceive me, did you? Well, *I'll* keep your secret, depend upon it. Good Heavens, if Ieuan knew! but he shall not. But I think I must be wrong. It is impossible, and yet it *is* Mifanwy."

And when Mrs. Elliott came in for a short time before going to bed, it was to find Elizabeth still

irritable, and with an angry gleam in her eye, and a cruel smile on her rosebud mouth.

During the next fortnight she was on the alert with every faculty alive to her own interest, and to the danger of Mifanwy's rivalry. She took every opportunity of watching her rival. Upon one pretext or another she crossed her path continually. Mifanwy was quite alive to it, and much disquieted in consequence. When she looked up she would find Elizabeth's eyes fixed upon her, to be almost instantly averted.

"She must know me! Well, there is nothing to be done. I will not tell a lie about it; but, if she does not ask me, I need not tell her. Ach y fi! I wish she were not so near me; she seems to freeze my blood. But, indeed, I am a foolish girl, whatever."

At last the antagonism between them came to a climax; for, at the next private concert, it fell out that Mifanwy and Elizabeth had to sing a duet together. Mifanwy's heart sank, and it was noticed by everybody that, from the first note to the last, her voice trembled as it never had before; and, immediately after the last chord, she sat down looking pale and exhausted.

"This will never do!" said Valpré, when, the concert over, Mifanwy came up to make her excuses. "What was the matter with you, mademoiselle? I never heard you sing badly before; but this evening your voice was as droning as the humming of a bee. What was the matter?"

"Sir," said Mifanwy, "I earnestly beg you not to make me sing with Miss Powys again; our voices do not blend; I have to stand so close to her, and it unnerves me. Perhaps you will think me mad, but, sir, it is true; she kills my voice."

"I don't think you mad at all, and I will not ask you to sing with her again; it is only another proof to me of the delicate quality of your voice."

"Oh, no! it is not that at all," replied Mifanwy,

clasping and unclasping her hands ; " but I cannot explain."

" No need, no need," said the professor, patting her patronisingly ; " I will take care it does not happen again."

And that danger was over. During the evening she again found Elizabeth turning over the same portfolio with her, and still regarding her with that dreamy, far-away look.

" Excuse me, Miss Roose," she said, " I daresay you wonder why I look at you so often?"

" Yes," said Mifanwy, with paipitating heart.

" Well, it is because your face seems so familiar to me."

Mifanwy flushed a rosy red and then turned pale. Elizabeth saw, with delight, that she was able to torment her rival ; and determined to do so, to the utmost of her power.

" Have I ever seen you before ? I shall remember one day. I do remember seeing you once, outside Sir Glynne Meredith's house, just when I and a friend of mine were getting out of the carriage. Do you remember that day?"

" Possibly I may have seen you," answered Mifanwy, now quite at her rival's mercy.

" That was my friend, Ieuan Gwyllt, Sir Glynne Meredith's adopted son ; isn't he handsome ? He is Welsh, like myself." And, with a cruel smile, she stared at Mifanwy.

" Is he ?" was all Mifanwy could say.

" Yes, and do you know, you have a slightly foreign accent, Russian, I have been told, but it is very like Welsh. How do you think we sang our duet together?"

" Speaking for myself, badly," replied Mifanwy.

" Ah ! well, never mind ; next time we'll sing it better," said Elizabeth.

" Well, good-bye," said Mifanwy ; " I must go and make my excuses to M. Valpré for that duet."

"Good-bye, Miss Roose," rejoined Elizabeth, leaving her still undecided as to how much or how little she had guessed.

"After all," thought Mifanwy, who had seated herself between Tom and Mrs. Roose, listening to a song by a rising tenor, "why should I dread her so much? I have done nothing wrong; I am not in the circus now; why should I hide away like a thief? And yet I should like to tell Ieuan myself. I wonder where he is, and why I never see him, here, or anywhere. Oh! I hope Elizabeth will not tell him; I should like to mystify him for a little while, to see his puzzled look, to hear the delight in his voice, when he recognises me."

"You look troubled, child," broke in Rhys Morgan, speaking in Welsh, "what is the matter?"

"I am troubled, master," replied Mifanwy, dropping naturally into her own language; "you know how much I wished to remain unknown until—until—well, until I had left the circus farther behind me."

"Well, what of that?" he asked. "I quite agree with you that it is very desirable."

"But how can I? Laissabeth is here, and has recognised me."

"Yes, I met Miss Elizabeth Powys, the fashionable singer, who is making quite a name for herself, at the door when I came in to-day; she spoke to me quite naturally, never alluded to you. Impossible, child, she could not recognise you. You are so utterly different from the little plain brown girl of the Abersethin slopes."

"Oh, master, was I then really so ugly? What a good thing I did not know it. I was so happy."

"Ugly, my dear child? no, you were never ugly; I spoke thoughtlessly; you must forgive a boorish old Welshman. But don't tell me that anyone who knew you only in those days could recognise you now; look at yourself in that long mirror. Ah! I am afraid I need not tell you the difference."

"But my voice, master?"

"There indeed is the difficulty; but still, even that is so cultivated, refined, polished, that none but a true musician would be struck by its similarity to the voice of the shepherd girl."

Mifanwy shook her head dubiously. "Would you advise me, master, to make a clean breast of it, and confess everything to her?"

Rhys Morgan laughed heartily. "Why, Mifanwy, one would think you had committed a murder at that circus. Certainly not; tell her nothing. I don't believe she has an idea who you are."

Mifanwy looked thoughtful. "Perhaps it has been foolish of me to change my name, to hide my identity; but, having begun, I will keep it up now, until I have got up a little higher."

Rhys Morgan smiled. "Got up higher; where do you want to get to, child?"

"I want to be a great singer," replied Mifanwy. "I feel I have it in me, if only I can go on calmly; there are some things that would utterly spoil me as a singer. I can't explain it, sir, but, when Elizabeth comes near me, I feel a shrivelling up that makes it impossible for me to sing well."

"For heaven's sake, keep away from her, then," said Rhys Morgan. "Such feelings are very unaccountable, but very real. I have my own theory with regard to these strong likes and dislikes; but anyway, in your case, it must not be disregarded. I will speak to Valpré about it." And he did, with the result that Elizabeth and Mifanwy sang no more duets together.

This was the last of Elizabeth's appearances at Valpré's private concerts; she was now launched on the sea of professional life, where her brilliant voice and sparkling manner, together with her undeniable beauty, took the London public by storm. Her name was in everybody's mouth, her charms of voice and appearance were discussed at every club, at every tea-

table, especially where young men foregathered. Engagements poured in upon her, and Miss Elizabeth Powys' name on a concert bill ensured a crowded attendance. She was delighted with her own success, fêted, flattered, admired, and even loved, she went on her way like a butterfly in the sun, so engrossed with the delights of her existence, that, having ended her connection with Valpré and Victoria Hall, and never coming into contact with Mifanwy, she ceased to trouble herself about her. When, however, she remembered her suspicions, an evil gleam came into her eyes, and the old cruel smile to her lips.

Mifanwy, meanwhile, or Belle Roose, being freed from the restraint of Elizabeth's presence, pressed on her way bravely and indefatigably. Her name was already whispered about in musical circles, and in one of the leading papers a paragraph prepared the musical world for the advent of a new and brilliant star. It ran thus :—

"We are informed on good authority that M. Valpré, who has already done so much for musical art, will shortly bring out a new singer, who bids fair to eclipse any of those who have preceded her, this century. Her voice, which is a mezzo soprano of great range, and of exquisite timbre, has so delighted the professor's heart that he is not afraid to raise in musical circles the highest hopes. Miss Belle Roose, the possessor of this beautiful voice, will sing for the first time in London, at Valpré's concert, at the Victoria Hall, on Monday the 16th of May. Her début will be looked for with great interest by all who know that gentleman's great experience and thorough knowledge of what singing should be."

Mifanwy blushed vividly, and hid her face in her hands, when Rhys Morgan came in one morning and showed her the paragraph.

"Oh, master, and what if I disappoint you all, when the time comes? it won't be for the want of try-

ing to do my best. It is already the 20th of April; how near the time is drawing!"

"Yes," he said, taking a letter out of his pocket; it was thin, and had a foreign postmark. "By the by, I have a letter here that will interest you; it is from Sir Glynne Meredith."

A crimson glow rushed over Mifanwy's clear, pale face.

"I will read you the latter part of it; the first is wholly taken up with business matters; he wants me to see to the safe removal of his statue, and also that of Ieuan Gwyllt's, from his studio to the exhibition rooms, in May."

"Oh!" was all that Mifanwy could utter.

"Here is—let me see—here is what I thought would interest you: 'Lady Meredith has had a serious attack of fever, and Ieuan has also had a slighter attack of the same complaint. They are both, I am thankful to say, convalescent, and will, I hope, be well enough to leave here next month; but this illness will prevent either Ieuan or myself from travelling to London at present. We had quite intended seeing to the removal of the sculpture ourselves, and then joining Lady Meredith for a tour through Norway, but our plans will be considerably altered, and I cannot say exactly when we shall be back in London. I will let you know when we have settled.' Then the rest is all about the removal of the sculpture. Oh, yes, here is a little postscript. 'Ieuan is getting well so rapidly that he actually proposes to return to London himself, and save you all this trouble. A rash proceeding, which I have had sternly to forbid.'"

"Italy," said Mifanwy, "are they in Italy?"

"Yes. Didn't you know, child?"

"No, I didn't know, indeed. I wondered where they were."

"Well, now, I am going to see Valpré, and show him this paragraph." And, humming a Welsh hymn,

Rhys Morgan departed, leaving Mifanwy lost in thought.

Ieuan in Italy! This, then, was why she never heard the names of Sir Glynne, or Lady Meredith, or of Ieuan, though she listened eagerly whenever she had thought it possible to learn anything of them. She thirsted for even a crumb of information, so that, sometimes, she had been tempted to ask Elizabeth for news; but her Welsh pride had come to her assistance, and prevented her.

"No, never!" she had said, "though I die of ignorance!" But now the whole aspect of affairs was changed. Deep in her heart, unconfessed even to herself, had been a hope that at the concert in May, Ieuan would be present; but until Rhys Morgan had read the extract from Sir Glynne's letter, she had not realised how much she had counted upon his presence. "I thought, perhaps, he would recognise me," she thought, "or, if he did not recognise me, that my voice would remind him of Mifanwy, and I should watch the surprise in his dear eyes; but now I must sing to strangers," and the tears welled up, to be hastily dried away. "I must not be foolish," her thoughts went on; "I mean to work to make a name for myself, to be a good singer, to gain fame and riches; enough to repay all my kind friends; enough to go home to my beloved rocks and sea-birds, to roam the hills as I please, to be out in moonlight and the sunshine, on the golden sands, and on the blue sea, and to have enough money for Ieuan as well as for myself."

This was her dream and her continual aim.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

ON a glorious spring day, in the first week of May, Mrs. Roose and Mifanwy, having put on their best "bibs and tuckers," sallied forth to make their way to the Royal Academy, the elder lady in her sober black silk, and Mifanwy in a costume of light grey, with a bonnet of the same delicate colour, that tied under her chin, and showed off to perfection the beautiful oval of the face, the velvety brown eyes, and the forehead, soft-shaded by its waves of dark hair. A bunch of crimson carnations at her neck gave the necessary colouring to the quiet dress, and many an eye followed the movements of the graceful girl as she made her way through the heated atmosphere of the thronged rooms into the cooler and less crowded space given up to sculpture. She turned the leaves of the catalogue hurriedly to the end.

"Oh, here it is, auntie. 'A Hymn of Welcome to the Sunrise,' No. 40. There! it must be that one; several people are looking at it."

And by degrees they managed to catch a glimpse of it, and sat down patiently to wait for a better view. Soon a large party moved on to another statue, leaving a clear space between them and Ieuan Gwyllt's work. Mrs. Roose was loud in her admiration, but Mifanwy sat before it speechless.

Oh, to think that this exquisite conception was Ieuan's! To know that she herself had first suggested it to him! Not intentionally, indeed, but unconsciously, one evening when breasting a high wind, she

had stood on the edge of the cliff and sung "Codiad yr Haul," while the sun sank slowly out of sight. "He is not rising really, Mifanwy, he is departing; but never mind, he is rising somewhere else! And I will carve you just like that—indeed I will try, whatever!"

Ah! how well she remembered that evening. And he had carved the little statuette that had first arrested Sir Glynne's attention. But *this*!—this lovely figure, instinct with life and grace, she had never thought it possible that Ieuan could have evolved anything so beautiful from so commonplace a theme as a song of hers.

"Yes," said Mrs. Roose, "it is beautiful, my dear. It is not so much the beauty of the statue as what it suggests; and I am sure you feel the same. The sculptor could not wish for a more appreciative admirer than you seem to be. What does it suggest to you, Belle?"

"Oh, I see the sea gleaming bright under those outstretched fingers; I can feel the west wind blowing; I can hear the sea-birds calling; and I see a boy and a girl, who are all in all to one another, standing together, and drinking in draughts of beauty from the scene."

"Well, I can't see that," said Mrs. Roose, adding, by way of excusing her obtuseness, "but I have not much imagination."

Mifanwy smiled. "If we took you at your own valuation, you have nothing but faults. Do you know, auntie, that *I* was that girl, and that *I* suggested that lovely statue to Ieuan Gwyllt? I have never told you my story, but now that we have become such real friends, I will tell you all of it one evening when we are sitting together by the fire—we two."

"Do, dear, I should love to hear it. I have often wondered how you could have grown up in a circus."

And they sat silently gazing, Mifanwy's hands

resting idly in her lap, while her mind was busy with reflections of the past.

She was roused from her reverie by the tone of a voice, familiar, yet not heard of late. Looking round, she saw approaching the statue a girl, followed by a young man—Elizabeth, in all the beauty of her golden hair, and pink, dimpling face, set off by her new spring costume of pink muslin; and behind her Ieuan, tall and broad-shouldered, with the crisp brown hair so well remembered, the face darker and more manly, but otherwise unaltered, except for the thick moustache. He guided the bright and laughing girl protectingly through the crowd, until they stood close in front of Mifanwy and Mrs. Roose.

The long looked-for moment had arrived, when she should first see him after their long separation. But instead of rushing to meet him with the words, "Ieuan, it is I—Mifanwy!" she sat immovable on the red velvet seat, apparently as cold and inert as one of the statues around her. For a moment a sense of giddiness overcame her, but with a strong effort she pulled herself together.

"Why should I be disappointed?" she asked herself. "How could I expect him to know me, when I am not sure even that he has seen me? What shall I do? Shall I speak to him? No; while Elizabeth is with him I cannot." And she resigned herself to await the train of circumstances.

Elizabeth burst forth into quite a little shower of exclamations.

"Oh, lovely! Oh, Ieuan, how beautiful!" etc., etc. "Exquisite! There is nothing in the room to come up to it!"

"Oh, there you are wrong, Elizabeth. Sir Glynne's 'Fireman' is really much finer."

"Ah, well! to me, you know, this seems the loveliest by far."

Elizabeth's sharp eye had caught sight of Mifanwy, and although she had fears of the probable failure of

her plans to keep Ieuan and her rival apart, she could not resist the temptation to wound her as much as possible.

"But how delightful that you have broken away after all, and returned to London, though it is only for a week."

"Yes," said the well remembered voice, "it was ridiculous treating me as a convalescent, when in point of fact I have been perfectly well for a fortnight."

"But you must not rush about too much, Ieuan. What if—what if you were to be ill again? What should I do?"

"Would you really care, Elizabeth?" asked the young man, looking down at the blushing face beside him.

He spoke in a low tone, but Mifanwy caught every word, and felt powerless to move.

"Yes," was Elizabeth's sole reply, while she pretended to pore over her catalogue.

"It is kind of you to say that; it is delightful to feel, when we are roaming about in foreign countries, that there are warm hearts awaiting us at home."

Elizabeth hoped for more, but no more seemed forthcoming, so she changed her tactics, and returned to her sparkling manner, which she generally found *took* with men, grave or gay, old or young.

"Well, and when are you going away and leaving me again?" she said playfully, tapping his arm with her parasol.

"This day week I have promised to rejoin Sir Glynne and Lady Meredith. Then we go straight to Norway, where we shall remain the whole summer. So soon as we return in the autumn, we shall go direct to Wales, for Sir Glynne and I have some particular business to attend to there." He paused a moment. "And, when I come back, Elizabeth, I shall have something to say to you!"

"Something I should like to hear?" she asked, with innocent blue eyes.

Ieuan hesitated. "I--I hope so!"

Here he inadvertently stepped backwards and, treading on Mifanwy's dress, detached a grey satin bow from the skirt. Turning round to apologise and pick up the bow, he caught sight of the pale, sweet face, and was struck by the spirituality of her beauty. Elizabeth pretended not to have seen the little misadventure, and passed on rapidly, hoping to attract Ieuan in her train; but he stayed a little longer than was necessary to return the bow, "and to hope that the tear was not irremediable." Mifanwy only bowed, and busied herself with her dress to hide her face.

At this moment, most inopportunistly, or the reverse, her bunch of carnations fell to the ground, and Ieuan returned them with nervous fingers; there was no excuse for further delay, so, with a flushed brow, he lifted his hat and passed on, first stooping to pick up one of the crimson carnations that had become detached from the rest, and to place it in his button-hole. Elizabeth observed it at once.

"What a lovely carnation! Where did you get it?"

"Picked it up from the ground," replied Ieuan.

"Faugh!" scoffed Elizabeth. But he only smiled.

"What a lovely girl that was!" he said. "Did you see her, Elizabeth?"

"No," she answered unblushingly.

And back into the crowded rooms they went, to crane their necks, to criticise and admire, and, finally, to emerge into the bright sunshine. Both were tired, though Elizabeth fought bravely with her fatigue, and laughed and chatted brightly to the last.

Meanwhile, Mifanwy awoke as it were from a dream; it had all happened so suddenly. Like a vision, Ieuan had passed before her, and had disappeared before she had had time to realise what was happening. Mrs. Roose, unconscious of anything unusual in the little incident, made no remark when she had once satisfied herself that the satin bow could easily be replaced.

"But you have lost one of your beautiful carnations, my dear. I saw the young man pick it up and put it in his button-hole, though he had a lovely rose, which he threw away."

"Did he?" said Mifanwy, fastening the remaining carnation more safely at her neck.

"Shall we go and see the pictures now, dear?"

"No, not to-day, thank you, I am so tired."

She had seen Ieuan and Elizabeth pass out that way, and dreaded to meet them again. She had heard every word of their conversation, and though pained and wounded at his evident admiration of Elizabeth, and, it must be confessed, with the cruel fangs of jealousy gnawing at her heart, still she was accustomed to that feeling; it had been present with her since the early days, when, in their childhood, Ieuan had praised Elizabeth's beauty. Even now she did not believe that he loved her, and although she had heard the words, "Then I shall have something to say to you," she did not put Elizabeth's construction on them.

"What could he mean? I don't know; but whatever it was, it was not what Elizabeth thought."

When she reached home, the remaining carnation was safely folded up in paper, and placed in her dressing-case with a certain piece of red ribbon.

For the rest of the time between this and the 16th, she walked as in a dream, and it was not altogether an unhappy one. Her faith in Ieuan never wavered; in spite of his not having recognised her, in spite of his tender manner towards Elizabeth, she still believed he was true at heart to the "Mifanwy" of the Abersethin slopes. Not that handsome, fashionably-dressed gentleman, with the glossy hat and the catalogue in his hand, but Ieuan himself, the true inner being would be true to the shepherdess of the hills—the girl of the thin blue frock and the bare feet!

Had she known more of the world, or had her character been less governed by the love of Nature,

and the spirit of her art, she might not have been able to keep her faith so unsullied, and her trust so unbroken.

As the day approached, Rhys Morgan became filled with anxious fears; Valpré with excitement; and Elizabeth, who was fully aware of the important results hanging on Mifanwy's first appearance in public, with anger and evil hopes.

"She will never *take* as *I* have! She has not had sufficient training. Horrid thing! Why couldn't she be satisfied to sing to the sheep and the cows? It would suit her better!"

Mifanwy alone was cool and collected, and at the last rehearsal of her songs, on the evening before the concert, she astonished Valpré by her calmness and self-forgetfulness. At her own request, her favourite air, "As when the dove," had been chosen as one of her songs. In this she was thoroughly at home; every note brought its sweet memories to her mind, and she returned to it always with the confidence of a child who repeats his alphabet when he has learned to spell long words.

Valpré's concert—the first of a series of four—bade fair, if one might judge by the amount of interest shown in it beforehand, to be a great success. But at concerts, as in life, it is often the unexpected that befalls, and it is impossible to foretell how things will go. Sometimes a cold cloud will hang over the audience, a cloud that every effort on the part of the performers fails to dissipate. The music is excellent, there is no hitch from beginning to end, and yet there has been a something wanting, a mysterious, nameless, impalpable something, that is an all-important factor in the success of a concert.

This mysterious "something" was certainly not wanting on the evening of the 16th of May, when Miss Belle Roose was to make her first appearance before a London audience. It was felt in the subdued, pleasant hum that accompanied the entrance of a

thronging audience into the large building; in the energetic manner in which a few officials crossed the platform, arranging music and instruments; above all, it was felt when the large hall filled almost to overflowing.

The concert opened with an instrumental chorus from "Don Giovanni." It was beautifully rendered, and, being an old favourite, was warmly applauded; and, as one thing followed another, all well received, and evidently appreciated, M. Valpré felt perfectly at ease; everything was going well.

Among the audience in the front row sat Elizabeth and Mrs. Elliott, accompanied by Mr. Camperton, who was devoted to her attentions, and evidently in a happier frame of mind than usual.

"The next thing on the programme," he said, "is an aria from 'Acis and Galatea,' by Miss Belle Roose, the new singer, you know."

"Yes, I see," said Elizabeth shortly; "she makes me quite nervous." And she laughed a sharp, sarcastic little laugh, which, of course, drew from Mr. Camperton a torrent of flattering compliments.

"You nervous?" he laughed, "*she'll* be nervous, poor thing, if she sees the queen of song so near her. By George! I shouldn't like to be in her place to-night; so much is expected from her that she is safe to disappoint the audience."

"Yes, safe," agreed Elizabeth.

But suddenly there was a silence. Miss Belle Roose was being led forward by M. Valpré, who left her standing in the front of the platform, while he returned to the piano to accompany her himself. She was greeted by the immense audience, who had waited impatiently for her, with warm applause. Her appearance was much in her favour; she looked simple and unaffected in her dress of some soft white material, and her beauty, which was an unexpected item on the programme (Valpré having carefully kept this in the background), had evidently made a good

impression. She cast one glance over the large audience thronging the great hall, but did not see those who sat nearest to her, and thus was free from the restraint of Elizabeth's presence.

At the first note there was a dead silence ; then note after note, word after word, was listened to with deep attention, which changed into marked appreciation as the simple, thrilling air dropped out in clear, golden tones from that small throat. She had chosen well for her first venture ; from first to last it was sung faultlessly ; there was no room in it for brilliancy of execution, but graceful phrasing, harmonious colouring, and depth of feeling, were evident throughout ; and, when the last note was ended, it was followed by a storm of applause that rose again and again when the singer endeavoured to retire from the platform ; it broke out afresh when the object of its enthusiasm, directed by M. Valpré, came back to bow her thanks. The audience determinately demanded an encore, but Valpré was firm in his refusal, and made a sign that the next piece of music should be proceeded with.

In the second part of the programme Belle Roose appeared again. This time she sang an impassioned song of love and sorrow and returning happiness. There was a depth of tenderness in the first part of the song, which was listened to with rapt attention ; but when the music changed into a light and joyous refrain, Belle Roose was at her best. Loud and rapturous encores followed, and this time Valpré assented.

"What shall I sing ?" she asked ; "I have nothing prepared for this."

"But I have," said Valpré, putting into her hands the music of a joyous, gipsy song, in which the words of a little Russian refrain were often repeated.

It was brilliant and exciting, but Belle Roose's flexible voice found no difficulty in rendering it with the proper grace and brightness. The audience was

charmed, and when the long-continued applause had died away, Belle Roose's triumph was assured. The little Russian song had given an impression that she was singing one of her own national airs, an impression that perhaps was strengthened by her name and her slightly foreign accent. When the audience filed out of the room, appreciative, even enthusiastic, remarks were heard on all sides.

"Splendid," said a great musical authority, whose praise was usually difficult to win. "I hope it won't be long before we hear La Belle Russe again."

"Russian, is she?" said his friend.

"I believe so."

And how, Mifanwy never knew, but from that night forth the name of La Belle Russe was that by which she was generally known. From that night forth also her success as a concert singer was assured; she sprang suddenly into public favour, and never afterwards lost her hold upon it. In a few months she had established herself as the first singer in London, and hopes were whispered about, and even suggested by Valpré, that she would make her début in Italian opera during the coming season. She was sought after and interviewed by the manager of every musical company, but she continued faithful to Valpré, and refused to make any engagements without his sanction.

And now her dreams of wealth and fame bid fair to take substantial form. She and Mrs. Roose took a house in a more fashionable neighbourhood; a large and comfortable one, but by no means corresponding with her income; her tastes were simple almost to a fault, and she turned with utter distaste from the luxuries and hollow conventionalities of what is called Society." Not that she refused to avail herself of all the comforts within her reach, for her domestic ménage was carried on in an easier style than Mrs. Roose's had been; and she drove in her own brougham to keep her engagements; but there she drew the

line, and nothing would induce her to enter the ranks of fashionable society, although invitations poured in upon her. She was heart and soul a "professional singer," it was her work, it was also her relaxation and delight; and she would not waste upon the so-called "pleasures" of fashion the energies demanded by her art.

Perhaps it was this earnest simplicity of character that charmed almost everyone who came within her influence. Not everyone; there was one person in London, at all events, who took only displeasure at La Belle's success; this was Elizabeth Powys, to whom the éclat of the new favourite brought only gall and bitterness. Perhaps complete immunity from envy could not have been expected of her; but, sitting in her pretty drawing-room alone, on the morning after one of Valpré's concerts, at which La Belle Russe had scored a greater success than ever, and the enthusiasm of the audience had been unparalleled, she seemed, in spite of her elegance and beauty, a very impersonation of evil, and, being quite alone, she made no effort to disguise her feelings.

She started to her feet and began to pace up and down the long room, with head thrown back, and hands clasped behind her.

"Hateful creature! how she has spoiled my life! I hated her long ago when she was my uncle's shepherdess. I felt then that she would work me evil; I felt then," dropping her head again upon her breast, "that we two could not live in the same world; and now she has followed me here, to steal from me my reputation as a singer—my wealth; and, if she can, she will steal Ievan's love from me! but *that* I will never give up! *that* I will fight for to the death!"

"Mr. Camperton," said the servant, announcing a visitor. And in a moment Elizabeth had smoothed her brow and ruffled hair, and, opening a door at the further end of the room, had made a silent sign to Mrs. Elliott, who entered from her own little sitting-

room, work in hand, as though she had only left the room the moment before. Then, after shaking hands with the visitor, she retired to the further end of the room; Elizabeth, as has been said before, being particular as to the proprieties.

Mr. Camperton had brought his usual offering of flowers, a lovely bouquet of roses and lilies.

"Oh! how lovely!" cried Elizabeth, dipping her face into the sweet scented flowers, and then looking up with dimpling smile and sparkling eyes. "But you mustn't, you know, you really mustn't! You spoil me quite. What shall I do for flowers when you are gone? For you are going, are you not?"

"Yes," said the young man, looking distressed. "I am sorry to say I have been sent for to my uncle's sick-bed. It's a great bore, but I must go, you know; it wouldn't do to offend the old boy."

"No?" said Elizabeth, with innocent, arched eyebrows.

"Well—no—not exactly; I am his heir, you see. His death will mean a great change for me—er—er—er—I mean as regards money, Miss Powys, and—er—er—er—I venture to hope in something more than money!"

Elizabeth looked down, and blushed. "Well, I hope your hopes will be realised."

"Thank you," said Mr. Camperton; "not that I wish the old man to go, you know. By George! I am very fond of him! but—er—er—er—you know!"

"Oh! yes, quite so. What train do you go by?"

"Oh! quite early, first I can get. But let me congratulate you upon your success last night. Never heard such singing! By George! everyone was in ecstasies!"

And Elizabeth was pacified.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"TUNEFUL ECHOES.

TOWARDS the end of the season, the Merediths returned from their visit to Norway, with a fresh stock of health and spirits, to find London still alternately broiling and steaming in the summer sun, its denizens as busy as ever, in the pursuit of pleasure and of gain. Coming, as she did, straight from the beauty and serenity of Nature, the sight struck Lady Meredith with a force generally blunted by familiarity.

"Let us get away as soon as we can," she said at breakfast, a day or two after her return; "the season will soon be over, and everyone will be gone away; but before we go, we must hear *La Belle Russe*!"

"Certainly," said Sir Glynne, "we won't go away without hearing her. What a fuss people are making about her, and what a lot of nonsense they talk about this wonderful singer, a mere slip of a girl, who leads the life of a hermit when off the platform, and, when on it, sways the multitude before her with a word or a tone, or a musical phrase; declining all invitations, refusing to make acquaintances, and not hesitating to turn her back upon the nobility and aristocracy of London, when they kneel before her, and crave the honour of her acquaintance. I don't believe half I hear of her, and I'll back our little Elizabeth against her, any day. By the way, what has become of Elizabeth?"

"She has engagements for every evening this week," said Ieuan; "she is announced to sing at

Valpré's last concert with La Belle Russe, so we shall hear them both, and be able to compare them."

One evening, in the same week, Valpré held his last concert; every available ticket had been taken in advance; so that it was only through Mr. Rhys Morgan's influence with Valpré that the Merediths were able to be present.

"What a crowded house!" remarked Sir Glynne, looking round the great hall, thronged to its utmost capacity.

"I see La Belle Russe sings only two songs," said Ieuan, "near the end of each part; and here is Elizabeth quite at the beginning. She won't like that."

"Why not?" asked Lady Meredith.

"Oh, because the weakest is always given the advantage of singing before the best has been heard. Ah! Camperton, old fellow, how are you?" And the newly arrived found his seat was next to Ieuan's.

"By George! awfully glad I chose this seat. Splendid treat we are going to have to-night, the two cantatrices in the same concert. By-the-by, you can't have heard La Belle Russe?"

"Never," said Ieuan.

"Well, there is no doubt she is a splendid singer, but for my part, I prefer Miss Powys; I like the song of the canary bird or the lark, you know, better than the nightingale's or the thrush's; suits me better; and Miss Powys' voice certainly is perfection, you know, and what can you wish for better than perfection?"

"What, indeed?" assented Ieuan, with a smile; but further conversation was impossible, for they were not far from the platform, and the concert had begun. Mr. Camperton having no real love of music, yawned and stretched out his legs and gazed about with indifference, while the two first items on the programme were gone through.

"No. 3, 'A Song of Spring,' by Miss Elizabeth

Powys," read Ieuan. And Mr. Camperton pulled himself together, and stared fixedly at the little red door at the side of the platform, from which Elizabeth soon emerged, looking radiant and sparkling. Her beauty invariably evoked applause and admiration, and Mr. Camperton continued to clap his hands until the first note of the song fairly broke upon the air. It was "A Song of Spring," and the carolling, bird-like notes, soaring higher and higher, rendered in perfection the exquisite song of the lark, that they were meant to represent; trills and runs and shakes followed each other in rapid succession, until the audience fairly lost their breath; and, when the song was ended, they cheered and applauded vociferously. Elizabeth, bowing repeatedly, backed off towards the little red door again; but there was no encore, except from Ieuan and Mr. Camperton, for everyone was waiting impatiently for *La Belle Russe*, the chief attraction of the evening.

"How beautifully Elizabeth sang," said Lady Meredith, "I wonder they didn't give her an encore."

"Horrid ba' taste!" observed Mr. Camperton, with disgust.

After a vocal quartette and a violin solo, the little red door once more opened, and, amid breathless silence, *Belle Russe* advanced to the front of the platform; but, before she had breathed a note, the audience burst forth into long and loud applause and greetings.

Mifanwy was already becoming accustomed to the adulation of the public, and, though she felt pleasure at the evidence of their high regard for her, she was in no wise disconcerted by it; she smiled and bowed her thanks, and then stood waiting patiently with a pleased expression until the storm of greeting should have passed away. Valpré sat impatiently at the piano, playing the prelude to the song over again, and, during this little pause, Mifanwy's eye roamed over the large audience; and in that short glance she saw and

recognised Ieuan. For a moment she felt overcome but the long-continued cheering covered her confusion, and enabled her to begin her song at the proper time. The audience were spell-bound.

What had come to La Belle? Her singing had always been something inexpressibly beautiful, but to-night it was a living echo of each person's inmost thoughts and feelings. The liquid notes not only filled the air with melody, but spoke to the soul of every man and woman. To the selfish it seemed to say, "Drop your self-seeking," to the untruthful, "Be true"; and to the sorrowful it whispered, "Be comforted"; to the impure it said, "Be pure."

There was one amongst that throng who felt himself strangely moved. It was Ieuan, who sat, outwardly immovable, his eyes fixed upon the slim and graceful figure of the girl who, for the moment, held in her grasp and under her sway the multitude before her.

Her dress of white satin, devoid of any ornament except a bunch of crimson carnations, fastened at the bosom, set off to advantage her pure complexion, which, though colourless as cream velvet, looked fresh and healthy. Her masses of brown-black hair were drawn straight back from the brow.

Ieuan sat still and rigid, every sense intent upon the music, which seemed to be speaking to him in strange and yet familiar tones. He recognised the face of the singer at once; she was the girl he had seen at the Royal Academy, and had often thought of since; but it was not this that so much moved him, unexpectedly pleasant though it was. It was the extraordinary train of thought her voice aroused. It carried him back to the days of his childhood; it spoke to him of the sea, of the crags, of nature in all her freshness; but, above all, it reminded him of Mifanwy; with her ragged blue gown and bare feet she came before him, and, fixing her soft brown eyes upon him, seemed to say, "Ieuan, I have waited long."

The words of the song died away. The singer was leaving the platform ; yet Ieuan sat on still and rigid. Was she going? this woman whose song had awakened in him a tumult of old memories, regrets, and self-reproach. "It is ridiculous," he said to himself, "but it is a fact that this lovely girl reminds me of Mifanwy, of those soft brown eyes as dark as night, and of that voice, which, in those inexperienced days, I thought could never have its equal." He started from his dream to find Mr. Camperton addressing him.

"Oh, yes! oh, yes! a lovely voice, no doubt, though, as I said before, I prefer Miss Powys," and he chatted on good-humouredly, until Elizabeth once more made her appearance, when, to Ieuan's relief, he again subsided into attentive silence.

Elizabeth sang with greater brilliancy than ever, and the audience greeted her efforts with enthusiastic encores, which she rewarded with a little rippling, laughing song, that suited her clear voice and sparkling manner to perfection. No sooner had she retired from the platform than Mr. Camperton, too, disappeared ; and Ieuan was glad, for he could now give himself completely to the enjoyment of the next song from *La Belle Russe*.

"What is it?" asked Lady Meredith, hunting in her programme. "Oh, something from *Der Freischutz*; but I don't know it ; do you, Ieuan?"

Ieuan could scarcely spare a breath to say "no," so intent was he upon the music that once more flooded his whole being with ecstasy. Be it remembered, he belonged to a race more influenced by music, more swayed by its power, than, perhaps, any other in the world.

The girl seemed to sing without effort as naturally as she would breathe ; and, while she sang, she seemed to hold personal communion with every individual of that large concourse. The song came to an end at last, and the singer tried in vain to leave the platform. The applause continued, in spite of Valpré's scowls,

and cries of "La Belle! La Belle! encore! La Belle Russe!" were heard in every direction. It was useless to try to stem the tide, so the singer returned once more to sing a simple country ballad of home and love, of sea and sail. Once only she mustered courage to turn her eyes on Ieuan, but the look that met hers was so fixed and sad that the girl wondered, and was saddened herself; she durst not look again. When she had retired, and the long, thunderous applause had died away, Ieuan roused himself, and woke once more from the curious state of mingled ecstasy and agitation into which the song had thrown him.

"Wonderful!" whispered Lady Meredith.

"Exquisite!" said Sir Glynn. "I don't wonder now at the public's making such an idol of her. She is charming. I didn't know Russians had such liquid, thrilling voices. Wake up, Ieuan! you seem bewitched."

Ieuan laughed, and pulled himself together.

"Do you think," said Lady Meredith, tapping him with her fan, "that you could find Elizabeth for me, before she goes, and tell her I shall be glad to see her to tea to-morrow afternoon, if she can spare an hour or two?"

"I will see," said Ieuan; "but I think it very likely she left when her song was over." And he was soon threading his way through the passages at the back of the platform. "Can I see Miss Powys?" he asked of an official, whom he met on his way.

"Gone, sir; she left immediately after her song."

At this moment a slender figure, cloaked and hooded, followed by an elderly lady in black, came down the passage.

"La Belle Russe," whispered the man, and he drew Ieuan a little aside to make room for the lady.

Yes, there she was; in spite of the hood, Ieuan would have recognised her anywhere; that clear pale complexion, the velvety brown eyes "put in with

smutty fingers." A description more expressive than daintiness. She saw him, and for a moment faltered. The official bowed respectfully, and Ieuan, taking off his hat, caught one more glance of those wondrous eyes that she raised to his in passing, acknowledging his salute with a slight bow.

Ieuan stood transfixed; he was so close to her that he had heard her breathe, and felt the touch of her garments while she was passing him.

"You are fortunate, sir," remarked the man. "This is not the way she generally comes out. I don't know why she came to-night."

"I am fortunate indeed. Have you seen Mr. Camperton here to-night?"

"Yes, sir; he took Miss Powys and Mrs. Elliott down to their carriage; he generally do, sir."

"Thank you, good-night." And Ieuan returned to tell Lady Meredith of his fruitless search.

Arrived at home, Ieuan made his way at once to the smoking-room, and throwing himself into a lounge-chair, smoked and dreamed away for two hours. And what were his dreams? Be sure the beautiful singer figured largely in the vision. Elizabeth's dazzling beauty also came in frequently, but the most vivid impression was of Mifanwy treading the dangerous sheep paths, the wind circling round her and threatening to carry her away; or roaming bare-foot on the yellow sands below and searching the wreaths of shells left by the receding tide; or sitting idly on the hilly slopes with Topper at her side; or singing her heart out to the setting sun; and he himself, a fresh and sunburnt lad, shouting to her across the valley some important piece of information, as "Herrings in the bay," or "Found the puffin's nest," or listening with "Robert the Mill," while Mifanwy, looking down upon them from the crags, woke the echoes with her song.

Lighting a fresh cigar, he mused, "Why should I for ever be haunted by the image of that girl, so long

gone out of my life? No doubt married long ago, or betrothed to some country bumpkin! I must be a muff to think so much of a boy and girl affair; and yet how sweet she was! Have I ever met anyone with such a wealth of love, even Elizabeth with all her charms? Well, I must do something to lay this ghost. We are going down to Abersethin, and I will try to find her out, to see what she's like; and I will be kind to her, poor girl; and, if she's married, or going to be married, I will give her a handsome present; and, if she's nice, and still remembers me, well then—we'll have a happy time together; but marry her, good heavens! it would be a cruel wrong to my uncle and aunt."

One evening, before they left for Wales, Mr. Rhys Morgan dropped in to dinner, and during the meal, the conversation turned upon the daily increasing popularity of *La Belle Russe*.

"Yes," observed the parson, "it is most amusing as well as gratifying. I have just seen at a shop window a gorgeously trimmed hat or bonnet, I don't know which, ticketed 'The Belle Russe'; and I believe the 'Belle Russe' cigars have the best sale. It is amusing, because the lady herself is one of the most retiring and plainly dressed imaginable."

"Do you know her?" asked Ieuan, opening his eyes.

"Yes."

"Personally?"

"Yes, personally."

"Oh, how delightful!" cried Lady Meredith; "then you can tell us all about her, and make us acquainted with her also."

"H'm! well! I am not so sure of that; I have been besieged with requests for an introduction to her, but, as I told you, she is of a very retiring nature, leads a simple life, and absolutely refuses to make a large circle of acquaintances."

"Oh, tell me all about her! Where does she live?" inquired Lady Meredith, "and why does she

shut herself up so? I hear she leads the life of a hermit."

"Oh, far from that," replied the parson. "It is curious how difficult it is to lead a simple and natural life in London, without being thought eccentric. She is the centre of a circle of true friends and admirers, and her days are fully occupied in the study necessary for her profession. Next spring she will appear in the Opera; that entails a good deal of preparation; then she spends an hour or two in reading to improve her mind, her education not having been begun until lately."

"She does not give you the impression of being an uneducated woman," observed Ieuan.

"Quite the reverse, I should say," put in Sir Glynne; "a thorough lady, I should have thought."

"So she is," agreed Rhys Morgan, "one of Nature's gentlewomen, with a mind refined beyond that of the usual present day young lady; though not highly educated, she is well informed. She has several friends in the highest ranks of life, old Lady Winthorpe, for instance, who seems very fond of her; and the Marquis of Eversleigh is decidedly quite *éprouvé*; she is very friendly with them both, but I honestly believe their rank weighs not at all with her; I don't see a shade of difference between her manner towards them and that towards her old friends in a lower rank of life."

"How unusual and how delightful!" exclaimed Lady Meredith. "You make me wish to know her more than ever. But how did you make her acquaintance?"

"Well, quite by accident. I saw her at a circus; you know I find myself in queer places sometimes—wherever I can find my human brothers and sisters."

"Yes, indeed," assented Lady Meredith; "I know how you find out everybody who is in distress. But did you find this Russian girl in any distress?"

"Oh, no—not at all; only rather home-sick, and

chafing under the roughnesses of circus life. They were very nice people at that circus, though ; and she still keeps up her friendship with them."

Ieuan listened and wondered. Where did the girl find that strange power to touch the hearts of her audience, as she had touched his ?

"Well, I shall give you no rest till you introduce me to her," he said. "I want to find out the secret of her power over the hearts of men. It is not only in her voice, though that is exquisite."

"Possibly in her experience of life," rejoined Rhys Morgan, "added to her exceptionally candid and tender nature. But you had better not inquire too closely into that secret : I mean lest she should direct her witcheries towards you, and steal your heart !"

"I feel much inclined to run the risk," answered Ieuan, laughing. "Will you promise to give me the chance when I return from Wales ?"

"Well, with her consent, I will," replied Rhys Morgan.

"Ieuan is a general lover," Lady Meredith interposed ; "and there is safety in numbers, you know."

"Now, uncle," said Ieuan, "won't you take my part ? Is that a fair character to give me ?"

"Well, it was rather a sweeping remark, Gwladys. I should call him generally proof against the darts of Love ; but, if he should be struck, I am inclined to think it will be a mortal blow."

"Oh, this is worse and worse ! I think I had better retire, and think out my defence."

CHAPTER XXV.

ONE ABSENT.

A FEW days later, Ieuan was walking briskly across the moors that lay between Glanarvon and Shân and Ianto's cottage. He and his uncle had arrived late the evening before, a good deal tired, and a little disheartened by the failure of their errand to Chester. They had hunted through every register in every church in the district, but without success; nor could they get any clue to the mystery of Mary Meredith's elopement.

"Never mind," had remarked Sir Glynne, when they reluctantly gave up the search; "it does not in the least shake my faith. I feel morally certain that my dear sister, your mother, was the legal wife of John Powys. They were married somewhere, if not in Chester, and one day we shall come across the proofs."

The north-west wind blew fresh in from the sea, that, blue and sparkling, stretched out before him. There was the blue smoke curling upwards from the dear old cottage, buried in its hollow, with only its chimneys rising over the line of the moor. The sweet and luscious odours of the heather and the hurtle berries brought back memories of the sunny afternoons, when he and Mifanwy had filled their basket with the dainty fruit, that Shân had stewed for their suppers. There, straight in his path, was the furze bush over which he had always lifted Mifanwy when she was a child. Mifanwy! Mifanwy!—already she filled his thoughts, already his heart called out for

her. "I have never been truly happy since I lost her; for all her bare feet, blue petticoat, and tangled hair, she was sweeter than any girl I have ever met in London society."

While thus he mused, Ianto, his shovel and mattock on his shoulder, suddenly made his appearance from the hollow in which the cottage nestled, and loomed large and sprawly against the line of the horizon. On nearing Ieuan, he looked with inquiring interest at the stalwart form of the young man, who passed him with a nod and a short "Boreu da."

"Boreu da chi, sir," replied Ianto, pulling his slouched felt hat, and passing on.

Ieuan had purposely left the time of his visit undecided, merely saying, "I shall come down to my old home before long;" and the two old people had spent many a half hour looking across the moor to the high road, that intersected it. But to-day Ianto was off his guard; this tall, broad-shouldered man could not be Ieuan. Suddenly he heard a rebuking voice.

"Ianto! not know me, indeed, not know your own boy? Come back for shame, and be scolded properly."

"Dear Lord!" the old man cried, dropping his spade, and stooping to pick it up, thereby letting fall his mattock, which Ieuan picked up and himself shouldered. "Dear Lord, not my boy!"

"It is indeed—indeed, Ianto."

"Yes, yes—I see him now," said the old man, grasping his hand; "but how would I know it was you, walking like this on your feet, when I had been expecting you in a grand carriage? and wearing a rough brown coat, when I had expected to see you in a velvet one?"

"And you are disappointed, Ianto? I'll come in the carriage one day to please you, and perhaps I can forage up a velvet coat, too; but come along and let's see whether Shân will have a better memory."

When they approached the cottage, they saw Shân

emerge from the door, and stand with her arms folded in her apron, looking dreamily towards the brow of the hollow.

"Be bound she's thinking of you now, and waiting for you," said Ianto.

And so she was, and she took the vision of the young man in the brown frieze coat and Tam o' Shanter as an answer to her prayers; and, in a moment, he was folded in the faithful old arms. He kissed the wrinkled cheek, and felt that here indeed was home and love.

Then came greetings and questions and laughter, not unmixed with tears, when the two old people realised that they had their boy once more beneath their roof.

"And such a fine, handsome man; look at him," cried Shân, turning him round, a movement which Ieuan assisted by turning himself swiftly, as if on a pivot.

"Yes, look at me all round," he said, when laughter had subsided a little; "and come and show me all over the place. Where are the hens? Scraping at your onion seeds at this moment."

Shân could not resist a rush to the door, and a "shw" with her apron, that caused a general scattering over the low, turf hedge.

"Do you tell me now, they didn't see you coming, and think I should be too busy to look after them? that they did! But, dear anwl, where's the crochon? I must put the cawl on at once."

Ieuan remembered the ways of the household too well to suggest that it was too early for dinner, or to inform the active old couple, who had had their breakfast at seven, that he had only just partaken of that meal.

And soon Shân was supremely happy in preparing the crock of cawl for her dear boy's dinner. It was all ready and placed smoking hot upon the old black

table at twelve o'clock, and they gathered round with wooden spoons and bowls.

"Only one thing is wanting now," said Shân, with a saddened look, "Mifanwy! Don't you miss her, Ieuan? See her little stool in the chimney corner; her little wooden shoes under it! I keep them there waiting for her; I know some day she will come over the moor as you came to-day; only, I wish you had both come together. Oh, how happy we should be."

"We should indeed," said Ieuan, looking at the stool and the little wooden shoes. "I have missed her ever since I came into the house, and have been longing to ask about her."

"Good boy, good boy," answered Shân, drawing her horny hand affectionately over his. "Never forget Mifanwy, for no sister ever loved a brother more than she loved thee."

"Oh," put in Ianto, passing his bowl up for more cawl. "He couldn't do that; he'd have more onnore than to forget his sister; wouldn't thee, my boy?"

"Well," said Ieuan, "I won't say much about onnore, Ianto; but I couldn't forget her, even if I wished; especially here, where everything seems to speak of her. You must have missed her dreadfully, Shân?"

"Ach y fi, yes; nobody but the Almighty knows how much. In the morning, when the sun shines in and wakes me, I miss her voice singing at her work, and in the evening when it gets dark, and Ianto and I try to sing our bits of hymns together, oh, don't I miss her angel voice, and thine too, my boy? for I will say, though thee couldn't sing like Mifanwy, thee could always come in with a good second and fill up the chords."

"Well, but tell me, Shân, where is she now?"

"Oh, now," said Shân, spreading out her fingers; "well, I don't know where she is now, but I know it must be a good place, for she sends us a lot of money, quite as much as thee hast sent us; but it is all safe."

she whispered, with a wink ; " Ianto has it all safe, my boy. We never take it out to count it without going out first to see that nobody is near." And, suiting the action to the word, she went out to the front garden and looked north, south, east, and west, finishing with a peep round the back of the cottage. " It's all right, Ianto," coming in again, closing the door, and pushing the wooden bolt into its hasp. Ianto rose solemnly and walked towards the large open chimney, and, reaching a good way up its brown smoky side, drew out from a hole in the wall a stocking of grey worsted, and, undoing the string that tied it, poured out the contents upon the table.

" Forty sovereigns ! there's riches ! " cried Shân, with her arms akimbo ; " and all for Mifanwy and thee, Ieuan, when we are dead and gone ; all for thee, my boy, and Mifanwy."

Here a fowl pecked at the door, causing Shân to rush to the window, while Ianto stuffed the stocking into his pocket, and, covering the gold with his two hands, sat at the table with a look of placid innocence.

" Only the fowls," said Shân.

" Art sure ? "

" Certain ; they are waiting for their dinner."

Ieuan exhibited a satisfactory amount of interest and astonishment.

" But what is the good of it to you if you hoard it up there ? "

" Why, do you think we are going to spend it ? Ach y fi ! We have too much onnore to spend our children's earnings. We buy what we want, and there will be enough there to bury us. What more can the Queen want ? "

And, one by one, the shining pieces were put back into the stocking, tied up, and carefully replaced in their dusty place of concealment. Then the door was opened, letting in a flood of sunshine, and, at the same time, a flock of fowls.

" Now, my boy," said Ianto, " it grieves me to leave

thee the first day of thy coming home, but it can't be helped. I told John Powys that bed would be dug up to-day—I was going there when I met thee—so now it must be done; not but what it could be done as well to-morrow, but thee know'st me, Ieuan; my word is my bond; I'll be back to tea." And, shouldering his tools, the old man took his way up the hollow and over the moor.

"And hast never seen Mifanwy fach, Ieuan?"

"Seen her, Shân? no. How could I see her? Where is she?"

"How know I?" returned the old woman, sprinkling the wetted meal on the earthen floor, for the fowls to peck at. "How can I tell? Thee might have met her in the street, out on the roads, or any where."

"Is she in London, then?"

"Yes, she's in London now; she went from here to Caer Madoc, and from there to Merthyr. She wrote and told us she had a very kind mistress, and had two little children to take care of. After that, she went to London, and I think she is there now, still with the same kind mistress; and she must be earning very good wages," with a shrewd nod, "or she couldn't afford to send us all the money that she does. But there, wouldn't Mifanwy be worth good wages to any one? But never mind where she is, she's coming home this autumn; any day, we don't know when. Oh, I wish it would be when thou art here."

Ieuan started. "What if it should be? How embarrassing to find her a little, perky London maid-of-all-work!"

Shân was now reaching something down from a shelf at the top of the low doorway: an old, cracked black teapot, that always stood there in company with a dog-eared Testament, Ianto's thick-rimmed spectacles, and a brass candlestick.

"Here it is!" cried Shân, panting, "her last letter. I tied that bit of worsted round thy last letter and hers together; it saves hunting for them."

"Well, I won't take my own," said Ieuan, "but I'll take Mifanwy's down to the slopes with me, and have a look at the old paths, and the sheep, and the dear old shore."

"Yes, go, my boy; that will give me time to tidy up, and get the tea ready."

"All right, Shân; I told them up at the Hall not to expect me till bed-time to-night."

It was a dreadful disappointment to Shân to find that her boy would not sleep under her roof; until he had explained that, even before he left Wales, the bed had been considerably too short for him. "And now," he added, "I believe not only my feet, but my knees would come out at the bottom."

She laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. "Well! well! thee was always a boy for jokes; but thee'll come back the first thing in the morning anyway?"

"Be sure, Shân fach, that every moment I have to spare I will spend here in my dear old home. Now, I will begin my way down to the cliffs."

But she would not be satisfied until she had taken him at all events to look at the comfortable bed she had prepared for him; up the rough ladder, past the rafters where the fowls slept, and into the long bedroom, divided into two tiny ones, Mifanwy's and his own.

Yes, there were the rows of birds' eggs, the garlands of seaweeds, and the row of animals he had carved, ranged on the top of the wall, running along under the eaves. Shân turned back the bed clothes, the clean sheets and the pink quilt, her special pride.

"It looks so comfortable, Shân, I don't think I can go back to London without sleeping in it once, at all events, but," seriously, "I think Lady Glanarvon would like me to sleep at the Hall."

"Yes, go, my boy, it will be grand to have thee sleeping at the Hall, and yet drinking thy cawl with old Ianto and Shân."

Down the ladder again they went, Ieuan stooping his tall shoulders, his feet almost in the kitchen before his head had disappeared below the floor of the bedroom. He went out into the August sunshine, up to the crest of the hollow, to meet the fresh sea wind, and then straight on over the well-remembered paths. A flock of sheep were grazing on the slope, and a shepherdess lay dozing on the grass, her dog beside her; but, alas! it was not Mifanwy, it was not Topper! The "little sea-crows" flew across from one hill to another, as of yore, filling the air with their busy cawing; the sea sparkled and heaved in the golden sunlight; the sea-pinks bloomed as bravely as ever on the crags; the sky was as blue, the breakers were as snowy white as they ever had been; the glorious beauty of the summer day was still undimmed, and yet he missed something from the scene. It was like a beautiful body from which the soul had taken flight. Oh, this mystery of life, this void caused by the absence of one human being! The air may be full of greetings, we may be surrounded by friends, but "one" is absent, and the whole scene is empty and deserted. So Ieuan felt while looking over the broad expanse of sea and sky, of rock and shore. "Everything is the same," he muttered, "but that simple girl is missing, and without her everything is flat and stale. Here is our 'broom-parlour'; it is empty!" Then, unconsciously, he took his way along the path to Ogo Wylofen. The tide was surging in at the mouth of the cave, and Ieuan, sitting on one of the boulders, listened to the mournful sounds that rose from the cleavage of the rock. "She was right," he thought; "it is fearfully like the wailing of a human being in anguish or distress," and, with a shudder, he turned and retraced his footsteps towards the shepherdess, who was now awake, and staring at the stranger.

"A fine day, my lass. You are the shepherdess, I see; and these are John Powys' sheep?"

"Yes; how do you know?" rejoined the girl with niggard manners.

"I knew them long ago; I used to be the shepherd on Moel Hiraethog. Who minds the sheep there now?"

"No one; they are all here," replied the girl; "and I watch them all together."

"You've hard work, then?"

"Yes, but I get fourpence a day."

"Oh, that's grand," said Ieuan.

"Are you Ieuan Gwyllt, then? whom I have heard my mother talk about? The shepherd boy who went away with the grand people at the Hall, and is living with them now, as if he were a son of theirs?"

"Yes, I am that boy."

"I should think you would wish you were back here sometimes."

"Why?"

"Oh! to be so long away from Wales. I shouldn't like it, and then to have always to behave like gentlemen. I shouldn't like it."

Ieuan laughed. "It has its drawbacks, indeed. Well, I won't turn you out of your situation just yet."

The girl laughed merrily, showing a row of dazzling white and even teeth, her only beauty, for her face was freckled and her nose was snubby. Ieuan threw her a shilling, and turning to follow the pathway down to the shore, he went his way, climbing up Moel Hiraethog, and visiting his own old shepherd's hut, before he returned. He sat down at the doorway, and gave himself up to a long train of reflections.

Mifanwy, Mifanwy, everywhere; every blade of grass, every nodding flower, seemed to speak of her; the sighing of the sea-wind seemed to whisper her name. "Now," he said, drawing from his pocket the soiled and crumpled letter Shân had given him, "let me read her letter; no doubt it will put all these

romantic memories of her to flight. English, probably," he muttered, "without an h. No, indeed, Welsh. Ah, she hasn't forgotten her Welsh then." He spread the crumpled letter out on his knees before him. "Been in Shân's pocket, I expect, with all the wonderful collection of things she used to carry in it. By Jove! good writing, round and firm and clear. A woman's hand perhaps, but not poor Mifanwy's," and he began :

"MY EVER BELOVED SHÂN AND IANTO,—Do you think it is long since I wrote to you? Three months quite; but you need not my letters to tell you that I love you, and that, though I am happy and busy here from morning to night, and have plenty of kind friends, still my heart is in Wales, and my thoughts often fly to dear Abersethin. I remember the sea cliffs, and the little sea-crows, the sheep, and dear old Topper. How kind of you to bury him in the garden; don't let the fowls scratch his grave. Oh, Shân fach, I remember you and Ianto, too, and the bright sun shining through my little window in the morning, and our sweet songs together when the moonlight was so bright that we sat round the hearth without a candle. Father, mother, I am saving up all my money to come home to you again. I am coming some time, but I must first save more money; enough to live for ever in the dear old country, and with the dear old simple people. And now good-bye, and never forget, your loving
"MIFANWY."

Ieuan folded it up slowly, and replaced it in his pocket; he was relieved to find no mention of his name, and yet he was wounded. "Not like a servant's letter," he thought; "but just like Mifanwy. If somebody else wrote it for her, she dictated it herself, that I'll swear. I wonder when she means to come! What if she should come now? If only she should come with her blue petticoat and bare feet, I

would clasp her in my arms, and marry her in spite of the world ; but a servant, with ribbons in her cap, it's altogether upsetting." And for the rest of the way home he brooded upon what he thought the aggravating way in which fate had treated him.

The air, when he approached the cottage, was full of the odour of the delicious, crisp batter cakes, the invariable adjunct of the tea-table in Wales when company is present. While he stooped to enter the low door, he drew in a long sniff of the appetising odour. "Hello! light-cakes for tea, bravo!" Shân turned her heated, smiling face towards him for an instant, but quickly resumed the absorbing work of turning her thin cakes upon the griddle. An immense pile of them already stood simmering in front of the fire.

"There's the last!" cried Shân triumphantly, as she flipped it on to the pile and buttered it. "Here's Ianto in the nick of time. Now, come along while they are hot." And round the old oak table they gathered, and chatted, and ate their light-cakes, and drank their tea.

"Well," said Ieuan, "I have been to many a feast and banquet, to dinners, and suppers, and balls, but never anywhere have I tasted anything that would beat your light-cakes."

Shân laughed till she showed her toothless gums. It was a happy evening, and the sun had long set before Ieuan began his trudge over the moor again.

"Good-night, my boy," said Ianto, "we have only wanted one thing this evening."

"Mifanwy fach?" asked Ieuan, laughing.

"Yes, indeed," said the two old people, "Mifanwy fach."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DEATH CHAMBER.

"I DON'T envy you your interview with John Powys," said Lady Meredith, on the following morning, waving a good-bye from the hall door to her husband and her nephew; "but, if you had not been going on business, I should have liked to accompany you part way; I want to go and see old Catrin Howells, and one or two more in the village."

"We will tell her you are coming. Aunt, wait till to-morrow, and I will come, too."

His aunt nodded. "Then to-day I will go and see Shân and Ianto. Good-bye."

Striding down the drive, and out on to the breezy moor, the uncle and nephew chatted cheerfully together.

"Gwladys is well out of it, indeed," said Sir Glynne. "I hate the idea of speaking to that man, but still it must be done."

"Yes," assented Ieuan, "we must go through with it. I was just thinking of my old childish determination that, at the first opportunity, I would give him a sound thrashing, and, by Jove! I should enjoy nothing better now. And I can't tell what deters me, uncle," he added, suddenly brightening up. "Why should I not pitch into him, and give him a good pommelling? It would do him good, and me, too."

Sir Glynne laughed heartily, but added seriously, "Well, I won't deny that I should like to come in with a few blows myself; but, Ieuan, he is your father, my boy, and *that* is the reason, and the only

reason I can see, why you should not keep your vow."

Ieuan grunted, and they trudged on silently for some time.

"Here we come on John Powys' land, don't we?" asked Ieuan.

"Yes, this long enclosure is a corner of his land, and look here, Ieuan, surely this is old John himself coming across the field."

"Is it he?" asked Ieuan, looking over the hedge. "If it is, he is very much altered. How he stoops! I wish he would hold up his head, that I might see how that cruel face looks."

The approaching figure had now reached the middle of the field, and, standing still, with head bent down, and hands deep in his pockets, seemed lost in thought.

"See that bull?" said Sir Glynne. "If he does not hurry his footsteps that creature will be upon him." But John Powys did not move.

The bull, who had been grazing quietly in the further corner of the field, had at first only walked slowly towards the centre; gradually he changed into a trot; then, all at once, he broke into a furious gallop, advancing with curled tail and head bent down, towards John Powys, who still stood, lost in thought.

Sir Glynne and Ieuan shouted with all their might, but he only moved slowly forwards, as though he had not perceived his danger.

"Fool," cried Ieuan, "he will be killed," and they shouted again, "Hoi! hoi! the bull, the bull!"

"The man is deaf!" exclaimed Sir Glynne, waving his arms frantically, a movement that caught John Powys' eye, though his ear was deaf to their cries. Instinctively he looked behind him, and, seeing the bull tearing towards him, and close upon him, he started running towards the two men, who now stood by the fence, in breathless excitement. His face was pale as death, and he ran with wonderful agility for a

man of his age; but too late! With a bound the creature was upon him, his black, curly head lowered, his tail still flourished over his back; and John Powys fully realised his peril. He gave one cry of despair, when the bull's strong, white horns tossed him bodily off the ground, on which he fell with a heavy thud, and where he remained inert and, as the other two feared, lifeless. The infuriated creature rushed at him again, goring him and stamping him with his feet; but, at this moment, he was attracted by another object upon which to wreak his fury. The two men standing by the fence had remained transfixed with horror for a moment, while the bull had been making for his victim; but only for a moment.

"Run to that tree on the right, uncle, and wave your red handkerchief."

In a moment Sir Glynne had run and scrambled along the top of the high turf fence to the one gaunt tree that grew there.

The bull was at once attracted by the red silk handkerchief, which Sir Glynne waved, with cries and shouts; and, leaving his victim on the ground, he galloped furiously towards it. Sir Glynne had climbed the tree, and was out of reach.

Ieuan had noticed that a little to the left was the gate of the field. He calculated that, if Sir Glynne could keep the bull's attention engaged for a few moments near the tree, he might have time to make a rush for *his father*, and carry him to the gate in safety. He had run many a race, and won many a prize for speed, but never had he run as he did now.

The bull soon tired of his fruitless efforts to reach the red handkerchief, and now began to make his way back to his first enemy. Ieuan saw it all. Already he had lifted the old man, who was groaning with pain, and was carrying him over his shoulder towards the gate. He tried to run, but, with his heavy burden, could not make such progress as the bull, who now came snorting and tearing after him, followed by Sir

Glynne, still shouting and waving his handkerchief.

"Would he escape? Yes, the bull was still two or three yards behind him when he gained the gate. Just in time he managed to put his burden over the highest bar, letting him drop on to the furze bushes on the other side. The next moment he was climbing the gate himself; he reached the top and was safely over. Sir Glynne, dropping his red handkerchief, ran round on the other side of the fence to Ieuan, while the bull turned back to wreak his vengeance on the red silk handkerchief, which he pawed and tore and tossed into the air, with loud bellowing and roaring. Sir Glynne and Ieuan now turned their attention to John Powys, who had fainted from pain and terror.

"Stay with him here, uncle, while I run home to Shân, and send her for a cart from Maen Powys."

"No," said Sir Glynne; "send her to Glanarvon for the break, and tell them to fill it with cushions, for I think he is seriously hurt."

The bull still bellowed in the field, the lark sang high above his head, the little yellow crowfoot and furze blossoms filled the air with perfume, the sea-gulls cried, and in the distance a woman called to the cows; and Sir Glynne still watched, and, with a bunch of heather, kept the flies from the face of the unconscious man.

"Is he dead?" he thought. "Will he never open his eyes?"

Yes; there was a little flicker in the breath, a little movement in the eyelids, and John Powys slowly opened his eyes. For a moment he gazed up to the blue sky above him; then gathering his senses together with a gleam of that shrewdness which never forsook him, he gasped:

"Who is he? No time to lose."

"Who?" asked Sir Glynne gently.

"The young man who tried to save my life." He

spoke with panting breath, and with long pauses between the words. "He tried—but failed. He risked his life; who is he?"

Here Ieuan returned, and, stooping down, said, "Don't try your breath; you shall talk when you are safe home."

John Powys fixed his black eyes on his face. "Who is he?" he repeated.

"He is Ieuan," replied Sir Glynne firmly, but gently; "*my nephew and your son.*"

John Powys still kept his dim eyes fixed on the young man's face, and at last murmured:

"It is late—to make reparation. Yes, he is my son; he tried to save me—he risked his life."

The eyes closed—the lips ceased to move; Sir Glynne and Ieuan watched silently, while, with a last struggle, the soul departed. A thin, scarlet stream of blood came from his mouth. Ieuan looked into Sir Glynne's pale face.

"It is no use waiting, uncle; he is dead."

"Yes," said Sir Glynne solemnly; "may God forgive him."

"As I do," added Ieuan, "fully, entirely; and may God forgive me for my angry feelings."

The break came quickly and smoothly over the soft grass, and on the cushions, hurriedly thrown in by Lady Glanarvon, they stretched the lifeless body of John Powys; then slowly they took their way towards Maen Powys.

The front door was wide open, for Mrs. Powys, Elizabeth's mother, had come up to-day for her weekly visit of inspection and house-cleaning.

The door of the old oak parlour was thrown open, and on the stiff, horsehair sofa was laid the body of John Powys.

When Sir Glynne and Ieuan turned their steps homewards through the old oak avenue, there was an ominous creaking of the branches; the wind had changed, and already an army of grey fleecy clouds

was advancing over the brow of the sombre hills; and when they reached the rustic gateway, the moor beyond looked grey and bare, the cotton grass bent its white silk tassels all one way, the little pimpernel by the gate-post had closed its delicate petals, the cry of the peacocks at Glanarvon came down the breeze, and the little sea-crows cawed wildly, and flew about in great excitement.

"Who could believe this moor to be the same we crossed two hours ago?" said Ieuan. "What a difference a little sunshine makes."

"And not only that," replied Sir Glynne; "but how suddenly we passed from the brightness and freshness of our walk to that gruesome scene in the field."

"Yes, and on the moor," said Ieuan. "I shall never forget that last despairing look at me."

Lady Meredith had already heard the news of John Powys' death.

"How dreadful," she said, meeting them at the hall door, "poor old man! They say he had altered very much lately; he was less gruff, and less stingy, and in very bad health. Poor man!" And, with a woman's tenderness, as well as inconsistency, she began to white-wash John Powys' memory.

Later in the day, Sir Glynne entered the room with an open letter in his hand. "Read that, Ieuan; it is to Mrs. Powys."

Ieuan read it aloud:—

"DEAR MRS. POWYS,—If in any way Lady Meredith or I can be of use to you in the sudden catastrophe that has overtaken you—the death of your brother-in-law—be kind enough to let me know, and you will find us very willing. My nephew, Mr. Ieuan Gwyllt Powys, begs that you will take the management of his late father's domestic affairs, which you have hitherto so admirably performed,

until after the day of the funeral, which he will attend as chief mourner."

"Oh, by Jove! uncle, what a farce!"

"Ieuan!" exclaimed Lady Meredith in disapproval.

Ieuan fumed, but Sir Glynne carried his point. He went on reading:—

"You will be kind enough to arrange the day and hour of the funeral to suit your own plans, only letting us know the date and time fixed upon.

"Yours faithfully,

"GLYNNE MEREDITH."

The letter was sealed and addressed without further comment, and was despatched at once by a groom to Maen Powys.

There, in the sombre, shaded house, Mrs. Powys was holding a levée. The door at the end of the long passage, that shut off the old dwelling-house from the domestic offices, generally kept closed, stood open for the entrance and departure of the many visitors to the death-chamber.

Ianto Morgan had been at once commissioned to carry the tidings of the accident to every household in the neighbourhood, and more particularly to every place of worship, so that on the next day, which would be Sunday, it might be announced to the congregations after the sermon; and he had already traversed the country for five or six miles around, entering each house with the same formula:

"I came to tell you that John Powys of Maen Powys died this morning at eleven o'clock, killed by a bull, and will be buried on Thursday at Pemynydd Church at twelve o'clock."

Then came exclamations of pity, horror, and astonishment. "John Powys! Well, well, druan bach!"¹ And round many a hearth of farm-house and cottage were raked up old tales of former Powyses to

¹ Poor fellow!

the third and fourth generation, always ending with the same remark :

"Well, it is a mercy it did not happen six months ago before he became a member at Beulah," the fact of his having become a communicant at the said chapel being regarded by all as a guarantee of safety in the next world.

Meanwhile, Shân was the self-constituted priestess of the death-chamber, and Mrs. Powys was well pleased with the arrangement. She escorted each fresh visitor through the long passage and into the darkened room, turning down the sheet that covered the dead man's face, and reverently replacing it when the visitors had gazed solemnly for a few minutes; then, accompanying them back to the room in which Mrs. Powys was seated, she placed a chair for them in a row with the other callers, who were ranged round the walls. Each woman sniffed a little, and wiped a tear away with the corner of her best apron, the bettermost farmers' wives unfolding a clean pocket handkerchief for the occasion, and keeping it clasped between their two hands for the rest of the visit, never returning it to their pockets until they were well on their way home, and out of sight of the house. Everyone brought with her or him some substantial proof of sympathy, in the shape of provisions, which were silently placed on the table in front of Mrs. Powys, who returned thanks with as much show of gratitude as if she had been really in need of them.

"Thank you, Mali fach! Oh, Gwen fach, how kind of you! I don't know how to thank you all!" Mrs. Powys kept exclaiming, with her handkerchief to her eyes.

"No need for thanks, ma'm; deeply grieved for you," said Mali, curtseying; "and so thankful that master had joined us at Beulah."

"Oh yes, Mali, it is all right with *him*; but we who are left behind will miss his guiding hand. You see,

my daughter is so young to manage a great place like this."

At this point, a servant brought in Sir Glynne's letter, and there was quite a flutter of excitement while Mrs. Powys hunted about for her glasses to read it.

"It is English, I suppose, or I would offer to read it for you, ma'm," said a young farmer, who had just arrived, carrying a large ox tongue in a basket.

"Oh, English, of course!" assented Mrs. Powys, with a little sniff of pride; and having found her glasses, she began reading it aloud for the edification of the visitors. She made several dire mistakes in the pronunciation of the words, and had but a hazy idea of the purport of the letter, but she read it off glibly to show her familiarity with the English language.

"Very kind of Sir Glynne, druan bach," she concluded, folding up the letter. "Give the man a glass of beer, and tell him the funeral will be on Thursday at twelve o'clock."

The assembled company were much impressed, not only by the friendliness of Sir Glynne Meredith, but also by the ease with which Mrs. Powys had read the letter. They guessed it was a letter of condolence, and were quite unconscious of the mistakes in her pronunciation.

The whole day, even until ten o'clock, the visits of condolence lasted; so that it was not until late at night, when the house had been shut up, and Shân and Catrin Howells had taken their places in the death-chamber to watch beside the dead through the silent hours of night, that Mrs. Powys could find time to read her letter again, and properly spell out its meaning.

"What can he mean," she wondered, "by that? My nephew, Mr. Ieuan Gwyllt Powys! His father's domestic affairs! I don't understand, and Laissabeth can't be here till Tuesday morning. Oh, dear anwl,

what can it mean? Well! I'll keep it to myself till Laissabeth comes, whatever."

Meanwhile, in the chamber of death, Shân and Catrin sat together at one end of the room, while at the other lay the silent figure under its white covering. They spoke in subdued tones, and each sipped a glass of steaming grog which Mrs. Powys had sent in to them.

"Oh! how the wind howls," said Shân; "what a storm is rising." And indeed the storm had come in all its fury; every hour had added to the strength of the wind, and it was now roaring in the chimneys and moaning and whistling in the long passages of the old house.

"Yes, we have not had such a storm since that night, do you remember, when the poor woman came in to Abersethin in the *Aden y don*? I kept her several days at The Ship, and then she came on here and died in the barn, leaving her little boy behind her."

"Oh yes, well I remember the night," responded Shân, looking furtively towards the sofa; "when I wrapped the dear child in my shawl and took him home with me. To look at him now, Catrin, who could believe he was that little child? He and Sir Glynne were on their way to see you to-day when the accident happened."

"Well, they had better come soon," said Catrin, "for I have a strange thing to tell them. *He*, John Powys, confessed to me, about a month ago, that your Ieuan was his own son, born in lawful wedlock, and that that poor woman was his wife."

Shân held up both her hands in astonishment. "Caton pawb! what are you telling me? Ieuan his son! and who was his mother?"

"That I can't tell you, but she was a lady, and a sweet, pretty creature."

"Well, well, well, indeed, indeed, I never heard of such a thing! What will Ieuan say?"

"Well, I don't know what he will say, now that *he* has acknowledged him—and, Shân, do you see what *may* be when Miss Poppet comes home to take possession of her uncle's property?"

"Why, yes, of course; my boy will meet her and, perhaps, take a fancy to her; and I shouldn't like that at all, nor Ianto any more."

"More than that, you simpleton," said Catrin, taking another pinch of snuff; "if he is his son, won't he be his lawful heir, and come in to all his property?"

"Anwl, anwl!" cried Shân, "and is that possible? Well, to be sure, the ways of Providence are wonderful. Catrin fach! do you think these candles will last till dawn?"

They talked on in subdued tones through the long hours of the night, the storm still raging outside, the windows rattling, and the shutters banging; all contrasting strangely with the calm repose of the white figure on the sofa.

Shân's nerves were not so strong as Catrin's, for, as the night progressed, Catrin had several short naps; while Shân, with her arms folded up in her apron, sat stiff and straight, staring at her stockinged feet in the vain endeavour to keep her eyes from roving to the sofa.

Both women had left their wooden shoes in the farm kitchen, as was their custom when entering the best rooms of the house, more especially that in which a dead body lay.

At last, when the candles were burning low in their sockets, and the storm seemed inclined to subside a little, Catrin opened the heavy shutters, and looked out towards the east. Yes! there was the pale dawn looking over the hills, there were the black clouds scudding hurriedly before the wind, and, every moment, the pink flush of sunrise was growing stronger over the grey moor.

"We can go now," said Catrin, snuffing the candles out carefully with her fingers, and opening wide the shutters to let in the light.

They went silently out of the room, locking the door behind them.

In the farm kitchen there was soon a blazing fire beside which, in the large open chimney, they sat down to a comforting breakfast of hot toast and tea.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FUNERAL.

ON the following Thursday all signs of a storm had disappeared, and Nature wore a smiling face. The hedges sparkled with dewdrops; the flowers, and even the birds, seemed fresher for the rain and wind; the sea and sky vied with each other in their tints of blue; and, as the sombre cortège of the funeral train passed out from the gates of Maen Powys, and across the moor, nothing could have seemed more out of keeping with the environment. Behind the hearse, with its nodding plumes, came a mourning carriage, in which sat Elizabeth and her mother, immediately followed by another with Ieuan and Sir Glynne Meredith.

"Better so, Ieuan, than make any fuss," said Sir Glynne, when the cortège started. "I had no idea Elizabeth would be down to the funeral."

"Nor I," said Ieuan. "I never thought of it." And he fell into a brown study. Was he going to work Elizabeth an injury? She evidently considered herself next of kin to John Powys, and expected to inherit his money. Was he to be the cause of disappointment to her? The thought was embarrassing, even painful.

Following them came carriages, closed and open, by the dozen, ranging from Colonel Gwyther's handsome brougham to the red and blue painted cart of the Welsh farm-yard. After the vehicles followed an indiscriminate crowd of people, forming a long, straggling train nearly half a mile in length. The moor

was black with people, who gathered from every hill-side and valley, from every farm-house and cottage, to swell the procession. Down one hill it went, and slowly up another, until it reached Pemynydd churchyard, where all that was mortal of John Powys was laid to rest in the gloomy vault in which so many of his forefathers reposed.

Mrs. Powys sobbed when the coffin was lowered into the vault, and Elizabeth held a deeply-bordered handkerchief to her eyes ; while to Ieuan's mind returned the memory of that long, last, earnest look fixed upon him by the dying man on the moor ; and, when the coffin went out of sight, he was conscious only of repeating in his heart, "Forgiven, father, fully, as I hope to be forgiven ;" and, amongst all those assembled round the vault, there was not one who felt more kindly towards John Powys than did the son he had neglected.

Meanwhile, at Maen Powys there had been great preparations for the dinner that was to follow the return of the mourners from the funeral. Mary, the head servant, had surpassed herself in the cooking of geese and fowls, while Shân—always called in to help upon any unusual occasion, whether of joy or sorrow—confined her attention to the boiling of legs of mutton and ox tongues.

Sir Glynne offered his arm to Mrs. Powys, and Ieuan found himself following with Laissabeth into the sombre dining-room, where the tables were already groaning under the weight of the dishes.

Mr. Gwynne Edwards, the lawyer from Caer Madoc, was present at the table, at one end of which Sir Glynne Meredith, as the chief guest, had been asked to preside. He was now busy carving a large goose. Mr. Edwards, bowing gravely towards Ieuan, addressed him across the table.

"You should have saved your uncle that trouble, and sat at the head of the table," he said meaningly ; "but I see you are looking after Miss Powys ; that's

right, that's right. You received my note last night?"

"Yes," responded Ieuan; "or I should have gone straight home from the funeral."

"I should have been vexed if you had done that," put in Elizabeth, bending her eyes upon her plate. "I hope you will stay a day or two, at least. I am sure I shall be glad of your advice."

"Oh, if I can be of any use," stammered Ieuan, looking, as he felt, confused.

It was quite late in the afternoon when the guests left the house. A few distant cousins remained to hear the reading of the will, "just out of curiosity," they said; "not that they expected anything"; and Mr. Gwynne Edwards requested the assembled relatives to follow him into the study.

"I daresay," he said, when they had ranged themselves round the table, "that most of you are aware that for many years I have been Mr. John Powys' legal adviser. Perhaps it will not surprise you, therefore, to hear that, a short time ago, he instructed me to draw his will. I did so, and that will I have here," tapping his finger on the document. "Its contents will surprise you all, as it did me; but I hope you will be able also to rejoice with me that, before he died, my old friend, John Powys, was strengthened to do his duty, and to right a wrong that had too long continued."

"Perhaps," Sir Glynne interposed, "since I am not a relative, you would prefer my retiring?"

"By no means," replied Mr. Edwards. "Although not a relative, and not inheriting anything under the will, you will be much interested and gratified with its contents."

"I don't understand what all this is about," observed Mrs. Powys, drying her sharp, red nose with her deep, black-edged kerchief. "My poor brother-in-law had no one but my daughter, Laissabeth, to leave his money to; and I don't see what anybody else has got

to do with the matter," and she cast a scornful glance at Sir Glynne and Ieuan, leaving the two distant cousins quite unnoticed.

Mr. Edwards tapped once more on the document, which he slowly opened.

"A few moments will show, madam." And he began to read the will. After perusing the usual opening formula, he proceeded :

"I give and bequeath the whole of my real estate of Maen Powys, with its lands, tenements, and hereditaments in fee simple to my son, Ieuan Gwyllt Powys (whom I here acknowledge and declare to be my legitimate son by Mary Meredith, the only daughter of Robert Meredith of Berthlwyd, she being my lawful wife), and I also desire to express my deep contrition for the manner in which I have treated my said wife, and also for my neglect of, and cruelty to, my son, Ieuan Gwyllt Powys. I also give and bequeath to my son, Ieuan Gwyllt Powys, the whole of my personal estate, consisting of the sum of £35,000, now lying in the 3% Consols, bringing in an income of £1,000 per annum, conditional upon the marriage of my said son, Ieuan Gwyllt Powys, with his cousin, Elizabeth Powys, my niece (being given to understand that such marriage is the wish of the young people).

"If either my son, Ieuan Gwyllt Powys, or my niece, Elizabeth Powys, should object to the marriage, my son, Ieuan Gwyllt Powys, is to give out of such personalty the sum of £500 per annum to my niece, Elizabeth Powys.

"Signed, JOHN POWYS."

It was attested in the usual way.

When the last word had been read, and Mr. Edwards was slowly folding up the will again, Mrs. Powys' angry feelings could no longer be controlled.

"Disgraceful ! I call it, and I won't believe it, and I don't consider that you, Mr. Edwards, have acted the part of an honourable—"

"Oh, hush, mother," exclaimed Laissabeth, who, though bewildered and disappointed beyond expression, was still calm enough and shrewd enough to see that her best policy lay in conciliation ; in spite of the frustration of her hopes, there was a delightful suggestion in the wording of the will, that, if realised, would fulfil her most ardent aspirations.

As for Ieuan, his embarrassment was equalled only by his regret at being the cause of disquietude to Elizabeth ; and, had it been possible, he would, with the impetuous generosity of youth, have there and then resigned his rights to her ; but, fortunately, Sir Glynne was present, and, between his plain, common sense, and Mr. Edwards' legal advice, Ieuan was persuaded to accept the situation—at all events, for the present—insisting only that Elizabeth should receive her income from the date of her uncle's death. This would in some measure relieve the awkwardness of the situation ; to marry Elizabeth Powys ! this thought had never seriously entered his head ; he admired her, he had flirted with her, perhaps ; but marry her ! it would require much thought ; and would she marry him ? Of this Ieuan was very doubtful. He knew that Mr. Camperton was deeply in love with her, and he was by no means sure that Elizabeth did not reciprocate the feeling. Well ! it must be all thought out carefully, but not now, while Mr. Edwards was busily gathering up his papers, and Mrs. Powys was indignantly leaving the room ; while the two distant cousins, disappointed, though they would not confess it, were following her across the passage ; not now, while Elizabeth was blushing, offering her hand to bid good-bye. It must be confessed that both the young people looked, as they felt, exceedingly uncomfortable, and the two elder men sympathised with their embarrassment.

"You need not look so distressed, Mr. Powys; I think your father's will is both just and generous." This from Mr. Edwards.

"I feel as if I had defrauded my cousin of her rightful expectations," said Ieuan, with a flushed face, "and, although I am thankful to have my dear mother's name relieved from calumny, and my own birth from stain, I could wish it had been done without injury to my cousin."

"That means that you do not intend to carry out your father's evident wishes with regard to your marriage with her?"

"I have no reason to think that Miss Powys would ever consent to such a thing, and I certainly have never seriously contemplated it myself; in spite of our little talk upon the subject once, uncle—"

"Ah! I remember," said Sir Glynne. "Well, we will leave these matters for the present. I have now only to request you, Mr. Edwards, in looking over my brother-in-law's papers, to search for the certificate of his marriage with my dear sister; that would set everything right."

"His own statement in his will has already placed that question beyond a legal doubt, but I will certainly attend to your request. And now good-bye, Mr. Powys; you quite understand that you are master here, and can make any arrangements you choose, with regard to living here yourself, or letting Miss Powys remain for the present."

"Oh, I will never turn her out," said Ieuan, "and I hope you, sir, will use your influence to induce Mrs. Powys to make this her home, at least for the present."

"That is a very good arrangement," said Sir Glynne, while he and Ieuan were driving home together; "you will continue to live with us, Ieuan; you will not desert us?"

"No indeed! I owe everything to you, uncle, and, so long as you wish me to remain with you, it will be my happiness to do so."

"Well, until you marry," agreed Sir Glynne.

Ieuan shrugged his shoulders with a comical smile.

"Then," continued Sir Glynne, "I hope you will settle down at Maen Powys, and make your name honoured and respected in the country."

Lady Meredith's astonishment was great, when she heard of the wording of John Powys' will.

"How delightful, my dear boy! I congratulate you; what a happy ending to all the years of anxiety you have had on the subject of your birth and parentage! Poor old John Powys! I always said he was a good man."

Sir Glynne smiled mischievously.

"Yes, poor man," said Ieuan, "I shall never forget his last look at me."

The time slipped quickly by after John Powys' funeral. Shân and Ianto saw a great deal of their boy, and seemed to grow young again, while laughing at his jokes, and listening to his tales of London, of Rome, and, most wonderful of all, of the mountains always covered with snow.

"Caton pawb!" cried Shân, "Howyr bach!" chimed in Ianto; and then they would have their simple, though plentiful, supper of milk porridge and delicious brown bread and butter; after which the two old people would accompany Ieuan on his way home to the Hall, turning back where the moor merged into the roadway, and returning, arm in arm, in the broad moonlight to their cottage, where they finished the day with one of their old Welsh hymns.

Elizabeth had been obliged to return to London to keep a concert engagement; and Mrs. Powys, thinking 'discretion the better part of valour,' had dropped her tone of indignation, and did all in her power to make things comfortable for Ieuan, hoping that he would follow the suggestion of John Powys' will, and that she should yet see her daughter mistress of Maen Powys.

Sir Glynne and Ieuan returned to London after a

month's stay in Wales ; but, before they left, they paid frequent visits to old Catrin and Dan Howells.

"Well, it is just as it should be, and just as I knew it would be," said Catrin, on one of these occasions, "after I had that conversation with him about a month ago. Howyr bach ! he changed completely from the day Dr. Bevan told him he could not live a year ! He had some bad illness in his inside ; at first they say it made him more bad tempered than ever ; but, oh, anwl ! when it comes to the last fight, death is the master ; anyway, a month ago he was as meek as a lamb, and told me of his own accord that Ieuan was his son ; but he never told me that Miss Mary Meredith, whom we all thought had died in London, was his wife, and the mother of his child. He told me to tell Shân and Ianto when he was dead, and I did ; but I never told anyone else. Caton pawb ! if Catrin Howells were to begin to tell all the secrets entrusted to her, Abersethin would be turned topsy-turvy !"

"Yes, it has all ended well," agreed Sir Glynne ; "and now the only thing is that the certificate of her marriage has never been found ; it makes no real difference, but it would be a satisfaction to me to know where they were married."

Here Dan seemed to be seized with a fit ; he chuckled so continuously, that at last he seemed to lose his wheezy breath in laughter. Catrin rose and thumped him on the back.

"What's the matter with the man ? Now, don't you go away, sir, with the impression he is a born idiot, for, in spite of his funny ways," here she gave him another thump, "he is the cutest man in Abersethin."

At this juncture Dan had another fit ; and next he did a most unheard of thing, *he took off his hat*, exhibiting to view a bald head no inhabitant of Abersethin had ever seen.

Catrin gasped.

"What's the man doing now ?"

"It's the very identical hat you used to wear when I was a boy, Dan," said Ieuan.

"Yes, and I do believe when I was a boy, too," added his uncle.

"No," said Dan seriously, and looking sideways up from his chest, on which his chin still rested; "'twas my best hat then. I took it for every day about ten years ago, and I took this," fumbling inside the crown, "from the lining of my old hat; there!"

And he placed a small slip of yellow faded paper on the table; then subsided, with another chuckle, into his usual state of silence. It was only by grunting answers to Catrin's questions that the history of the paper was got out of him. Sir Glynne, rather disliking its greasy look, handed it to Ieuan, who, spreading it out, read it aloud.

It was the certificate of the marriage of John Powys to Mary Meredith, at a small church in the neighbourhood of Carnarvon, where John Powys had spent much of his time before his father's death.

"Where did you get this, you chuckling fool?" asked Catrin, forgetting her late description of her husband.

"Ah!" replied Dan, with a knowing wink.

"You took it from the lining of your old hat," said Ieuan.

"Yes," grunted Dan.

"How long had it been in your other hat?"

"Since the storm."

"What storm, man?" from Catrin.

"When the woman came."

"What woman?"

Dan screwed his eye round again to look at Ieuan, and with a nod, replied:

"Your mother."

"Did she give it to you?" asked Catrin again.

"No; it stuck to my glass, and I put it in my hat."

"And thou hast kept it all these years from me?"

Dan chuckled.

"Didn't I tell you he was cute?" said Catrin.

"Blessed old hat!" said Ieuan. "I have often thought of it, but never dreamt it contained anything so precious; except your head, of course, Dan."

Here the old man went into such spasms of laughter that he nearly lost his breath, and was once more silent.

"Well! this is a find," said Ieuan. "I suppose we may have it, Dan?"

When he and Sir Glynne were preparing to go, Dan seemed to be bursting with a strong desire to say something; his whole frame shook, and, after opening his mouth two or three times in vain, he burst out with:

"You couldn't have got your property without my help;" and not a word more did he say that day.

"Well done, Dan," cried Sir Glynne, heartily clapping him on the back; "you have done a grand thing, my man. Kept this all these years, and brought it out just at the right time."

But Dan was asleep.

"It would be cruel," said Sir Glynne, when they emerged into the sunshine outside, "to suggest that, if he had brought it out sooner, it would have been of more use. Think what a difference it would have made, Ieuan."

"Never mind, uncle; 'let bygones be bygones,' and 'all's well that ends well,' and lots of other proverbs to the same effect; and I never could wish my past to be different from what it has been; but, as for my future, it seems a perfect maze."

"H'm!" said Sir Glynne, "not much to grumble at, I think. I have once or twice interfered with your plans and intentions, Ieuan, but, henceforth, I shall leave you to yourself entirely; I have perfect trust in your good sense. My only and last advice is, don't be in a hurry."

Before they left the neighbourhood, Mary Meredith's

remains were removed from the corner of the church-yard, where they had hitherto lain in a pauper's grave, and placed beside her father and mother, her name being added to the simple cross that marked their resting-place.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DINNER PARTY.

MIFANWY and Mrs. Roose had been out shopping, and were returning home tired out with the questionable pleasures of choosing silks and laces and fallals generally. They were walking leisurely along, when an open carriage, drawn by a pair of handsome bays, drove past them briskly, but not before Mifanwy had recognised the occupants, Lady Meredith and Elizabeth, accompanied by Ieuan, who at the moment was laughing heartily at some remark of his young companion's. A pang of jealousy shot through Mifanwy's heart, and for the remainder of the way she was silent and pre-occupied. She still felt sure that she could win back Ieuan from Elizabeth; but, to tell the truth, he did not hold so high a place in her esteem as when her faith in his constancy had been unshaken. She knew that, as *La Belle Russe*, the admired and flattered favourite of the public, she could win him back; but his forgetfulness of Mifanwy the shepherdess wounded her spirit, and took the flavour out of her life. Before she reached her own door, she had determined no longer to shun Ieuan; and Rhys Morgan was pleased and surprised at the willingness with which she acceded to his request that Lady Meredith might call upon her; he was still further pleased, a few days later, on receiving an invitation to meet *La Belle Russe* at dinner at Marbrook Gardens.

"That's right," he said, patting his protégée on the shoulder; "and you are going to be a wise girl now,

and have no more mysteries." Mifanwy blushed rather guiltily.

"Have patience with me still, master; for now I really have a little plan, as you once called it; let me sit on this footstool, where you can't see my face, and I will confess to you all I have in my mind."

And then she told him of her determination to make Ieuan's acquaintance as *La Belle Russe*, and so to influence him, and remind him of the past, that his better nature would be awakened, and he would return to his allegiance to the shepherd girl, whom he seemed to have forgotten. Rhys Morgan looked serious.

"Remember, my child, what strength of mind and character you require. For a man in his position to marry a shepherdess, barefooted and tattered, would, without doubt, be a great sacrifice."

"But," urged Mifanwy, "a man in his position, or any position, should be faithful to his promise. 'Onnore requires it,' as Ianto used to say; let him, at least, seek her out, and if he finds her unworthy of him, he is not bound morally by his promise."

"H'm!" said Rhys Morgan contemplatively, "I am afraid you are entering upon a path of thorns, my child, which will end by piercing you to the heart."

"But, if I succeed, master," disputed Mifanwy, looking up into his face, "what will you say to me?"

"I shall say you have even more power over the hearts of men and women than I thought you had."

"But you will help me, master, by keeping my secret still?"

"So far as I can, child."

And when the appointed evening came, and he saw Mifanwy enter the drawing-room at Marbrook Gardens, he felt how difficult a task she had imposed upon herself and him. She was dressed in pure white of some soft gauzy material gathered high to the throat; a bunch of crimson carnations was fastened at her neck, and she wore no ornaments ex-

cept a necklet of gold with a very handsome pendant set with emeralds, a present from M. Valpré, that she valued very much. Her brown-black hair was simply drawn back above her ears, and fastened in heavy coils behind her head; her melting brown eyes, fringed with the long eyelashes, looked darker and softer even than usual, and heightened the impression of her foreign extraction. Her soft white complexion was redeemed from paleness by the small red mouth; yes, no doubt she was a beautiful woman, but though not unconscious of her beauty (what woman is?), she was wholly free from vanity and its attendant follies. Reality and simplicity ruled her life, so far as the restraints of society and a professional career allowed.

"I am so sorry," said Lady Meredith, at dinner, "that my nephew has not arrived; he returns from Scotland to-day, and was to have been here in the afternoon. I cannot think what has detained him."

Mifanwy had, of course, noted his absence, and begun to wonder whether Fate would persistently delay their meeting. After dinner in the drawing-room, she sank into the depths of a luxurious armchair, and listened with interest while Sir Glynne and Rhys Morgan discussed Welsh politics, and Lady Meredith and Mrs. Roose the important question of Tricot stitch! She was silent and pre-occupied, when the door opened and admitted Ieuan. He passed behind Lady Meredith's chair, and stooping over her, kissed her forehead.

"Ieuan, my dear boy, I am glad you have come."

"Hullo, Ieuan," cried Sir Glynne, "better late than never; come and be introduced to Miss Roose."

Ieuan bowed low, and Mifanwy returned his greeting. Rhys Morgan watched her anxiously; it required a strong curb upon her feelings to enable her to go through the ordeal without flinching; she felt certain that one look of recognition in her eyes would awaken at once Ieuan's sleeping memory; but she kept a tight grasp upon herself, and bowing calmly,

though not coldly, she entered naturally into conversation with him.

"I was detained by an accident to the train before mine," he explained. "I have managed your business all right for you, uncle. I will just tell you so much to relieve your mind. It is a long tiring journey from Edinburgh; have you ever been that way?" turning to Mifanwy.

"Never," she answered; "I have travelled very little; I hope to go there some time; I am reading Sir Walter Scott's novels for the first time, and am longing to see Scotland."

"I envy you," said Ieuan, "both your first reading of Sir Walter and your first view of Edinburgh."

"You have travelled a great deal, perhaps," she said.

"Well, a good deal. I haven't been to Australia, or to China, or to the Arctic regions; so I can't be considered a great traveller now-a-days."

Mifanwy smiled.

"It is a great privilege to be able to see the world for yourself; I can only dream of it; perhaps my dreams would be spoiled were I to see realities."

"In some cases, certainly," said Ieuan, and then he was silent.

What was this strange influence that was stealing over him once more? Why did this woman's presence awake within him the sense of disquietude? The marvellous depths of her brown eyes enchained him, her voice was soft and low, and yet it awoke within him a feeling of restless discontent.

Lady Meredith joining the group, he endeavoured to interest himself in what she was saying, and to withdraw himself from the subtle influence of La Belle Russe. But it was useless: every graceful movement, every tone of her voice, even the folds of her soft drapery, seemed to cast a spell over him, and, helpless as a moth about a candle, he could not resist the charm of her personality.

"I asked Elizabeth to dine with us to-night," said Lady Meredith, "but she had an engagement; she was going to a concert. I wonder she does not give up singing professionally, now that she is so well provided for."

"Yes, I have said the same thing to her," said Ieuan; "but she tells me that she has engagements for another year."

"And besides," put in Rhys Morgan, "now that she has tasted the sweets of public praise and flattery, I doubt whether Miss Powys will ever be happy without them."

Ieuan was silent, and looked thoughtful.

"Oh, I don't think she is so wrapt up in her public life," he said excusingly; "what do you think, Miss Russe? You must know more of its seductions and delights than almost anyone."

"Well, it has a certain charm," replied La Belle; "and it grows upon one; but I think it lies less in the flattery and admiration of the public than in the feeling of power and influence it gives you over your fellow-creatures, the communion it brings about between soul and soul. You can convey through music what you could not say in words; I think that is its charm to me; but I could abandon public life without regret, if I might keep my voice, and still sing to my own friends, and in my own home."

"But surely you can do that now?"

"Very soon I shall be able to; but I cannot afford it yet. What lovely flowers," she said, pointing to some in a vase beside her.

"Yes, I fancy they came from Wales; we often have them sent up."

"Dear things!" she murmured, drawing them nearer, and picturing the woods and hills around Glanarvon.

"Carnations are your favourite flowers, I think," said Ieuan.

"Why do you think so?"

"You are wearing them."

"So are you," she answered, with a mischievous smile, and pointing to his buttonhole.

"Yes, it has been my favourite lately ; ever since the beginning of May, when you dropped one and I picked it up."

La Belle blushed, but she took no further notice of the remark. "I am very fond of them," she said, "but I do not like to say I have a favourite amongst flowers. If I say I prefer a rose, I instantly remember the beauties of the lily, and, if I say a cowslip is my favourite flower, a pale primrose rises up and looks reproachfully at me. If I were to tell you my real reason for wearing carnations, you would laugh at me."

"I am sure I should not—do tell me."

"Well, I wear them because they are—they are—becoming."

"There is no doubt of that," looking admiringly at the bunch under her chin.

"Not that I don't love them for themselves, sweet darlings, I do," she said, bending her head so that her cheek rested lovingly upon them.

"What a simple girl she is," thought Ieuan, "how different from Elizabeth, with her mincing ways and palpable mannerisms ; and yet how charming in her simplicity !"

Rhys Morgan here approached them. "Lady Meredith does not like to ask you to sing, Miss Russe ; but I tell her you are always ready, and will be delighted. Am I right or wrong ?"

"Oh, right, indeed ! I will sing with pleasure."

"Here is my portfolio," he went on ; "will you choose something from it ?"

And once more, after several years, Mifanwy's head and Ieuan's bent side by side over the same engrossing object.

"What is this ?" he asked, choosing a song, "The Enchantress."

"Oh, yes, my favourite song ; I will sing that."

"It seems to be your own ; here is your name, Belle Russe."

"Yes, it is mine ; Mr. Rhys Morgan often plays my songs for me, and has many of them in his keeping."

And she sang the song she loved so much, pouring into it the fulness of her heart. They listened breathlessly, while "The Enchantress" wove her spells, and sang of cloud and tempest and riven sails ; then, suddenly changing into soft, melting tones, the siren, addressing her human lover, went on,

"But for thee, no storms shall be,
But a calm on earth and sea.
Gentle rivers, teeming mines,
Golden harvests, fragrant vines,
And a sunlight bland and warm,
And a moon of dreamy charm,
For, believe me, love like ours
Is the power of magic powers !"

"Oh ! what a privilege to be able to sing like that ! No wonder you have delighted and maddened the crowd !" exclaimed Sir Glynne. "No wonder La Belle Russe is their idol !"

Ieuan had been standing by the piano, with arms folded, looking earnestly at the singer ; her tones entranced him as they did the others ; but it was inexplicable to him, this tumult of feeling that her voice raised in him. The wash of the sea seemed to be really in his ears ; a vision of the cliffs, and the sheep, and the rugged paths, where a boy and girl stood close together, rose up before him. Yes ! and the very sound of his own long forgotten words, "I will return to thee, lass ! I have ever known me break a promise ?"

"It is a beautiful song," said Ieuan, when her voice had died away.

"Yes," she said ; "and it carries me away. Did



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you like it?" looking down with a little flush on her face.

"Like it! That isn't the word," cried Ieuan earnestly. "It enchained me; it entranced me; it carried me back to the days of my childhood: to the sea, to the cliffs, and to the sweet west wind."

"My song was scarcely of that," she said, with a pleased smile.

"That is the strange part of it," he replied. "Your song was of the torn sail and the thunder cloud; my thoughts were of a different scene."

"So were mine," she answered.

"Happy man!" thought Ieuan.

"What do you think of Miss Powys' singing?" asked Sir Glynne.

"She has a beautiful voice," replied La Belle, "and her trills in that bird song are marvellous, I think."

"I wish she could have been here this evening," said Lady Meredith. "She has not many evenings to spare, and this evening, I know, she could not come."

"And you, too, dear," put in Mrs. Roose, "have a busy day before you to-morrow."

"Yes, a lovely day!" replied La Belle; "singing in the morning, singing in the afternoon, and singing in the evening!"

Rhys Morgan shook his head reprovingly.

"Oh, that comes only once in a way," she laughed; "but I thoroughly enjoy it when it does."

When the good-byes had been said, and Mrs. Roose and La Belle had departed, cloaked and hooded, Ieuan returned from the hall door in time to hear Lady Meredith's remarks upon the visitor.

"What a strange girl! She seems the very embodiment of music! Ieuan, you don't say anything! Isn't she lovely? Wasn't her singing delicious?"

"Yes, aunt, all that you say."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A MORNING RIDE.

A DAY or two afterwards, when Mrs. Roose and Mifanwy were alone, the door opened, and Tom Pomfrey entered unannounced. He dropped in so often that he had come to be looked upon by Bessie as an habitu  of the house.

Mifanwy threw her work away, and rushed to meet him. "Oh, Tom, I am so glad! Have you brought Sultan?"

"Not to-day. I left him comfortably munching his oats."

"But I am longing to see him, and you too, Tom, indeed!"

"Oh, yes," said Tom, "I am quite aware that I come after Sultan; but I wanted to talk to you about him."

"There is nothing wrong with him, I hope."

"Nothing. Wrong, indeed! No, he is quite fit. I would have ridden him to-day, but that Bill could not be spared to hold him."

Here Mrs. Roose was called away on some domestic matter. Tom was restless, and seemed to have lost his usual placidity.

"What is the matter?" asked Mifanwy. "I know there is something on your mind you want to tell me."

"Er—er—well, just this, Mifanwy: I don't think you have been looking well lately."

"Oh, I am quite well," she answered, interrupting him.

"Well, I fancied," continued Tom, "that you were not, and I thought I would ask you whether a ride every day would not be good for you."

"A ride!" she cried, and she clapped her hands. "Oh, Tom, how delightful, but—"

"But what?"

"Oh, heaps of buts. First but, I have no riding-habit; second but, I have no time; and third but, I have no one to ride with me."

"But," said Tom, smiling, "you can buy a riding-habit; and you can surely spare one hour in the day. Your third but is the most difficult to answer; but again—surely amongst all your grand acquaintances there must be many a man who would be proud to ride with you."

"Yes," said Mifanwy, looking down contemplatively, with her finger to her chin; "but I could not ask them; and to tell you the truth, Tom, I don't like them. Certainly Miss Majoribanks asked me one day to ride with her and her brother, but I declined, having no horse and no habit."

"No horse! You know you have Sultan, the finest horse in London, always at your command, and that is exactly what I wanted to speak to you about. Mifanwy," he went on, laying his hand on her soft grey dress, not daring to touch her hand, "you know how it is with me. Don't be frightened, I am not going to say a word more about my love, but I beseech you to let me have the only happiness possible for me while I live."

"And what is that, Tom?" she said, looking down, distressed.

"Let me have the happiness of doing all I can for you. Do not refuse me anything I may offer you; and if you ever think I am making a sacrifice for you, call to mind that it is my greatest happiness."

"Oh, Tom, it makes me very unhappy to think that I am the continual cause of sorrow to you, who have been so good to me, and whom I love as if you were

my own brother. Yes, indeed, indeed, I feel that the time can never come when I should be content to lose you out of my life ; and yet—and yet I must cause you pain."

"That cannot be helped ; it is beyond your control and mine ; things are just so with me, and can never be altered ; but I do feel a great pleasure in doing anything for you. So, now, get your riding-habit at once, and on Monday I will send Sultan to take you for a ride."

"But, I cannot ride alone. Now, if *you* would come with me."

His face flushed. "Will you have me with you, Mifanwy ? Think well, La Belle Russe escorted by Tom Pomfrey the circus man !"

"No ; Mifanwy accompanied by her best friend and brother."

Tom straightened himself, and said, "Well, so be it ; but only once, or until you have found somebody else to ride with. Here comes Mrs. Roose ; let us see what she will say to it."

That good lady, though fully alive to the benefit her charge would reap from a daily ride, hesitated a moment when she learned that the girl would be accompanied by Tom. He saw her hesitation, and guessed the cause of it at once.

"You think, Mrs. Roose, that, amongst all her acquaintances, she might find a better escort than Tom Pomfrey. I quite agree with you, and so as soon as you have arranged for another escort for her, I will retire ; meanwhile, nobody need know who I am ; and I think my appearance is not so different from other people's as to attract attention."

"Well, I don't want to make you vain," smiled Mrs. Roose, "but I think there are few better-looking men in the Park than you, and I am certain there will be no better rider."

"Oh, that goes without saying for us both, Mifanwy, doesn't it ?"

"Yes, indeed ! and, oh, to think I shall ride dear old Sultan again."

"Monday at twelve, then," concluded Tom, "and don't forget the riding-habit."

On Monday the sun shone out bravely, the air was as crisp and clear as London chimneys would allow. Mifanwy stood before Mrs. Roose, exhibiting herself in her new riding-habit, whip, gloves, and bowler hat complete.

"Well, you do look nice," said Mrs. Roose, putting on her glasses; "fits splendidly, my dear; not a crease or a wrinkle."

"Oh here is Tom at the door, and here comes Sultan led by Bill; "doesn't he look lovely, Mrs. Roose?"

"Yes, he is a beauty, and so is Mr. Pomfrey's bay."

"Ready, Mifanwy?" inquired Tom, opening the door.

"Yes, quite." And she ran down the stairs before him.

Sultan arched his glossy neck, and when Mifanwy kissed his forehead, and spoke a few soft words close to his nostrils, he neighed with pleasure, and pawed the ground impatiently. She sprang lightly into the saddle, and they turned their horses' heads towards the Park, Sultan positively dancing up the street, until his mistress patted his neck, and said, "Quiet, Sultan, quiet ! these curvettes and caracoles don't suit the London streets, old boy. We must both be sober and proper here. Oh, but if I once had you on the hills in Wales, wouldn't we have a flying gallop ! But, Tom, what a lovely saddle and bridle. I don't remember these at the circus."

"No, they are my present to you, Mifanwy."

"Oh, you are too kind to me."

"Remember our compact; and here we are in Rotten Row. Now let us have a canter."

And off they went, as handsome a pair as ever rode over its well-kept course. Many an admiring glance

was cast after them, as they cantered on ; especially at La Belle, who managed her spirited horse with such ease and gracefulness. She was recognised by many people.

"La Belle Russe ! I have never seen her ride before."

"What a magnificent horse, and how well she manages him ! And who is that handsome man with her ? " etc., etc.

"A lovely day," said Tom, when they stopped after their canter ; "as if it were made for your first ride, Mifanwy. Are you enjoying it ? "

"Oh, intensely ; you *have* given me a pleasure ; and this beautiful saddle and bridle. How shall I thank you properly ? "

"By using them every day."

At this moment two gentlemen were seen approaching, and Mifanwy recognised Sir Glynne Meredith and Ieuan. Both raised their hats, and she felt her face flush and her heart beat faster.

"How many people seem to know you !" said Tom. "Who were those two now ? "

"Sir Glynne Meredith and Mr. Ieuan Powys, his nephew."

Tom was silent for a moment, and when he spoke again, his face had altered visibly. "You have met him, then ? "

"Yes ; he knows me a little as La Belle Russe, but not as Mifanwy."

"Do you mean to say he has not recognised you ? " asked Tom, a little scorn in his voice.

"No."

"Well, you certainly are totally different from the little 'brown bird' we first knew, but I think I should have known you anywhere, and under any disguise."

Mifanwy both looked and felt embarrassed ; she could not explain to him the plan she had laid out for herself, to win Ieuan back to his former allegiance, so

she said nothing, and they rode on in silence, and presently out of the gates and homewards; Tom with a little fresh aching in his heart, Mifanwy with a fresh glow in hers, for she had seen Ieuan; she had seen a light in his eyes at the sight of her; and this had been the cause of her heightened colour, and the flutter at her heart.

"Who was that with La Belle Russe?" inquired Sir Glynne of Ieuan. "How beautifully she rides!"

"Yes," said Ieuan, "and what a magnificent horse she rode! A thoroughbred Arab, I should think."

"And her friend was well mounted too," returned Sir Glynne. "They seemed to be on very intimate terms."

"Yes," assented Ieuan sulkily, and he added under his breath, "Confound the fellow!" And then, by the association of ideas, he remembered the words of her song:

"But for thee my hair shall braided be."

"Was it for him, I wonder? Was this the happy man of whom she was thinking when she sang that song?"

The next day was dark and wet, so there was no ride for La Belle, but Miss Majoribanks and her brother came to call. Nothing less than a thunder-storm would have kept her at home if she had arranged to go out. She lived with her brother, Colonel Majoribanks, and was governed by one idea, *viz.*, that before all men and things, he was to be considered.

"You will come and dine with us on Monday, I hope; my brother would like it so much, you know. I wish I had got that grey silk instead of the green; my brother would have liked it so much. Of course, I am glad, for the sake of the country, that there is to be no war after all; but, personally, I was hoping the Government would have been firm, and that we should fight out the question; my brother would have liked it so much."

And now she was calling upon Mifanwy to follow up her previous proposal that she should ride with them.

"I saw you yesterday, my dear, and that you had got over the difficulty of the horse and the riding-habit, or I wouldn't have proposed it again. My brother would like it so much, you know; wouldn't you, Sam dear?"

"Oh, certainly; should be delighted to have the honour of escorting you, Miss Roose."

For Colonel Majoribanks had one fixed idea too, and that was that his sister was always right; accordingly he invariably assented to her plans; it saved him the trouble of arranging for himself.

"Well," replied La Belle, "now that I have both horse and riding-habit, I will come with pleasure."

"What a lovely horse you had; everybody is talking about him. Is he your own?"

"Yes, my very own; given to me by a very dear friend, who is keeping him for me at present."

"How nice," remarked Miss Majoribanks, who never hesitated to inquire into the minutiae of her friends' private concerns. "And you only hire the brougham, I am told."

"Yes, it is always at my disposal."

"And how much wiser," joined in the colonel; "for a lady living alone, it saves so much trouble."

And so it was arranged between them that every day at twelve o'clock they should call for La Belle, when the weather would permit.

In the afternoon of the day after Miss Majoribank's visit, Tom Pomfrey appeared.

He had come, he said, to see how Mifanwy felt after her ride, and also about something else.

Mifanwy looked embarrassed and unhappy, and Tom, with the sensitiveness of true love, quickly divined the cause of her discomfort.

"Have you found anyone to ride with you, Mifanwy? for I fear my father would grumble if I were away every day at noon."

"Ah! dear friend," she answered, laying her small hand on his, "I see through your kind subterfuge; is there anyone like you, Tom, so loving, so true, and so unselfish?"

"Oh, lots, Mifanwy, lots. I hope, for your sake, there is *one*, at all events;" and he turned laughingly to Mrs. Roose. "Come to my help, Mrs. Roose; she is loading me with compliments, and utterly spoiling me with flattery. I am glad to hear you have found an escort for her daily rides; it would be a pity to leave them off; and there is Sultan eating his head off in the stable; you know it would be a kindness to give him a little exercise."

"Colonel Majoribanks and his sister called yesterday and arranged it all, Tom; but I do hope you are not going to cut me altogether; you will ride with me again one day?"

"Oh, one day," he replied jauntily; "when things are going more smoothly, and when my father is in a better humour; but good-bye now; I am very busy to-day."

He held out his hand, Mifanwy grasped it in both her own, and, with a lingering look into his eyes, said slowly and sorrowfully, "Good-bye, dear old Tom; I thank you for everything."

Tom pressed her hand in return. "Good-bye, dear, I understand it all; don't trouble to explain anything to Tom Pomfrey." And he took a hurried and rather boisterous departure to hide his feelings, which, in truth, required his strongest efforts to control.

Next day saw Mifanwy again taking her morning ride in the Park, accompanied by Miss Majoribanks and her brother. It was not long before they saw Ieuan riding alone; he recognised them at once, and joined their party; and thus it came about that Mifanwy and he frequently met in their daily rides, and to Ieuan at least it was an hour of unalloyed delight.

"What a beauty Sultan is," he said one day when

they were riding together, having left Miss Majoribanks and her brother with some of their numerous acquaintances; "he is the admiration of everybody, and I notice that he seems to understand every tone of your voice."

"Yes," agreed La Belle pensively, for she was thinking of Tom, "we have been friends for years, Sultan and I! and we understand each other; don't we, old boy? and you should see how delighted he is when I put my arm round his neck and kiss his forehead."

"No wonder," he said.

La Belle laughed merrily, and Ieuan gazed distractedly at the little dimple on her chin the fresh young laugh brought out. But the girl became suddenly serious.

"Do you think it possible," she asked gravely, "that there can be any subtle understanding between a human being and a dumb animal? I am almost certain that when I touch Sultan, or ride him, he understands my feelings; when I am happy he prances and tosses his head, and dances along with joy; and, when I am sad, he walks along so soberly and dejectedly; I have even seen him tremble once when I was sobbing."

"I can quite believe it," agreed Ieuan; "but that opens up quite a new train of thought to me. I do not like to hear that you are ever sad, but to think of your sobbing is real pain to me."

"Oh, that was a long time ago. I ought not to have alluded to it; it will give you a wrong impression; it was when my life was not so smooth and so happy as it is now."

"Before you became the admiration and the delight of the whole world, as you are now."

"Yes," said Mifanwy simply; "but, do you know, I am going to sing at Milan, Paris and Vienna, before the opera season commences here? I leave all my arrangements to M. Valpré. I am not a bit of a busi-

ness woman, and he is a true friend to me ; indeed, I am only ashamed of the great sums he insists upon for my singing."

"He is quite right ; but we cannot spare you long from London."

"Oh, it will all be done in a month."

"A month !" cried Ieuan, "it is a fearfully long time ; an age in some circumstances."

"Miss Powys will fill my place well."

"To the public, perhaps, but not to me though she has a very sweet voice."

"You see a great deal of her, do you not ?"

"Yes, she is rather a favourite of my aunt's. She is coming to stay with us next week."

"Then you will have plenty of music. But here are the Majoribanks."

And when her friends came and separated them, both Mifanwy and Ieuan had a happy consciousness that each was cognizant of the other's feelings, and that the knowledge was not displeasing.

When Mifanwy reached her own door, where Bill was waiting to take Sultan away, she bade her friends a rather strained good-bye, and hurried upstairs, passing Mrs. Roose with only a nod and a smile at the drawing-room door, and into her bedroom, where Bessie was waiting for her.

"Thank you, Bessie, but I don't want help to-day." And the moment the maid had gone she bolted the door, and, hastily taking off her hat and gloves, she flung herself in her riding-habit on her bed ; then, burying her face in the pillow, burst into a fit of sobbing. For some time the sobs and tears went on unchecked, but gradually they subsided, and, when Mrs. Roose's gentle knock came to the door, she rose at once and opened it. Her eyes were still swollen with tears, and her hair was in disorder.

"My dear child !" gasped Mrs. Roose, "what is the matter ? Such a lovely day, too ! and I thought

you were having such a nice ride. What is it all about, darling?" she went on, in soothing tones, drawing her hand over the tangled hair.

"Oh, auntie!" wailed Mifanwy, "I have had quite a lovely ride, and such a happy hour; but, oh! it is Tom, dear Tom!" and she began to sob again. "Why must I always have something to make me unhappy?"

"Unhappy, my child, always unhappy! You, the very brightest nature I have ever known; always calm and gladsome! Belle, dear, what do you mean? Surely, surely, you are not in love with Mr. Pomfrey?"

"In love!" exclaimed Mifanwy, rising hastily and beginning to arrange her hair before the mirror. "In love! I hate that word. No, I am not in love with him, as you call it, but I love him; and, oh! it pains me to see how miserable he is. He does not know that I saw him to-day, but I did—I did. Just when I was happiest and merriest I saw Tom's face, and a pang shot through my heart, and it has been here ever since. Oh, auntie, I can never be truly happy while he is so wretched; his lips looked white and set, and he turned away after seeing me, and walked out at the gates; he walked straight and firm, and broad-shouldered as ever, but, oh! I know his heart is aching now."

"Who was riding with you, dear?"

Mifanwy hesitated. "Oh! nobody in particular; it was Mr. Ieuan Powys."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Roose thoughtfully. She was not a dull-witted woman, by any means, and began to think she saw "daylight." "Well, come down, dear; you will feel better after lunch."

So La Belle smoothed her hair and changed her dress and went down to lunch with her usual placid demeanour, though her eyes still showed traces of her storm of tears.

"'Tis a sweet face," thought gentle Mrs

Roose; "no wonder I love her so much. Gravy, dear?"

La Belle smiled at Mrs. Roose's efforts to soothe her sorrow. Lunch! gravy! here were things to heal a trouble which, with the extravagance of youthful ideas, she thought could never be relieved. She was to sing in the evening at a concert, at which some of the best opera singers of the Continent were to take part.

"I am afraid you will not sing so well as usual to-night, Belle dear, if you are unhappy."

"Oh, yes, aunt. Don't you know I am like the thrush in the old Welsh song, that always sings most feelingly when the thorn pricks his breast?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Roose; "'Mae geni't newydd garw—Pan bo t'in pigo'r drain.'"

"No, it is another—not just that."

"Perhaps you are thinking of Shakespeare's 'Nightingale,' 'Who leaned her breast up till a thorn.'"

"Perhaps," replied the girl; "it is the same all the world over, I suspect." And, truth to tell, she was right.

In the evening, when she advanced to the front of the platform, amidst a hurricane of applause, she wore a robe of shimmering white, relieved only with a bunch of crimson carnations at the bosom. These carnations she had found on her dressing-table, sent by some mysterious hand.

"Where did these come from, Bessie?"

"A man left them at the door, an elderly man in livery."

"Oh!"

"You will wear them?" asked Bessie anxiously, for, as a rule, Mifanwy did not display the mysterious bouquets she so constantly received.

"Yes," she said, blushing; "they happen to be carnations, you know, so I will wear them." And Bessie delightedly fastened them in the folds of silk and lace.

Never had La Belle sung as she sang that night ; she took the hearts of her audience by storm. She had chosen for her song an old favourite, "The Links of Love," and, though there were tears in her voice, she delivered the song with such fervency of expression, such depth of feeling, that the words were forgotten by the audience in the tender appeal of the musical phrasing.

Her song was followed by rapturous applause, and such showers of bouquets, that the platform was strewn.

Ieuan was present, entranced and delighted ; and, further back in the audience, Tom Pomfrey sat and listened, his very soul hanging upon the music. Fortunately, Mifanwy did not see him, so that the altered look in his brave blue eyes did not pain her ; but she saw Ieuan, and a little smile of recognition floated across her mouth—a smile to be recalled by him with rapturous gratitude in the small hours of the night, when he lay awake and dwelt on every word, and every movement, and, of course, every gesture, of the being who had taken complete possession of his heart. The disquieting thoughts of Mifanwy the shepherdess, that her voice and presence had at first awakened in him, had given place to the completely natural emotion of a man who has surrendered his heart—not only the outposts, but the very inner citadel thereof—to the possession of the beloved one. He no longer doubted ; he loved this woman with the fervid warmth of his Celtic nature. Her beauty had enslaved him, her singing had enchained him ; and he felt that, without her, his life would be for ever incomplete.

He did not join in the loud applause that followed, but sat silent, in a dream of happiness. She had worn his flowers ; did she guess he was the sender ? And he woke up to find Mifanwy singing again, in response to the vociferous calls for an encore.

She sang some simple ballad, and this was received

with even greater enthusiasm than the first rather florid song. When it was over, and she had left the platform, Ieuan found himself once more threading the passages at the back of the hall, once more he waited until he saw La Belle approaching. She saw him at once.

"Ah, Mr. Powys, is it you?" and the little hand was grasped by Ieuan's. "Are you waiting for Miss Powys?" she asked mischievously; and Ieuan was taken aback.

How could he tell her that he was there only in the hope of getting a glimpse of her as she passed?

"Oh, no; she is not singing here to-night."

At the door of the hall, where Mifanwy's quiet brougham awaited her, by some accident her cloak slipped down, and Ieuan had the supreme felicity of re-arranging it; and oh, dizzy height of transport! of unfastening an erratic hook from her hair. She laughed merrily as she turned to wish him good-night.

"You see that stupid cloak has crushed my bouquet; but it has brought out the scent."

"I was so thankful to see you wear them."

There was no time for an answer; the door closed, and the carriage rolled away.

"Just like Mifanwy's smile," Ieuan thought; "and the brown eyes growing humid when she laughs—it is a strange likeness."

At this evening's concert, La Belle Russe made her last public appearance before leaving England to fulfil her engagements at various continental cities.

She travelled in company with M. Valpré and Mrs. Roose, Bessie accompanying her as maid.

Ieuan had to console himself with such scraps of tidings of her as the newspapers afforded. Glowing accounts were given of her enthusiastic reception wherever she appeared. He noted even the smallest incident recorded, and gloated over the somewhat extravagant description of her charms.

Tom Pomfrey, too, hunted up every item of news he could obtain ; and Mr. Rhys Morgan followed her progress with the deepest interest.

Elizabeth Powys did not read the papers. She had had the account of La Belle Russe's reception in Paris read to her by a *kind* friend, and she had afterwards strictly eschewed all newspapers.

"Disgusting!" she had muttered ; "ridiculous!"

It was curious how La Belle Russe's personality disquieted Elizabeth. The suspicion of her being the shepherdess Mifanwy had gradually weakened in her mind, and had now almost disappeared. She hated her more than ever ; but it was as La Belle Russe the singer, the flattered and caressed idol of the London public, and, above all, as the intimate friend of Lady Meredith, and, consequently, the friend of Ieuan Powys.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WEST END.

ONE evening during La Belle's absence on the Continent, No. 1 Marbrook Gardens was *en fête*. Through the open doorway the well-lighted hall looked bright and cheerful, with its shaded lamps and flowers and palms. The air throbbed with the sound of music, as up the broad canopied steps flocked Lady Meredith's acquaintances and friends.

About the middle of the evening, Ieuan made his way towards Elizabeth, who was sitting beside Lady Meredith in lively conversation. He saw Mr. Camperton approaching, and glided in before him, taking an empty chair beside her. Ieuan thought he had never seen her look so beautiful; and, though a vision of a still fairer face, with liquid, brown eyes, and dark, wavy hair arose before him, he was not insensible to the charms of the fair creature at his side.

"At last!" he said, while he sank into a chair. "I thought I should never have a word with you, Elizabeth. My aunt had positively written out a list of girls 'with whom I must really dance with, you know,' and I have just got through the last of them. Now I am a free man; will you initiate my freedom by dancing this waltz with me?"

Mr. Camperton had now reached the point at which he had been aiming; but, at that moment, Elizabeth had risen, and was gliding away with Ieuan. She took care, however, to look over his shoulder at Mr. Camperton with a little "moue" of regret.

"I haven't seen you for days, Ieuan; where have you been?" she asked in the pauses of the dance.

"In the studio most of my time. I am working hard at my 'Sea-nymph.'"

"But it is work you enjoy?"

"Yes; but I don't find it such a labour of love as was my last."

"That lovely rising sun? Lord Belmont bought that, didn't he?"

"Yes, he had ordered it; but I was sorry to let it go. When will you come and see my 'Sea-nymph?'"

"Any day; I have been longing to see it; but, of course, I wouldn't venture into the studio without a special invitation."

"Come to-morrow, Elizabeth, and we'll have a chat about old times."

"Oh, the hateful old times! I shudder when I think of them; that frowzy old parlour, where I mended Uncle John's stockings, and that dreadful buckle strap with which he beat you, Ieuan. Oh!" and she shuddered visibly.

"Yes, and your tenderness, Elizabeth! how you felt for me and Mafanwy."

"Oh, that brown-skinned girl? What has become of her?"

"I don't know," he answered dreamily; "gone into service somewhere, I believe."

"What a wild creature she was!"

"Yes; but very sweet and charming. Shall we go into the conservatory and rest?" And in through the shady ferns and heavily-scented flowers they made their way to a quiet corner.

"Charming!" resumed Elizabeth, with a scornful laugh. "I never could see her charms; but men look at things through rose-coloured spectacles."

"Men!" laughed Ieuan; "I was only a boy. I daresay, if I were to see her now, I should not think her so charming. A pretty little servant maid in a white muslin apron and toy cap, perhaps. We mustn't stay too long in here, Elizabeth, or I shall have

Camperton calling me out, 'Pistols for two, coffee for one,' you know."

"Oh, never mind Mr. Camperton. What is he to me?"

"Well, if you don't mind, I don't," agreed Ieuan, taking her fan, and fanning her and himself, and yielding to the glamour of the moment.

"You don't think," said Elizabeth, fixing her lovely blue eyes upon him, "that I would really care what he said or thought, if—if—" and she blushed and looked down at her tiny white shoe.

"If what, Elizabeth?"

"Oh, if you wanted anything, you know, he wouldn't weigh much in the balance," and again the blue eyes looked up tenderly, almost wistfully.

Ieuan began to feel uncomfortable. The conversation was becoming rather more sentimental than he desired; but, with the fear of hurting her feelings, he replied:

"You are very kind to say so, Elizabeth; but I have my doubts on that subject. *He*, I know, is very much in earnest, and *I*, as your nearest relative and guardian, as I suppose I may call myself, shall have to speak to you seriously on the subject one of these days. I have no right, perhaps, to ask you—but—"

Elizabeth's heart was beating fast. Surely the happy moment for which she had planned, and hoped, and manoeuvred, had come at last!

"Oh, Ieuan," she murmured, with soft, languishing eyes, when Mr. Camperton stood before them.

"By George! I beg your pardon. I am afraid I am intruding."

"Not at all, my dear fellow," said Ieuan, rising and making room for him. "In fact, we were just talking about you. Come and sit here, and finish the conversation. Elizabeth knows I am the 'son of the house,' as it were, and must tear myself away to look after the rest of the guests." And, with a friendly nod, he left the conservatory.

"May I be allowed?" asked Mr. Camperton, taking the chair beside her.

"Of course," she answered with a winning smile, at the same time drawing her cloudy pink drapery aside to make room for him. "It is true we were talking about you."

"I am highly honoured," he said, still looking a little ruffled. "I have no right to ask the nature of your remarks. I dare not hope they were those of approval."

"And why not?" she asked, with a coquettish smile. "Are you conscious of having been a naughty boy?"

"I am conscious of being so at this present moment, for I am full of malice and anger and all uncharitableness; it was too bad of Powys to carry you off in that off-hand manner, and then to bring you in here, you know."

"Why not? he is my guardian."

"Really, is that so?"

"Well—in a way—really."

This was a great relief to Mr. Camperton. It seemed to clear the clouds from his horizon and to explain the intimate terms upon which Ieuan and Elizabeth stood towards one another.

"Oh, that makes all the difference," he replied; "I wish I had known that sooner; it would have saved me many a pang."

"Pang!" repeated Elizabeth, with bewitching innocence, "pang of what?"

"Oh, of envy and jealousy; for, Miss Powys, you must have guessed the state of my feelings towards you; you must know I love you, and have only been waiting until my prospects were more assured to tell you of it. Even now that time has not come, but I can wait no longer without some crumb of comfort; only tell me that—that—that I am not disliked, and that my attentions are not displeasing to you."

Elizabeth looked mischievously over her fan. "Should I be sitting here with you and making myself so awfully agreeable, if you were displeasing to me? No indeed; I have a summary way of getting rid of things displeasing. Ask Colonel —, but that would be telling tales."

"Oh, I don't want to hear anything about him; I know you have had lots of offers. By George! I am continually hearing of them, and every man of them is more worthy of you than myself, but not one of them loves you as I love you!"

"And how do you know, pray? They may be broken-hearted now, for all you know, and may be seeking for a suitable tree on which to hang themselves!"

"Miss Powys! Elizabeth! you are joking, while I am in earnest, in terrible earnest! Tell me only, may I dare to hope that you love me—a little, Elizabeth?" And he took her hand and looked earnestly at her downcast eyes; "for Heaven's sake! do not trifle with me."

"I am not trifling; don't you see how serious I am? but I warn you I cannot be serious long, and when you ask me a question I will answer it."

"I have asked you—I do ask you—do you love me? will you marry me? will you wait for me a little while, Elizabeth? I hate to appear cruel and grasping; but, while my old uncle lives, you know, I am poor; but he is ninety, and cannot live long, and then, you know, I shall succeed to his title and his fortune. Will you wait, Elizabeth?"

"Which question shall I answer first?"

"Will you marry me?"

"But there was one before that."

"Elizabeth, have pity! Do you love me?"

"A weeny bit."

"Will you marry me?"

"Let us leave that question, and proceed to the next."

"Will you wait for me?"

"Yes, I will wait," she said, gladly seizing this loophole of escape from the necessity of an immediate decision.

The prospective wealth and title of Mr Camperton were not without weight in her mind. To marry an earl, to be a countess! to be able to patronise her old acquaintances, many of whom she knew disliked her, and very few of whom she cared for herself; above all, oh, delicious thought! to triumph over La Belle Russe, who was the bitter herb in her "mess of pottage," the only thorn in her downy nest! Under that snowy brow and that heaving bosom, in its lace and sparkling ornaments, was hidden a flame of vengeful jealousy, that grew ever in intensity as the years rolled by. She had not yet fully realised, or, at least, had not confessed to herself, that Ieuan's heart was alienated from her; she dreaded to believe it; she feared herself when the fact should become self-evident. Her love for Ieuan—if her selfish heart was capable of such a feeling—had grown with her growth, and it had blinded her to the truth that he had never loved her. He had been flattered by her evident preference for him when surrounded by her numerous admirers; he had, alas! sometimes indulged in an innocent flirtation; there had been a little dalliance, a few whispered compliments, and that was all! but these Elizabeth had taken more seriously than Ieuan had intended. Latterly his manner, though as friendly and kindly as of yore, had been free from all suggestions of love.

What, she asked herself, was the shadow that was falling between them? Was it the worldly and ambitious plans of Sir Glynne and Lady Meredith? or was it his devotion to his art? or was it—oh, hateful thought!—could it be La Belle Russe?

No, she would not believe it; it could not be that that pale, quiet girl should steal from her the love that was hers by right. Had she not loved him from

her babyhood? Had not her uncle, his father, arranged his affairs so as to facilitate their union, and even expressed the wish for it? But, if La Belle Russe was the cause of his altered manner, not the whole world should prevent her suffering for it.

"In some way or other I will reach her," she exclaimed, "and I will wreck her happiness, as she has wrecked mine!"

And could Mr. Camperton have seen that dimpled face, on which he doted with such blind devotion, marred by the evil passions engendered by these thoughts, he would have paused ere he had laid his heart and title at her feet. But he did not see it; it was in the solitude of her own room only that she let her natural impulses find expression. At present, seated beside him in the softened light of the conservatory, where the air was heavy with the delicious scent of flowers, she seemed to him the embodiment of all that was beautiful and good; and he pleaded his cause with the eloquence of true and unselfish love.

"I can bear the waiting, with the comfort of knowing that you are mine, Elizabeth, engaged to me! Darling, may I tell Powys, your guardian? May I tell everybody, the whole world, of my happiness?"

"Oh, no!" Elizabeth pleaded; "I have always felt that a long engagement would be a dreadful thing; and how do we know that the dear old earl may not live to be a centenarian?"

"Good heavens! no, he cannot, poor old man; for the last year he has been dying!"

"He may go on dying for nine years longer," observed Elizabeth demurely.

"He is a dear old man, and, 'pon my word! I feel like a murderer when I allude to his death. I am very fond of the old man."

"He may rally," urged Elizabeth, "and your engagement to me might not please him."

This idea had never entered Mr. Camperton's mind.

"By George! never thought of that. What a wise

little head you have, as well as beautiful eyes, we will not make our engagement public at present, then."

"Why should we be engaged at all?" inquired Elizabeth. "Can we not trust each other without that?"

"Must I then be satisfied with that weeny bit of love?" he sighed.

"Yes; with that teeny weeny crumb of comfort!"

But she endeavoured to make up with her eyes for the graciousness that was lacking in her words.

"Even that is precious to me beyond expression, and it will be the aim of my life to be worthy of it, and to make it grow into the same deep and true feeling that I have for you."

There was a little more talk behind the ferns and flowers, tender on Mr. Camperton's side, charming, but diplomatic, on Elizabeth's, and, was it a peep, or was it a kiss? before they rose and once more joined the dancers.

When the guests were departing, and Ieuan was arranging Elizabeth's cloak as she entered her brougham, she gave a little cry of surprise.

"Oh, I have left my fan in the conservatory, will you bring it to-morrow, Ieuan?"

"But to-morrow you are coming to see my sea-nymph!"

"Oh, I forgot—but that I can do the next day, —to-morrow you must bring my fan."

"Yes, and stay to dinner," added Mrs. Elliott, knowing how best to please Elizabeth.

"Yes, and we will sing some duets after dinner; those are my orders," continued Elizabeth playfully.

"Those are your orders, fair lady—then, of course, they must be obeyed."

Then Ieuan turned back to meet Mr. Camperton breathlessly hurrying out.

"Is Miss Powys gone? How tiresome! That old Lady Winyard never will let you go, if she once hooks on to you with her interminable questions."

"Never mind, my dear fellow, I saw her off all right. I say, Camperton, that was a pretty long visit of yours to the conservatory! I hope it is all right, old fellow, and arranged quite satisfactorily."

"Well, Powys, I have no right to say anything decided; but, at least, you may congratulate me on not having been rejected."

"Oh, that will do; it will all come right in time."

"But, Powys," resumed Camperton, buttonholing him in turn, "it's a secret at present, you know; nothing to be said about it."

"I understand; you may depend on me; delighted, old fellow! Good-night."

And so they parted, Ieuan well pleased with the prospect of a happy settlement for Elizabeth; for he had begun to be a little uncomfortable latterly, when she had shown him any decided signs of preference.

At dinner the next evening he was careful not to betray Mr. Camperton's confidence, and flattered himself that Elizabeth was quite unconscious of his knowledge of the situation; but he ought to have known that astute little person better than to think it possible that she could be so easily hoodwinked.

After dinner, while they looked over the music together and picked out a duet—Mrs. Elliott being at the far end of the room, intent upon her woolwork, and "none are so deaf as those who won't hear"—Elizabeth said:

"Of course Mr. Camperton told you last night that he had proposed to me?"

Ieuan was embarrassed; he never could prevaricate with ease.

"He did not tell me that exactly, Elizabeth; but I gathered it from his answer to my question. I chaffed him a little, you know, about your long stay in the conservatory, and asked him whether you had come to an arrangement."

"And I suppose he said, 'By George! I don't know, you know'?"

"And he imitated the voice of the girl, and I
 said he had a very good voice, and he said
 'Yes, he had a very good voice, and he had a
 very good voice, and he had a very good voice.'"

"Then said Elizabeth, 'he had a very good voice,
 and he had a very good voice, and he had a very good voice.'"

"Oh, he had a very good voice, and he had a
 very good voice, and he had a very good voice."

"Of course he had," I answered, leaning against the
 music.

"And what if I had a very good voice, and he had
 Elizabeth, 'then he had a very good voice, and he had
 a very good voice.'"

"Oh, he had a very good voice, and he had a very
 good voice, and he had a very good voice, and he had
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CHAPTER XXXI.

RECALLING THE PAST.

A WEEK later on, Ieuan was making his way through the murky afternoon sunshine to Graham Street. Had not La Belle Russe returned from the Continent?

When the drawing-room door was opened, he thought, for a moment, that the room was empty; but, at his entrance, La Belle rose from the corner of a crimson couch, where she had been sitting, surrounded by silks of different colours, with which she was embroidering some piece of work. A gold brooch at the throat, fastening her favourite flower, a dark red carnation, was her only ornament, and when she rose from the crimson background of the couch, Ieuan's artistic eye was filled with a restful sense of happiness. He held her hand, and the soft, brown eyes drooped under their snowy lids before his earnest gaze of love and admiration. To hide her confusion, she stooped to pick up her fallen silks; and, Ieuan aiding her, their hands met, and this added to the confusion.

"Auntie is gone out," she faltered at last, in an apologetic tone, "but will soon be back; it is our only free day, you know, and she had some shopping to do."

"Oh, it doesn't matter at all," replied Ieuan awkwardly. "I am only thankful you have not gone out shopping, too." Again there was an awkward pause, which was broken only when Ieuan hazarded the somewhat feeble question: "What is that lovely work you are engaged upon?"

She spread out her work before him, a bunch of

crimson carnations, with their grey-green leaves on a ground of cream-coloured cloth. "You mustn't tell secrets. It is a cushion for Lady Meredith."

"Oh!" said Ieuan, "I shall take it under my special protection, and woe be to the housemaid who touches it with dusty fingers."

"But I am working it to be used. It will be soft for you to lay your head upon, so I hope you will."

Ieuan was silent for a few moments while he fingered the silks on the table, and looked at the brown-black head that bent over the gorgeous work.

"Have you really been kind enough to mean to put my head upon it?"

The head bent lower, and there came no answer.

"Do say yes."

She looked up at him with those deep, velvet eyes, and a smile on the red lips. "I have thought it possible you might."

"Is that all?"

"That is all," with a mischievous smile.

"Well, even that is something to be thankful for."

Oh, of what small nothings are lovers' conversations made! Where lies their charm? At all events, Ieuan and his fair companion did not seem to find the time drag heavily.

"Do you remember, Mr. Powys, you promised to tell me something of your early life? Shall it be now?"

"Indeed, yes," said Ieuan, "if you care to listen. It is not very interesting, but perhaps it will surprise you to hear that I was born, and lived through my boyhood, amongst the lower classes, in a thatched cottage away in the most rural, secluded part of Wales, and that I grew up a thorough country lad?"

"No, I am not surprised," she murmured, pulling out a thread of silk.

"Something of the clumping clodhopper about me still, I suppose? Is that what you have noticed?"

"No, not that, at all; but still there is something

in you different from the other young men I have met in London."

"I dare not ask, is the difference to my advantage, or the contrary?"

"Suppose I don't tell you which?"

"That would be cruel," he replied.

"Perhaps it is kind," she retorted, laughing. "Anyway, I am longing to hear all about that early life, so different from what one meets in London—all show, and forms, and ceremonies."

"There were no forms or ceremonies there," he said, leaning forward on his elbows, and turning introspectively to the past. "Out on the bare brown hills from morning to night, basking in the beauty of the golden sunrise, or lying full length on the sea cliffs in the glory of the purple sunset; diving under the shimmering green sea-waves, with the blue sky spread over me like a canopy, and with the call of the sea-birds in my ears."

La Belle dropped her work, and fixed her eyes on Ieuan's earnest face.

"Go on; it sounds lovely."

"Roaming the sea cliffs, bare-footed, from morn to night, treading the short, soft turf, watching my sheep—for I was a shepherd, and knew the times and seasons only from the scenes of Nature around me; the green cornfields in the early spring, the soft, warm lapping tides of the golden summers, the silvery herrings shoaling in in the autumn, the crimson glow of the lime-kilns in the winter, and my faithful dog my sole companion! Oh, it was life! real living! a life that I have longed for ever since I left it, and I shall never be completely happy till I return to it."

"You are like me then," La Belle responded, beginning a fresh crimson petal, "not satisfied with the charms of London society."

Ieuan shrugged his shoulders. "Satisfied? no! would that I could spirit you away for a moment to that old life of mine, its never-ending variety of sun

and shade, its beauty of outward scenery and inward peace; the calm, even tenor of the peasant life, gliding on under those low, thatched cottages, hidden away in the hollows and valleys by the sea; the freshness of the morning breezes, the warmth of the mid-day sun, which drew up the wild thyme's scent, and burst the gorse blossom's seed; the glow of the sunsets, the silver beauty of the moonlight shining in through the cottage windows, the quiet evening meal, the smell of the peat smoke, the simple fare on the old oak table; oh, I cannot tell you the charm of everything!" He looked down upon La Belle; he saw her bosom heave and a tear bedew her lashes; he was startled, and a thrill of pleasure traversed him when he saw that the scenes so dear to him aroused her interest also.

"Oh, I see it all so plainly!" she exclaimed, "you have described it all so well; I am tired of this sordid town, I yearn for Nature and the country." And there was a little childish quivering of the lip.

She recalled so well the low, thatched cottage, the scent of the peat fire, the patch of silver moonlight on the floor, and her heart went out in a great throb of *hiraeth*¹ to the old home of her childhood's days, and scarce could she restrain her tears, but she forced down the feeling, for the sweet memories were not without a tinge of bitterness; in all that he had said about his former life, Ieuan had made no mention of Mifanwy. No, she had glided from his life, and faded even from his memory.

She stilled the throbbing heart, she dried her glistening lashes, and, drawing herself up calmly, she continued, "But you will never be able to return to that past life, however much you may desire it; you may go to the same place, and tread the rugged cliffs and golden sands again, but it will not be the same to you, and you will not feel yourself the same. But go on, please; it is very interesting." And she pulled out

¹ Longing.

another thread of crimson silk. "Tell me how you came to leave that idyllic life to live in London?"

Ieuan felt as if a cold shower had suddenly fallen upon him; she had seemed so interested; he had seen the tear-drops in her eyes; why the description of his early life should have caused that hurried breath, and that moisture in her eyes, he could not tell, but to know it had, had been delightful to him, and the contrast of her present calmness and self-restraint was correspondingly depressing.

"I am tiring you with my boyish memories."

"No, no; go on," she pressed him; "tell me more. How came you to leave that happy life? Was there no mother or sister to grieve over your departure?"

"I never knew my mother; she died when I was born, and I was brought up by strangers, tender and loving though they were, and are to this day; for I still love them, and visit them sometimes, and hope and trust to end my days near them."

Then he went on to relate the story of his first acquaintance with Sir Glynne, his departure from Wales, and his subsequent life in London. When he came to the history of his relationship to Sir Glynne, La Belle dropped her work again, and gazed at him with deep interest in her eyes.

"How strange!" she cried, "like a story out of a book. Did I not say that you were not quite like the other young men around us? Thank you so much for telling me all this; now I shall feel I know you better. Here comes auntie, I think, or is it—"

The door opened, and admitted Tom Pomfrey, straight and tall and broad-shouldered as ever, but with a haunting look of sadness in his face that had not been there of yore; but Ieuan, who had never seen him before, was struck only with his handsome looks and familiar manner on his entrance, and when he saw La Belle scatter her silks to the winds, and rise hastily to grasp Tom's hand in both her own, a stab of jealousy pierced his heart. Truth to tell, she was

a little sorry for the interruption, and it was the consciousness of this that troubled her, and made her doubly tender in her greeting.

"Ah, Tom, I thought you would come to-day; we have not seen you for such a time: this is our friend Mr. Powys, Sir Glynne Meredith's nephew."

A spasm crossed Tom's face at sight of Ieuan; he saw that he had interrupted a *tête-à-tête* , but he managed to hide his pain by stooping to pick up the scattered silks. In doing so, his hands came into contact with Mifanwy's, but it caused her no embarrassment, however it might have affected Tom.

"How is Sultan?" she asked eagerly.

"He is well," said Tom: "he will get fat and lazy if you don't ride him oftener. Why do you never send for him now? Bill feels quite neglected."

"I have been so dreadfully busy. Mr. Valpre does not give me an idle hour. I can assure you—now that the opera season is so close upon us. Of course you have heard, Mr. Powys, that 'Lucia' will be the first opera; the opening night will be the first of May."

"Oh! of course," asserted Ieuan: "everybody knows it, and we are all in a state of pleasurable anticipation. How do you feel about it? I should think appearing for the first time in opera must be rather nervous work to anyone; but such a mistress of her art as you are—"

"Oh! please wait, and do not pay me any compliments until after the event; for, I confess, I am rather nervous."

Ieuan chafed a good deal under the familiarity of Tom's manner when he spoke to La Belle, but as the conversation drifted to things operatic and musical in general, his genial face and pleasant voice gradually won upon Ieuan's discontent.

Mrs. Roose's arrival was the signal for tea during which, though entering into brisk conversation with the two ladies, he was rather stiff and formal when addressing Tom, who, keeping a tight rein on his

feelings, hid under his cheerful talk the weary aching that was gnawing at his heartstrings. When introducing him to Ieuan, Mifanwy had called him, "My oldest and best friend, Mr. Tom Pomfrey;" and Ieuan had wondered and felt sore, and when, after tea, he left the house, he was full of jealous doubts.

"Do our ways lie together?" he asked, when Tom joined him on the pavement.

"No," replied Tom, smiling, "our ways do not lie together, but, if you don't object, I will accompany you for a little way; there is a subject on which I wish to speak to you. I am a straight man and a plain man, and I can see, by your manner, that you are puzzled about my intimacy with *La Belle Russe*."

Ieuan drew himself up, and a haughty look swept over his face. "I have no right," he said, "to be surprised at anything *Miss Roose* may choose to do; you are fortunate in being on such terms with her, and on holding so high a place in her regard; she has spoken of you to me in the highest terms."

He felt obliged to make this admission, but hated the obligation.

Tom bowed his head unconsciously, and a flush of pleasure overspread his face. "Has she? God bless her! I thank her;" and he was silent for a moment, while Ieuan strode impatiently beside him.

"Well, to our subject, Mr. Powys; as I said before, our paths lie in opposite directions, and we are not likely to meet often; but I feel impelled to be quite open with you. *La Belle Russe* lived in our family before she entered upon her brilliant career as a singer; it was in the East End. My father is the owner of a large and prosperous circus in the Warkworth Road. I am Tom Pomfrey, his eldest son, and the manager of his circus. In the summer we take our troupe into the provinces; on one of these tours, my mother hired a poor girl as a nursemaid and help—that was *La Belle*. I took a great interest in her, and soon discovered that she had a beautiful voice. I persuaded

her to sing and ride in the clouds. There Mr Rhy-Morgan discovered her, her career since then you are acquainted with. She was I was much thrown together and, as a natural consequence, can you wonder Mr Powys, that I loved her? Remember that was before she had taken the first step on the ladder of success. I loved her passionately, devotedly, but she felt nothing for me but a sister's love and a true and warm friendship, which she has graciously accorded to me ever since, and which I prize as my life, but not my love, and he looked straight in Julian's face. "The love that I thirsted for, she never felt me, the slightest atom," and now I have been her friend and brother for so long that I desire no other position. I am thankful and content to have her friendship. Do you wonder why I tell you all this?

Julian stammered some incoherent reply.

"It is because I believe you love her, and I want you to know that I wish you well, that I find in the place of that friend whom we read of, who rejoiced greatly in another's happiness. Will you at me be that friend, and not judge me the comfort of her friendship? I am quite alive to the difference in our social position, as I said before, your path lies westward, and to riches and fame and happiness, mine lies eastward, to work and duty and peace. Let some day to success and happiness and. Here we are at the end of Regent Street, and I shall say good-bye, and next time we meet, if we ever do, I shall say to you as Tom Pamfret, the manager of *Le Bon Jour*, and La Belle Rasse's faithful friend, 'Good-bye.'

For a moment Julian stood irresolute, he could not explain to himself how it was that his heart went out to this man, whom he had never met before to-day, and whose name had hitherto seemed a name of things of fear, fear and sorrow. But suddenly he felt the old power of the long back road, and he stepped into it.

"My friend too," he said, "if you will have it so. Thank you for telling me all this." And, with the British dislike of a scene, the two men parted with a warm clasp of the hand and nothing more.

"Pomfrey's Circus!" thought Ieuan, as he entered his club, "the manager of a circus troupe, to be her special friend! Well, and are not Ianto and Shân my father and mother; and—and—Mifanwy *was* my sister and friend."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE BALL.

As the months passed on, Leuan found many opportunities of improving her acquaintance with the Duke of Russa. For although she did not enter much into society, she was by no means secluded, and every time went on, the intangible and unconfessed bond that seemed to connect the lives of these two, grew stronger, and Leuan found that her magic touched his every thought, and influenced his whole being, yet his love lay unspoken in his heart. A great dread of what might be her answer leaped up in his bosom, for she was retiring and self-controlled to an unusual degree, more especially in the presence of the man she loved. Better, far better, was it that to meet her without restriction, to hang on her words, to listen to her voice, even in uncertainty and doubt, sometimes to be rewarded by a flashing smile, or a responsive glance, than to be denied access to her presence, perhaps with a word of cold dismissal when it was necessary, and he wondered when he pictured this alternative.

Elizabeth, who saw her chance of winning him, and who by one experienced a curious change: her love for Leuan—if the feeling he had entertained towards her could be so styled—changed into a cold dislike that exhibited itself in a petty spitefulness, that felt unneeded and unnoticed on its object.

In the early spring Lady Meredith's spacious rooms were once more thronged with guests, and the enlivening strains of music, that made their way from the dancing-room, showed a ball to be in progress. One

of the loveliest and the brightest there was Elizabeth, and, as she circled gracefully round the room Mr. Camperton, who was never far away, followed her with looks of love and admiration. She fully meant to accept him in the end, and, meanwhile, managed cleverly to keep him at her side, by all sorts of coquettish, charming ways and moods. At the same time, she staved off the momentous question of "Will you marry me?" knowing thoroughly her complete power over him, and revelling in that knowledge.

La Belle, too, was present, looking, Ieuan thought, more beautiful than ever. She seldom wore anything but white, but to-night was dressed in pink of a delicate shade, that showed off advantageously her creamy-white complexion. She had been dancing with Ieuan, and they had strolled into the large conservatory, opening out of the ball-room, and were now seated in the same corner in which, a few weeks before, Mr. Camperton and Elizabeth had sat. The soft light of the shaded lamps, that flickered through the wavy ferns, the air laden with the delicious perfume of the flowers, the enlivening strains of music from the ball-room—everything combined to throw a glamour over them. They were silent from excess of feeling; and on the silence fell the sound of a cooing ring-dove.

"How sweet," said La Belle. "Where does it come from?"

"My aunt's pet ring-doves," answered Ieuan; "the aviary is close by." "Coo, coo!" called the dove again. "Yes, it is sweet, but sad, I think." Its tender note awoke a slumbering memory in Ieuan's heart—one that was never far away, never difficult to recall. "Have you ever heard a beautiful song of Handel's from 'Acis and Galatea,' called, 'As when the dove laments her love'?"

"Yes, I have heard it; it is very beautiful," rejoined La Belle with an almost painful throb of memory.

They were both silent for a while.

"I observe that you are not wearing flowers to-night, Miss Roose: not even your favourite carnations."

"No; the exigencies of a fashionable toilet forbade it. My crimson friends were not supposed to 'go well' with my gown."

Ieuan was standing beside her, looking down at the clear-cut profile. "I dare not offer you a flower, if fashion forbids it."

"Oh, indeed, I am not a slave to fashion."

"May I venture then?" And he cut from a luxuriant maiden's blush rose a pale pink flower, surrounded by its dark, glossy leaves, and held it towards her with trembling fingers, and love in his eyes.

She took it silently, and fastened it in the bosom of her dress, over—it must be confessed—a fluttering heart; but she ignored the sentiment of the situation, and answered calmly:

"You have good taste; even fashion could find no fault with this pale pink and glossy green."

"Coo, coo!" came again from the aviary, and La Belle felt an almost irresistible desire to break forth into song, so overpowering were the associations borne in upon her memory.

"When will you go on with the story of your early life?" she asked, lowering her eyes before his earnest gaze.

"I think I told you all, or all that would interest you," he answered.

"Oh, not nearly all. I want to know much more. What was the name of the hill on which you kept your sheep? What was your dog's name? And oh, many, many things."

Again the coo of the dove came on the air; and, even while in a trance-like dream of happiness in La Belle's presence, a vision rose before him of a brown-eyed girl, who looked at him the while she sang; and the tender words rang through his memory. "When

he returns, no more she mourns, but loves the long day," and he sighed while listening to the dove.

"Why do you sigh?" asked La Belle, looking at him. "That dove's cooing seems to trouble you. Why is it? To me his note speaks only of rest and peace."

"And love."

"Yes, and love. How does the song go? 'When he returns, no more she mourns, but loves the long day.'"

"Yes," said Ieuan; "but by some train of thought that song recalls to me circumstances of my early days."

"Sad circumstances?"

"N-no! certainly not; but there is always a sadness in looking back."

"Always," agreed La Belle; "I feel it myself."

"Even though the present may be all that we could desire, as mine is now. Where on the face of the earth could I be more happy, or more blessed, than here?"

"And yet," rejoined La Belle, "you are not happy."

"Happy! happy!" cried Ieuan; "yes, happy and blessed beyond my wildest dreams. If only I could be sure—"

"Oh, but," broke in La Belle with a mischievous smile, "you are straying from the subject. You know you were going to tell me the rest of your story. Can you so well picture the sheep, the shepherd and his dog, the sea—did you say the sea?"

"Oh, the sea; yes, our lives were lived in the sea, the wind's breath, for we spent our days on the north-west slopes of the hills, that stood as sentinels each side of a little golden strand."

"We! Do you mean your dog and you? It must have been a lonely life out on those bare hills, with only the sky above you. Was there no other shepherd or shepherdess?"

"There was," said Ieuan. He was filled with

strange uneasiness, an intense longing for the love that seemed so nearly in his grasp, and an undefined dread, as though he were about to suffer some deep loss. "There was a girl, who watched her sheep on the hill on the opposite side of the strand."

"Ah, that was nice for both of you. Did you ever meet?"

"Yes, frequently; indeed, we were often together, for we were foster-brother and sister, brought up by the same parents under the dear old thatched roof."

"Now the picture is complete," she said: "with a companion, life in such scenes would be perfect. And what was the girl's name?"

"Mifanwy."

"Mifanwy! a strange name; a country name, I suppose?"

"Yes; a Welsh name."

"You must have loved each other very much, being so thrown together in that solitary place."

"Yes, we were very fond of one another."

"Oh, tell me about the girl! Was she pretty?"

"Oh, no," said Iwan; "plain, very plain." A flush rose to the girl's pale cheeks. "At least, everyone else thought so; but she was my sister, you see, and I thought her beautiful. I suppose I knew only the spirit that looked out through her dark brown eyes, and smiled on her red lips."

"Was she fair, or dark?"

"Oh, dark—black, you might almost call her, for the sun and rain had so tanned and burnt her skin that it had become unnaturally dark of hue. I was sunburnt and brown, but Mifanwy was dusky and black. Our foster-mother used to declare that, as a baby, her skin was of an unusually delicate texture and fairness; but certainly you would not have guessed that, when looking at poor Mifanwy's brow face."

"She must have been like a little brown monkey," La Belle suggested tentatively.

It was now Ieuan's turn to flush.

"Oh, no, not that. She was extremely graceful in form and figure. Her movements had a natural suppleness and grace about them that the young ladies of fashion seldom have. She was my boyhood's companion, and very dear to me at the time; and is now—a sweet memory—that is all."

"And when Sir Glynne came and took you away, how did she bear the parting?"

"Oh, she felt it very much, as I did, at the time; but she soon got over it, I suspect. Shortly afterwards, she also left her home, and went into service somewhere or other, and is now, I suppose, a smart little maid with white cap and apron. And so ends my romance. And now that I have told you all, let me speak of what lies nearest to my heart. You know—you must have seen how much I love you; sometimes I have dared to hope that you are not quite indifferent to me; but that will not content me. Miss Roose, La Belle! Ma P'elle!" he cried, taking her hand in his, "give me some hope—nay, more than that; tell me that you love me, for, as God is my witness, my very soul is yours. I hear your voice amongst a hundred, when you speak, and, when you sing, you sway my very being."

The colour came and went on La Belle's clear features, the pale eyelids drooped, and there was a flutter at her heart that moved visibly the little locket fastened round her neck. She did not withdraw her hand, but, placing the other over her burning cheeks, she murmured low:

"I do confess I love you."

Ieuan started, and tried to take her other hand; but she repulsed him gently, and continued:

"But—but—I cannot say more."

"More!" cried Ieuan in an ecstasy; "what can I want more? What can life give me more precious than your love? Without it I should have gone hungry for ever; with it I can bear anything that fate

may have in store for me. Ma Belle! Ma Belle! you have crowned me with delight." And again he endeavoured to take her hands in his; but she turned her eyes upon him sadly, but, withal, firmly.

"Mr. Powys, I confessed I loved you; but that shepherd girl, Mifanwy!"

"Oh! heavens!" cried Ieuan, starting to his feet; "Mifanwy, Mifanwy, am I never to shake off that haunting word; are you beginning to taunt me with the memory of that foolish boy and girl affair?"

"But if she loved you."

"If she did, she has forgotten me long ago, and probably married either some country lout or some town shopman. Am I to be balked of my heart's desire, to be thrust back upon myself, when my whole heart has gone forth to you, Belle, because in my boyhood's days I thought I loved a girl; a child you may call her, for she was only fifteen when I left her."

"At fifteen a girl may love deeply and for ever; and something tells me that this girl—this Mifanwy, was one of those devoted and faithful ones. Mr. Powys, I have no right—or have I?" and with bewitching tenderness, she raised her eyes to his, who now stood leaning moodily against the wall.

"You have," he said, "you have the right that the master has over his slave; that the king has over his subject; that the owner has over his possessions. Oh, Belle! exercise that right; tell me only what to do to win your consent."

"Consent?" she said, "consent to what, Mr. Powys?—well, Ieuan, then."

"Consent to marry me. Good God! why do you trifle with me? Is a man's heart a toy, to be taken up and laid down at pleasure? Why do you keep me thus at a distance from you? You have confessed that you love me, you know that I love you; therefore, what power is there in heaven or earth to keep us two asunder?"

"Only Mifanwy," she answered with drooping head; and surely—surely—that was a tear that fell upon her gown. Conflicting feelings were surging through her heart; her love for Ieuan, that had ruled her being for so long—indeed, as long as she could remember—was craving for its fulfilment, and the happiness for which she had thirsted all her life was now held out to her, only waiting for her to grasp it and make it hers. What was it in that stubborn Celtic nature that prevented her taking to herself the joy for which her whole being longed? Just pride. She could not separate her personality from that of Mifanwy the shepherdess; her whole life as *La Belle Russe* seemed to her like a dream, and the bitterness of Ieuan's neglect of Mifanwy withered the fair flower of his love for *La Belle Russe*. She did not realise that her deception was a cruel wrong to him; that at heart—though unconsciously—he was still faithful to Mifanwy, and that the impossibility of harmonising his feelings for two women, who were still one, was the cause of all this misery and sorrow. No—he had done wrong in forgetting her as Mifanwy, and as Mifanwy, she could never be satisfied with his love for *La Belle Russe*. "I cannot marry you," she said, "while that poor girl still loves you, and waits for you."

"This is madness! this is cruel!" exclaimed Ieuan. "Belle, Belle! do you know what you are doing?" And he determinedly took both her hands in his, and covered them with kisses, while he earnestly pleaded that she would reconsider her decision. "Do you know," he urged, "that you are trampling on the heart of a man, who has never loved but you? Since I came to London I have been surrounded by every type of womanhood, from the matron to the girl, but I have never felt my heart beat faster, or a throb of interest, until I met you. It is true that, as a boy, I thought I loved Mifanwy, but I know now that you alone rule my destiny; without you, my life will be

empty and fraught with misery ; with you, it will be full and strong. Oh ! Belle, do not thrust me from you ! I could not bear it. If you love me, surely you will pity me."

"I do love you, Ieuan, as you love me ; but I cannot marry you as things are at present."

"Dearest, what would you have me do, then ? No, leave your hands with me ; tell me what to do to win you ?"

"Get this girl's consent ; let her set you free ; find her out, wherever she is ; if she has forgotten you, and sets you free, then come back to me, and if you come—oh ! then you can ask me again."

"And then, you will say—yes—love ?"

There was a very low "Yes," and a little pause, during which Ieuan pressed a kiss upon her hand. "Coo, coo," chimed in the ring-dove ; and even while his lips still pressed her hand, he seemed to hear Mifanwy's voice, "As when the dove laments her love."

"But supposing she has not forgotten me, what shall I do then ?"

"The path of honour lies straight before you ; you will take that path ; and I—I must bear the consequences."

"Honour ! honour ! the word was drummed into me as a boy ; it was my old foster-father's watchword—'onnoe !' he said with his strong Welsh accent, 'is better than gold !' I never thought then that honour would demand of me so terrible a sacrifice."

"And Mifanwy," said La Belle, "what did she think of the word ?"

"Oh, I think, to her it was as the breath of life."

"Yes—then she will set you free."

At this moment a flood of melody filled the air ; from the ball-room came a louder strain of music.

"We have been here too long," she said ; "will you take me back to Mrs. Roose ?"

Without a word, he offered her his arm.

And the dream of love and happiness seemed to

fade away, and, to the eyes of the occupants of the ball-room, nothing more interesting than a fashionably-dressed girl, escorted by a handsome young man, emerged from under the fern-draped door of the conservatory.

When Ieuan bowed and left La Belle with Mrs. Roose, a tide of joy rushed through his veins; nothing could undo the fact that she had confessed her love for him, and, if she chose to make no further sign to-night, he would respect her confidence.

Later in the evening, he found Mr. Camperton looking rather downcast. Elizabeth had gone; La Belle was going; should he approach her again and offer his services? No, it was already too late; she had disappeared.

"Come, Camperton," he said, "I am dying to have a talk with you. Come to my room, unless you want another dance."

"Not I," replied his friend; and, in a few moments, the two young men were seated in Ieuan's cosy "den," puffing away at their cigars, and exchanging mutual confidences.

"Come, Powys," said Mr. Camperton at last, "what did you want to say? What happened in that long *tête-à-tête* in the conservatory? I don't want to force your confidence, but you need not be so confoundedly close about your affairs, old fellow. I have seen for a long time that you are 'hard hit,' and, by George! you have my best wishes. I think you are the luckiest fellow in town—of course, myself excepted."

"Am I to congratulate you, then?"

Camperton shook his head. "Can't you persuade her, Ieuan? She's devilish coy and uncertain, you know, and I—well, the consciousness that my future is in such an unsettled state, that I have neither home nor title to offer her while my old uncle lives—unnerves me. Only once let me come into my titles and estates, and I will insist on a decided answer;

and, perhaps, she will throw me to the dogs. By George! if she does, I am a ruined man!"

"Nonsense," said Ieuan; "she won't refuse you; set your mind at rest on that point. I wish I had as little cause to be uneasy."

"Uneasy? You? with the loveliest woman in London, one excepted, deeply in love with you."

"Shut up, Camperton! Good heavens! what are you saying? Sometimes, in her presence, I venture to hope she is not quite indifferent to me, but when once I am away from her, I fall into the lowest depths of despair; in fact, Camperton," rising and throwing back his head with the old gesture, "my life lately has been one continual strain of conflicting emotions; you may thank Heaven, my dear fellow, that you are an Englishman, a cool-headed, nerve-proof Saxon, and that you can take things in a common-sense, rational manner, in spite of your recent remark about being a ruined man." He was silent for some time, then suddenly burst out with, "Camperton, do you think it is possible for a man to be in love with two women at once?"

Mr. Camperton held his cigar away from his lips, while he looked in astonishment at his friend. "Two flirtations, perhaps," he agreed, "but *bonâ fide* in love with two; don't think so."

"Well," said Ieuan, with a flushed face and hurried breath, "how can you explain my state of mind, then? for I tell you, Camperton, though I am heart and soul in love with Belle Roose—yes, God knows, if ever a man's whole being was enthralled and subjected by a woman's power, I am that man; I feel, Camperton, that though I had to give up fame and fortune, and even life, for her sake, I would do so without a regret, and I sometimes dare to hope that I shall, some day, gain her love—yet, invariably, at the moment of my most exalted hopes, there comes before me the image of another woman. I have tried to exorcise the phantom, to banish the thought of her, but in vain. I

can never dwell upon the hope of gaining Belle Roose's love, or the rapturous memory of a smile or a blush that has encouraged me, but, lo! this tender-eyed, sad, sweet face of another woman rises before me, and reproaches me. Come out, Camperton; let us have a breath of cool air. I believe it will drive me mad. I cannot live without La Belle, yet I am always haunted by the memory of another girl."

Mr. Camperton drew on his overcoat in silence, and dejectedly fumbled for his cane, but Ieuan was too much engrossed by his own thoughts to notice him. When they had reached the street, he clutched Ieuan's arm. "I did fear this—some time ago, Powys—but, by George! I never realised before that things had gone to such a length between Elizabeth and you."

"Elizabeth! is there no woman in the world but Elizabeth? I tell you, Camperton, I have no feeling for Elizabeth, except that of cousinly affection—take my word for it—it is not she; she is not the only woman in the world, as I said before."

"She is to me," replied Mr. Camperton, with great relief, "and, excuse me, Powys, but I never knew you had loved anyone else; not Ella Breeze, I hope? I remember you did have a little flirtation with her, but she is just engaged, and going to be married at once, to old Ponsonby—regular old-fashioned fellow—home to bed early, slippers and newspaper, and that sort of thing, you know, last man in the world I should have expected her to choose, but I daresay he will be an indulgent husband to the little minx."

"Hope he will, I'm sure," said Ieuan, with scant interest. "I have been a fool to tell you; you will never understand me. I don't think any sensible man would understand me, but, Camperton, I tell you there is a curious corner between Sir Glynne's rooms and mine, where the wind makes a weird moaning when it blows from the south; and, though I know it is the wind, I have heard that girl crying and sobbing there!"

"It is more serious than I thought, Powys. Have

you wronged her? Has she reason to hate you, or does she still love you? And who is she?"

"Oh, never mind, let her name rest!" said Ieuan wearily. "I feel that it would be sacrilege to mention it, now that I have deserted her, and drifted away from her, never to return. It was only a boy and girl affair—I was sixteen and she was fifteen—but, if ever true and faithful love shone out of a woman's eyes, it shone on me from those brown eyes of hers. They were the delight of my life in those days, and *now* they are my torment. Come, collect your ideas, Camperton, and advise me, for God's sake! what would you do?"

"Was there a promise on your part?"

"Yes."

Mr. Camperton, who, in spite of his somewhat simple manners and appearance, was not without a fund of common sense, did collect his ideas, and, taking Ieuan's arm, began slowly and emphatically, and without once appealing to his patron saint.

"Well, Powys, let us put the matter plainly before us. It seems to me like this. You were once in love with a girl. Being but a boy yourself, you made her a promise which, at the time, you fully intended to keep. Time and circumstances have prevented your meeting again. Is that so?"

Ieuan nodded.

"Your love grew cold; you grew to man's estate; you have met another woman to whom you are passionately devoted, whom, in fact, you feel you cannot live without. You have reason to hope that she returns your love. You ought to be perfectly happy, but the memory of your first love haunts you and wearies you with its persistency. Whether from the morbid sensitiveness of a Celtic temperament, or an overstrained idea of honour, you cannot shake off the feeling that you have no right to ask one woman to be your wife while the other is expecting you to marry her. Isn't that so?"

Ieuan nodded again.

"Well, then, my dear fellow, it's as plain as a pike-staff! You want to be 'off with the old love, before you are on with the new.' Many men would cast honour to the winds, and forget all about such a girl and boy affair; but you can't, or won't; therefore, take the bull by the horns; find out this wonderful maiden, and ask her to set you free. Ten to one, you will find she has already forgotten you and has married somebody else; at any rate, if you tell her your promise is irksome to you, she will release you."

"And suppose she will not?" asked Ieuan.

"Then, with your high ideas of honour, you cannot marry the other; but I would never marry a woman who tried to force me to keep a promise that had become galling to me."

"I believe you are right, Camperton, and I thank you for your advice; and, if I don't follow it, it will be because I am really the weak fool I have lately suspected myself to be. I need not say this is all in confidence."

"Of course, of course," agreed Mr. Camperton.

"Let us drop the subject then," said Ieuan. "If I follow your advice I will tell you how I have fared."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A CONDITIONAL PROMISE.

IEUAN had little sleep that night. His mind was in a turmoil of mingled pleasure, disappointment, and perplexity ; but, running through all was the golden thread of La Belle's admission that she loved him. She—the peerless woman he had loved from the first moment he had seen her, whose mere presence was life to him, the touch of whose garments, even, sent a thrill of joy through his being, the sound of whose voice was music to him, had confessed it ; and in thought he dwelt upon the drooping head, the down-cast lids over the soft brown eyes, the trembling admission, “ Yes, I love you,” and the little hand left in his own. Then had come the notes of the cooing dove to disturb the scene, and with them the thought of Mifanwy's sad face, and the mysterious unseen bonds that seemed to hold him to her against his will, in spite of his attempts to burst them, in spite of his passion for La Belle. What was the meaning of it ? Was he possessed by some evil spirit who loved to harass and to persecute him at the moment when his hopes were strongest, and his prospects of happiness at their brightest ? And now, here was La Belle, almost in the same breath with the confession of her love for him, urging upon him the claims of this imaginary being—for surely she was imaginary ! The Mifanwy of old, the fleet of foot, the clear-voiced, brown-eyed companion of his boyhood was gone ! and, though she might have developed into a keen-witted, clever, domestic servant, this was not the Mifanwy of

old. And then his pride revolted at the thought that La Belle had impressed upon him that it was his duty to marry a g'rl of inferior position and education to his own. Never! that he would *never* do! and La Belle's love for him could not be the deep and absorbing passion that was his for her, or she would never have thus urged him to keep a promise made in boyhood.

"To confess her love to me, and then to thrust me away from her! It is unbearable, and to-morrow I will make her recall her words."

But all this troubled thought and restless imagery ended in the rapturous realisation.

"She loves me, whatever happens, she loves me! and no earthly power shall divide us. I will see this girl, this girl with a cap and apron; I will find out whether she remembers the old past time, and still desires to hold me to my promise. She shall free me from these bonds, and I will return to La Belle with no shadow between us." And he rose in the morning refreshed and invigorated by this resolution.

"A letter for you, Ieuan," said Sir Glynne, smiling. "The address is in a schoolboy's round hand; Ianto's usual amanuensis, I think."

"Yes, Billy 'The Shop,'" assented Ieuan, smiling. "I have written to tell them I am coming down on business for you soon, and this, I suspect, is a welcome home!"

It was in Welsh as usual, and Ieuan read it aloud in the intervals between his coffee and toast.

"MY BELOVED BOY,—That is from Shân and me, and it is to say how glad your letter has made us; you don't forget your old parents, and we know you never will now as long as you live. We will have a happy time; we have a whole stack of peat yet unburnt, and a nice little heap of culm behind the pigsty. The hens are laying plenty of eggs. And Shân and I, when we sing in the evenings by the firelight.

sadly want thy bass to fill up the tune. And oh! what if Mifanwy happened to come at the same time. She has written to say she is coming soon, too. There's songs and hymns would go up with the smoke through our big chimney. You have been parted long enough, it is right that brother and sister should meet sometimes. Shân longs to see her 'cream and roses!'"

"Cream and roses!" laughed Sir Glynne; "what does she mean by that?"

"That is Mifanwy, the shepherdess, my foster-sister," replied Ieuan, with a little awkwardness, remembering the conversation in the smoking-room with Sir Glynne some years before, when his promise to Mifanwy had been the subject of their talk.

"Cream and roses!" laughed Lady Meredith; "that shows how a mother, even a foster-mother, is blinded by her love, for I never saw such a little brown-faced monkey."

Ieuan flushed scarlet. "Aunt," he said reproachfully, "what a word to use; she was not that though she was so dark."

"No, Ieuan, I beg your pardon; and she had a lovely voice."

"Yes," agreed Ieuan, "I have never heard one like it except La Belle Russe's."

"Well, my dear boy," joined in Sir Glynne, "whatever you do, don't get entangled with this little brown-faced songstress. Attend to business while you are there, and come back as soon as you can."

"You may depend on that; I will go on Monday and be back on Saturday, or even sooner, if possible."

"What a strange thing," thought Ieuan, as he wended his way towards Graham Street in the afternoon, "that Ianto's letter should have contained that bit of news to-day of all days, just when I was wondering how I should find this girl and lay my case before her, so that she should set me free." And

his spirits rose with every step that lessened the distance between him and La Belle.

"Of course, the girl has forgotten me; at any rate if she has a trace of the honour and candour which she used to have, she will free me at once from a bondage that has become so galling." And, when he entered La Belle's presence, his happy mood was shown in his springy step and kindling eye."

La Belle, on the contrary, seemed more shy and timid than her wont. She had embarked on a venture of some undertaking, one that might wreck the happiness of her life, and rob her of the love that was so precious to her. She was standing by the piano when he entered, and flushed all over her face and neck when he clasped her hand and held it long, gazing with delight at the burning blushes on her face.

"Beloved!" he began, still keeping her hand imprisoned, "I have come to see whether you are in a kinder mood than you were last night."

"Kinder!" she echoed, regaining her composure. "indeed, I have been thinking that I was too kind, and I had to hide my face in my hands when I remembered those words—you know."

"What words were they?" asked Ieuan mischievously. "Say them again."

She shook her head, smiling, but closing her lips firmly. "I will not say them again; you must forget them."

"Forget them!" cried Ieuan, "never, never, never! Have I not been living upon them and repeating them to myself at every moment? Is it likely I should forget them? No, no, Ma Belle, never! And I am come to-day to claim more than you accorded me last night."

"More?" raising her eyes to his for the first time. "No, indeed, I have no more to give; you are very greedy!" she added, with a smile.

"Well, if I must be satisfied with what you have given me—"

"What did I give you?" she interposed. "No promise."

"No promise? Indeed you did; and a promise that I shall insist upon your keeping. Oh, you will find me a hard man at a bargain; I will not forego one jot or one tittle of that promise."

"What was it then?"

Ieuan turned up the palm of her hand, while, with his finger, he dotted down the items of his bargain.

"First you blushed."

"That means nothing with me."

"Next, you said—'I love you.'"

"That was conditional."

"Not at all," said Ieuan; "there were no conditions to that. Then you said—'I will marry you,'" and he marked another imaginary dot on her hand, but she hastily withdrew it, and covered her blushing face again with both hands.

"Oh, no, no, I never said that!"

"Well, I said, 'Will you marry me?' And you said, 'Yes.'"

"Oh, well, that will do; I am quite ashamed of that!"

"Ashamed?" questioned Ieuan.

"Yes, because—because I do not mean to keep my word."

Ieuan started; it was said so calmly and deliberately. "Not keep your word?" he gasped.

"Unless you keep to my conditions, which are, as I said yesterday, that you find this girl, Mifanwy. They are not hard terms," she said, an imploring tenderness in her tone; "at least, it is incumbent upon you to do what is right, and upon me to bear the consequences. You have said that you love me, that you would give your life for me; do this, then, for my sake, and I am sure it will be well for both."

"But it is *more* than my life you ask of me, my honour? To marry without love; and, moreover, a

girl uneducated and coarse in thought and feeling *that* could never be the path of honour."

"Coarse and unrefined! No, if she is that, I will not hold you to your bargain; only find her out and ask her to absolve you from your promise. If she is coarse and unrefined she will refuse, and I would think it culpable in you to marry such a woman. If you find her all that you could wish, refined, faithful and true, then marry her."

"And you," asked Ieuan, "ma belle! my beloved, would it be naught to you?"

La Belle did not speak at once, but at last she leaned forward, and taking Ieuan's hand, she raised it to her lips, and pressed a kiss upon it. "And I," she said, raising her eyes to his, "at least, will never marry any other man."

They both rose together, Ieuan roused by excess of feeling, La Belle as if to say good-bye, but he drew her nearer and nearer towards him, until her head rested on his breast.

"I will do what you ask me, my darling, if it be possible; but you will give me one kiss before I go?"

"No, no," gently, but firmly, repulsing him, "not until you have sought and found Mifanwy; then she will come back to me." Then with a return of tenderness she drew near once more and laid her head upon his breast.

Ieuan passed his hands tenderly over the brown wavy hair. "Let me go then, dearest," he said, gently leading her to her seat, "for in your presence I cannot be the cold, calculating man you would seem to have me. It will be easy to find Mifanwy; see here, taking Ianto's letter from his pocket, "this letter which I received this morning, tells me she will be at home while I am there. You know I am soon going into Wales; first to the north to see after some property of Sir Glynne's, then down to the old home, and pray God, I may find Mifanwy happy and forgetful. Good-bye, beloved!"

"Good-bye, Ieuan, and God speed you! I know now that you love me."

She listened breathlessly to his footsteps as he went down the stairs and out through the hall. Rising from the sofa, she paced up and down the room with clasped hands and a face aglow with varying expressions. "Now, God speed me, too," she said, "and let the path of honour be the path of happiness." She saw Ieuan disappearing down the street, and, waving a kiss after him, rang out, with a child's glee in her voice, "Good-bye, my Ieuan, but not for long!" She rang the bell. "Come, Bessie," she said, when the little maid appeared, "come and help me to pack. On Monday I am going away, and to-morrow is my last rehearsal, so I shall have no time to spare." And soon they were busily engaged in packing, while Mrs. Roose sat by advising.

"This seems a very sudden and mysterious visit," she remarked, "and I don't feel at all comfortable about your travelling alone; and, Belle dear, who are you going to stay with?"

"I have told you, auntie dear, I am going to see my old foster-parents; there is no mystery about it." Then to Bessie, "Not that pink silk, nor yet that amber satin, only my grey and my white."

"No parties, then?" said Mrs. Roose.

"No, indeed!" replied La Belle, with a happy laugh, "nothing of the kind; only the peat smoke and the cawl under the dear old thatched roof!"

"Well, I hope the charms of the peat smoke and the thatched roof won't dazzle you, so that you forget your engagement at the Opera. Remember Wednesday week will be the 1st of May."

"It will be all right, dear," said the girl, with a joyful ring in her voice. And when Mrs. Roose went down to her tea in the drawing-room, she heard her voice, clear and loud, carolling snatches from the opera she had been practising.

Ieuan knew that the next evening there would be a

full-dress rehearsal of "Lucia," and, having Valpré's card of admission, he determined to be present at it, and then to go forthwith to Wales and face his difficulties. "Surely, surely, La Belle would not resent one day's delay, and surely, too, she would not refuse to accept the dainty gift he had purchased for her." It was a necklet of pearls, very chaste and plain, but costly and beautiful withal.

La Belle was in her dressing-room at the Opera House putting the last touches to her toilette, when Mrs. Roose opened the door leading from the sitting-room or boudoir.

"Here is Mr. Tom Pomfrey, my dear."

"I am ready," the girl replied, entering from her dressing-room; and Tom thought he had never seen her look so lovely. There was a faint colour in her cheeks and a happy sparkle in her eyes.

"Oh, Tom, I am so glad to see you! It is quite nine days since I have seen my brother, and I have so much to tell you. When will you come to Graham Street for a long chat?"

"One day soon," said Tom, holding both her hands and trying to look calmly into the melting eyes. "I can guess your news, dear, and I have already congratulated you in my thoughts; but I will come and hear all about it in a day or two."

"About what, Tom? Nothing has happened; at least, I mean, nothing to be congratulated upon."

"Well, I won't stay now, dear; I came only to wish you good luck this evening. Good-bye." And Tom went away with a puzzled look in his blue eyes.

In a few minutes Ieuan arrived; his coming was so unexpected that a bright flush overspread La Belle's face; and he realised with rapture that it was a flush of pleasure, and that the little nervous flutter of the hand she placed in his marked her delight.

"Mr. Powys, I did not expect you; I thought—thought—"

"You thought I had gone down to Wales; but oh

ma belle, how could I go before to-night's rehearsal! To-morrow, since you are so cruel as to thrust me from you, I will go by the first train in the morning, if that will please you."

"Now, who is cruel?" she answered, with a mischievous smile.

Here Mrs. Roose appeared in bonnet and cloak.

"I am going, dear," she said; "I shall find Mr. and Mrs. Jack Mowbray, and Tom. Perhaps you will join us, Mr. Powys?"

"Yes, in a few minutes," replied Ieuan, beginning to undo the jewel-case.

"What is that?" inquired La Belle; "not a present for me, for I cannot, cannot accept it. I have never accepted jewellery except from M. Valpré." But a glance at Ieuan's face showed there such deep disappointment, such a really wounded look, that she relented so far as to open the case. "How lovely! they are beautiful indeed! and oh! Mr. Powys—Ieuan—I do appreciate your kindness in offering them to me. Are you really hurt, and don't you understand my feelings?"

"No, I don't understand your feelings, and I am really hurt," said Ieuan, smiling mischievously, and wilfully clasping round her neck the pearls. "Now, if you take them off, I will throw them into the fire."

"Oh, how dreadful!" cried La Belle. "You are a domineering man, I am afraid. The fire indeed! no, they are too lovely to be burnt, and I accept them," bending her head and lowering her eyes, "and value them because they come from you."

"Now you are perfection," he exclaimed, admiringly; "and oh, ma belle, let me sit here and gaze my fill at you. Remember that to-morrow I am going." He took her hand in his, and she did not draw it away.

Meanwhile Tom Pinfrey and Mrs. Roose had found Mr. and Mrs. Jack Mowbray.

"How is La Belle?" asked Mrs. Mowbray, "is she very nervous?"

"No, not at all, she is full of the highest spirit and quite self-possessed."

"Bravo!" said Mrs. Mowbray.

Tom and Jack Mowbray were chatting behind them.

"Hope to goodness there will be no hitch of the first," said Jack; "poor old Jean has not been at all well lately; I have not been at all happy about him, but he will not go and see a doctor."

"I have not thought him looking well, myself," said Tom, "but I did not know there was anything to cause uneasiness."

Jack shook his head. "I don't think he is a bit fit, you know. So soon as the opera season is over we have settled to go to dear old Dandeloe, our old home in Brittany, together; take lodgings there, you know. Can't you come with us, Tom? Lounge all day under the apple trees, you know—make hay—curds and whey—and all that, you know."

"Perhaps I will," said Tom. "I feel I want to rest myself; how lovely this overture is!"

"First-rate band. Have you heard that Mr. Powys is very much smitten with La Belle?"

"Yes, and I think she is very fond of him."

"Phew! phew!" said Jack; and, after a moment's silence, he placed his hand on Tom's knee. "Ah! Tom, old fellow! that hurts, doesn't it? I have seen your love for her from the beginning. Wish to God it could have been different! I would give something to save you pain, old fellow."

"Oh, never mind," said Tom wearily; "we'll forget it all under those apple trees, Jack. It is a long overture."

The lights were lowered, and the curtain rose upon the first scene.

Tom Pomfrey, instead of looking at the beautiful scene before him, fixed his eyes on Jack Mowbray, who was gazing earnestly towards one side of the

stage. Tom turned, too, but could see nothing to explain his friend's strange look of anxiety.

"What's the matter, Jack?" he asked; but Jack still stared fixedly at one of the wings, for he had seen a face he knew, but blanched with horror and sudden fear. It was Valpré! who, with a bewildered stare, had rushed for a moment on to the stage and had disappeared again almost instantly.

"Tom," said Mowbray, speaking as calmly as he could, "take Mrs. Roose under your charge, and I will take my wife down this way to the front entrance; if we can get out quickly, well and good; if not, God help us!"

"What is it? what is it?" cried Mrs. Mowbray, in alarm.

"I don't know, dear." She felt his arm tremble while he hurried her out, down the stairs, and into the front hall, where already scared officials were beginning to rush past each other.

"Now across the street," said Mowbray, "and into Whellock, the chemist's shop, and back again at once, Tom. Mr. Whellock, will you take care of these ladies until I come to fetch them? There is something wrong in the Opera House. Good-bye."

Jack Mowbray rushed back from the doorway, and clasped his wife in a warm embrace.

"Good-bye, my darling, I will come back and fetch you soon."

Another moment, and the two men were running past the front of the Opera House round to the side entrance into the new wing. Within, quietness had been restored by the appearance of M. Valpré on the stage; white and haggard, indeed, but speaking in calm and measured tone he assured the frightened actors that there was absolutely no cause for alarm.

"I will speak the plain truth," he said; "the new rooms are on fire, but being only connected with the building by one narrow passage, which at present is absolutely safe, there is no danger, except from your

own rashness and excitement. There will be plenty of time for everyone to leave the Opera House in safety ; so let me implore you to be calm."

His words had a tranquillising effect upon the actors, who quietly and orderly left the stage. The musicians, too, made their escape ; the lights were turned down, and there was a general rush toward the new wing of the building.

When Tom and Jack Mowbray reached the entrance to the second addition to the theatre, in which were situated the dressing-rooms of the prima donna and the leading singers, they realised the true nature of the catastrophe. The new rooms were on fire. They could hear the roaring and the crackling of the flames, while they tore up the first broad flight of steps.

Arrived on the first landing, they were met by a dense cloud of smoke, that seemed to pour with the force of a whirlwind from some further passage. Its volume was so dense and palpable that the two men were struck, as though by a living obstacle determined to thrust them backwards ; but neither gave way an inch.

"Let me lead," said Tom ; "I know the way." And passing Jack Mowbray, he rushed, blinded and choking, along a passage ; then turning suddenly to the left, they entered another that led straight to the rooms allotted to La Belle and Miss Powys. Along this it seemed impossible to make way, for, from the end of the corridor, a still denser cloud of smoke, mixed with flames and showers of sparks, came rushing towards them, carried by a furious draught from the further end.

For a moment they halted, blinded and almost suffocated ; then, to Jack's astonishment, Tom turned round, and began running in an opposite direction, shouting as he went :

"Follow me, Jack ! a rope, a covering."

His voice sounded muffled, as though coming from a distance, so thick was the hot and lurid atmosphere ;

but Jack followed, trusting to Tom's better knowledge of the place. Some time was lost, while they found and opened a door, beyond which were piled ropes, ladders, buckets, etc., etc.

Each seized a rope, and Tom dragged from a corner a heavy piece of folded tarpaulin, and flung it over his shoulder. Thus burdened, they again essayed to traverse the burning passage. Nearest to them was La Belle's door, and beyond that, at the furthest end of the passage, was Miss Powys's.

Elizabeth had been the first to discover the fire. A quarter of an hour earlier, she had been sitting in her dressing-room filled with fluttering anticipations, mixed with envious heartburnings, anent her rival; but these had all been put to flight by a hurried visit from Mr. Camperton with a telegram apprising him of the old earl's death.

"She would be Countess of Marchmont! Good-bye! Good-bye to the opera! Good-bye to La Belle, and, alas! good-bye to Ieuan! She would sing to-night so as to charm every ear and eye," and in a dream of bliss she sat waiting for the call-boy's tinkle.

Suddenly, at an unwonted sound, she started, and went closer to the window; her room was in an angle looking on to a courtyard, the bare wall of the theatre facing it. What was that light in the window next to hers? She peered again through the darkness. Her window being in the corner of the square, that or the next room was at right angles to it; looking at it with eager gaze, she became conscious that the darkness of this window was becoming lighter. She watched it spellbound, growing first into a tawny grey, and now—yes—she was certain—it was a lurid red.

In a moment she guessed what had happened, and thoroughly alive to her danger, she snatched a cloak from the cupboard, and clutching her jewel-box, rushed madly into the corridor, already filled with

curling clouds of smoke. She had no thought but for her own escape—to think of anyone else in such a moment of peril would have been contrary to Elizabeth's whole nature—so she fled for her life; but at the sight of La Belle's door a sudden feeling of vindictive pleasure she could not resist surged through her heart.

"She will be burnt, and Ieuan will be free!" With the rapidity of lightning the thought flashed upon her brain.

By some unlucky chance, the key of La Belle's door had been left on the outside, and while Elizabeth was rushing past, a horrible impulse overcame her, and almost mechanically she turned the key in the lock, and flinging it away, sped onwards.

On the first landing she met Mr. Camperton, who was hurrying, pale and breathless, through the fast thickening smoke. He held his arms wide open, when he saw Elizabeth approach.

"Oh, my darling! thank God!" he cried, while he clasped her to his heart.

She had flung herself into his arms, and partly through terror, and partly from horror of the hideous deed she had just committed, she fell into a swoon, her jewel-box clattering down the steps before her.

Mr. Camperton raised her tenderly, and picking up the box, managed to carry her into the street, which was fast filling with the crowd, who were rushing from every direction.

"A cab, a cab!" he shouted, and a dozen eager helpers at once hurried away, and procured one for him. He placed Elizabeth within it, and getting in himself, drove her home at once—only remembering Mrs. Elliott and her maid, when Elizabeth returned to consciousness, and called that lady's name.

"Mrs. Elliott, where is my jewel-box?" were her first words; and it was only the sight of the box, which Mr. Camperton held up to her, that soothed her into quietness.

Meanwhile, Tom and Jack were battling with the smoke and flames, which now filled the passage through which Elizabeth had escaped. The door connecting the new rooms with the theatre was at this moment opened, and a number of the officials and employées rushed down a flight of steps, that led to the passage in front of La Belle's door; but they were thrust back by the roaring flames, that now, sucked up by the freshly-opened door, rushed up the staircase.

For a moment, the space in front of La Belle's door was comparatively free from smoke. Tom and Jack seized the opportunity, and made a bolt at the door, shouting while they did so, "Fire! fire! La Belle! La Belle!"

When Tom found that the door resisted all his efforts, a storm of agony burst over him, and tears filled his eyes, and deep sobs shook his frame, while he madly strove to burst it open.

"Again, Jack! together, for God's sake!" And once more they flung themselves against the door, which at last gave way, though slowly, as if something heavy were against it.

La Belle and Ieuan had passed the "waiting time" in a dream of happiness; the fear of Bessie's arrival, or a visit from M. Valpré, gave the little episode a spice of apprehension that but enhanced its charm.

To know that this angelic being, in dress of shimmering white, loved *him*, though she still refused to become all his own! No creature of air or imagination, but a living, breathing woman. Yes, her heart was his, and his alone; that he believed firmly now.

And to know, thought La Belle, that this broad-shouldered, clear-eyed, handsome man was Ieuan! That he whom she had thought so far removed from her was now so near and so devoted to her!

They did not speak much—there was no need for words; each knew that the other was living in a blissful consciousness of love! They did not notice that

the atmosphere had grown heavy and thick with smoke until La Belle coughed.

"Is this fog," she asked, "or is it smoke?"

Ieuan looked round. "It is smoke," he said "where does it come from?" And, drawing aside the curtains, he peered out into the darkness; then catching sight of the lurid light in the window that Elizabeth had also seen, he dropped the curtains hastily. "Ma belle! let us go, dearest, at once; it is fire!" Then dragging a heavy fur cloak from the sofa, he wrapped her in it, and drew her hastily towards the door; already they could hear the roaring of the flames and the crackling of the burning wood.

"The fire is that way," he continued, pointing with his right hand, "and the entrance door is on the left, so we can easily escape. Don't be frightened, darling."

"No, I am not frightened; you will save us both. But poor M. Valpré! it is for him I grieve."

"How do you open the door? I cannot undo it."

"Oh, quite easily," said La Belle, taking hold of the handle; but no, the door would not open! "It is locked!" she exclaimed, turning deadly pale. "Oh, what shall we do?"

Ieuan shook the door frantically, and pulled with all his might—it would not yield; and every moment the air grew heavier with smoke. He rushed to the window, and, opening it, called and shouted till he was hoarse, still keeping hold of La Belle's hand, as though this dire calamity might part them. In despair he turned away. She was already gasping for breath. He carried her to the open window, and held her up; but the air outside was filled with sparks and smoke; so he closed the window, and carried her towards the door. The movement revived her somewhat. She flung her arms around his neck, and burst into a flood of tears.

"Oh, Mr. Powys—Ieuan! Good-bye! I am glad we are together."

He clasped her to his heart. "Oh, God! can it be possible?" he cried. "Oh, must we die? And such a death for you, my darling!"

"Good-bye, Ieuan," murmured La Belle once more; "you know—I—"

"Not good-bye, my darling, for we die together."

While the words were yet upon his lips, he felt her slip from his arms, and, in a few moments, he, too, had succumbed to the thick, smoky atmosphere.

It was at this moment that Tom and Jack Mowbray succeeded in forcing an entrance into the room. The sight that met their view caused a double pang to Tom, for, lying close behind the door, were the figures of Ieuan and La Belle, and both, to all appearance, lifeless. Ieuan had evidently clasped her in his arms in a last embrace before he had become unconscious, for she still lay in them, though their hold had loosened. Jack Mowbray at once seized Ieuan, and, though struggling for breath and almost stupefied, managed to lift him over his shoulders, and rush into the passage, which had, by the uprush to the higher landing, become slightly cleared of smoke and flames; and he would, doubtless, have succeeded in saving both Ieuan and himself from injury, had not a sudden faintness conquered him when he reached the staircase. The impetus of his headlong speed brought him and his unconscious burden violently down the stone staircase into the street. They were instantly seized by some persons in the crowd, and carried out of danger.

Tom, meanwhile, in the burning room above, had spread the tarpaulin he had brought with them on the floor, and tenderly, though hastily, had laid La Belle upon it, and wrapped it round her. Then he raised her on his shoulders, and followed in Jack Mowbray's wake. But in the few moments thus employed, the fire had made rapid progress, and when

he reached the top of the staircase, blinded and staggering with suffocation, he saw that the outer doorway was blocked by a perfect sheet of flame.

In desperation he turned to seek some other way of escape; but in a moment he realised that the only chance was to make a rush through the flames themselves. His breath was failing, and his knees were trembling, but, with a supreme effort, he gathered his whole remaining strength together. At the same moment he felt, even through the suffocating numbness, an excruciating spasm as though something within had snapped; but controlling his agony with his will, he ran down the stairs, and, reaching the sheet of flame below, rushed madly through it, and headlong on to the roadway as Jack Mowbray had done before him. The flames seemed loth to lose their victim, for they now rushed outwards, and seemed to lick the street with their long, scorching tongues; but some amongst the crowd rushed forward and dragged the fallen bodies from the flames. The tarpaulin burden Tom had carried was quickly opened, and within it lay La Belle, smirched and blackened by the smoke and still unconscious, but unharmed. She was recognised by her dress, and carried in to Mr. Wheelock's shop, whence Ieuan had already been conveyed to his own home, and Jack Mowbray to the hospital, whither also poor Tom Pomfrey had been taken.

Before the next morning dawned, the fire had been completely conquered. The firemen had concentrated their efforts upon the new building, and had succeeded in extinguishing the flames before they had reached the Opera House itself.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TOM POMFREY.

WHEN Mifanwy returned to consciousness, she was lying in her own bed, and Mrs. Roose was bending tenderly over her. She was a self-contained young woman, and did not even say "Where am I?" but, turning her eyes on Mrs. Roose, she waited while slowly her ideas collected strength, and memories of the scenes of the previous night came crowding to her brain.

"You are awake, dear," said Mrs. Roose softly.

Her lips moved, but she did not answer.

"Yes," interposed the doctor, "she has been conscious some little time; she is coming to herself calmly, like a strong, sensible young woman. Don't flurry her with questions." So they waited quietly, while the girl thought out the situation.

She remembered the Opera House; the music seemed ringing in her brain; the yellow satin furniture of her boudoir; her own white dress, and Ieuan coming in at the door; sweet words and looks of love; and then, a roaring, rushing sound, a stifling air, an agony of farewell—and—nothing more.

Then she remembered; there had been a fire! and Ieuan, where was he? The soul within her awoke to suffering and anxiety.

"Oh, auntie, where is he?"

"Where is who, dear child?"

"Oh! Ieuan, Ieuan, where is he?"

"She must mean Mr. Powys," explained Mrs. Roose.

"Yes, yes, Ieuan Gwynn; where is he? we were together."

"If you mean Mr. Gwynn Powys, he is safe, my dear," replied the doctor; "quite safe and in his own home at Sir Glynne Meredith's."

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"I will tell you the exact truth," said the doctor, sitting down beside her, and taking her hand. "He was carried out from the burning building by some brave man; they both fell down the stairs together; the man was taken to the hospital with a broken arm, and Mr. Powys was carried to his own home uninjured, save for a slight burn on one hand. He soon recovered consciousness upon reaching the fresh air. That is all I have heard, but, if you will be quite still I will go to his doctor, and find out exactly how he is so soon as I have had some breakfast. There is no hurry, my dear, for I assure you it was but a slight injury."

Mifanwy groaned.

"Come now," he said, "you can't expect everyone to have escaped from a burning building scot free, as you have—not a hair singed, not a burn on your body, and, so far as I can see, with such a good constitution, that, in a few hours, you will be as well as ever. Come now, be calm and still, and to-morrow you will be well enough to go and see this fortunate young man."

"I will be quiet and patient," answered La Belle, "if you will go and see him, and tell me truly how he is."

"I was so fortunate," he told her, on his return, "as to find Dr. Hamilton at Sir Glynne Meredith's; he assured me that Mr. Powys was suffering only from a burn on his left hand, that shows every sign of healing rapidly. He insists, however, upon his keeping his bed for a few days, for his system has received a shock and he must avoid all excitement. To satisfy you, I went up to see him with Dr. Hamilton, and, in my

opinion, the only serious symptom in his case," and there was a mischievous twinkle in the doctor's eye, "was his extreme anxiety about the lady in whose company he was when the fire broke out. That anxiety I was enabled to allay, for I gather that you are the lady. I told him you had escaped uninjured, thanks to the brave man who saved you. I told him, further, that you would be quite well in a day or two, and that he might come and see you so soon as his doctor would allow it. I am sorry to say his remarks were anything but respectful to his medical adviser. I am not sure that he didn't say, 'Hang the doctor! I shall get up to-morrow.'"

Belle smiled, but rather wearily; her thoughts were busy with the fire. In the afternoon she insisted upon getting up; but, when she reached the drawing-room, she was glad enough to lie on the sofa for the remainder of the day. Early in the afternoon all her fears for Ieuan's safety were laid at rest by his appearance, a little pale, and with his arm in a sling, but, otherwise, as well as ever. Mrs. Roose considerably left the room, when he approached La Belle, who lay propped up with cushions; she stretched out both her hands to take his unhurt hand, and though, for the moment, her thoughts could find no words, Ieuan somehow was quite satisfied. He drew his chair beside her and raised her hands to his lips.

"We have been close to death together!" were her first words.

"We have, indeed," said Ieuan, "and thank God you are safe. Death is always a revealer, and, after standing so near him side by side, ma belle, no cloud or difference can come between us."

"Never again," and that was all her answer. Then a silence of embarrassment fell upon them; deep down in Ieuan's heart was echoing a song of joy whose tones drowned all the fear and horror of the previous night; for in the hour of death she had dropped all

disguise, and pressed her lips to his with words of loving farewell; and she, although the whole scene was like a troubled dream to her, still remembered how completely she had revealed her love for him. At last, she spoke.

"Mr. Powys!"

"Oh, good heavens! do not return to that."

"Yes," she responded, in a firm though gentle voice. "I must. You must be generous to me; in a moment of terror and weakness I forgot myself; be kind to me now, and forget my words."

Ieuan shook his head.

"Well, bury them out of sight, until—"

"Until what?"

"Until you have been to Wales and found Mifanwy."

"Surely, surely," pleaded Ieuan, "you are not going to insist upon this mad project?"

"Yes," she said; "I claim the fulfilment of your promise," and she held out her hand. "Good-bye! the path of duty is plain; if you love me, go! the issue is with God."

"I will go," said Ieuan, starting up; "but, before God, I swear to you that no man was ever asked for a more trying proof of love. Good-bye, La Belle! you shall not see me again until I have executed your behest, and if evil come of it, remember it is not my doing."

He seized her hand and covered it with kisses. When he was gone, she buried her face in the sofa and cried softly.

Ieuan's first visit was to the hospital, where he learnt that Tom Pomfrey, to his deep regret, was suffering from severe injuries, but that Mr. Mowbray was not seriously burnt. He was undecided whether to return and break the sad news to La Belle himself, or to leave her undisturbed, in the hope that she might receive better news in the morning; but, after a night made restless by conflicting emotions, and the pain

arising from his burn, he started for North Wales in the early morning.

La Belle rapidly recovered, and, with the help of Mrs. Roose's information, pieced together her memories of the preceding day, until she had formed a pretty correct idea of all that had occurred.

"Auntie," she said suddenly, when, towards evening, Mrs. Roose appeared with a dainty little tea for both of them, "I know who saved me."

"How do you know, dear?" asked Mrs. Roose, looking rather guilty, for she had heard from Mrs. Mowbray that, though her husband was suffering only from a broken arm and was doing well, poor Tom Pomfrey was dying from some internal injury sustained during his exertions in saving La Belle's life. Mrs. Roose had been anxious not to distress or excite her patient by any allusion to Tom Pomfrey, and was now considerably dismayed at her remark.

"I don't know how I know; but *I am sure* that it was Tom. You say Mr. Mowbray saved Mr. Powys, and I am convinced it was no other than Tom who rescued me."

"Well, I daresay it was, dear; Dr. Goodrich said it was some brave man. Two lumps, dear? Hasn't Bessie made these tea cakes well? She is really quite a clever cook. When you get well—"

"Oh, auntie, never mind the tea cakes; tell me about Tom; was he hurt? Where is he? If he were well, I know he would come and see me."

"Well, I did hear something about his being hurt a little, dear, and being taken to the hospital with Mr. Mowbray."

La Belle sighed and put down her cup. "Tomorrow I must go to him."

"Oh! I don't know what Dr. Goodrich will say to that."

"And M. Valpré, auntie? Where is he?"

"Oh! Belle, dear," answered the poor lady in de-

spair, "don't ask me questions; I can only give painful answers. Wait till you are better."

"I need not ask," replied La Belle. "I know seemed to have known all along, M. Valpré was but in the fire."

"No, dear, no, indeed," said Mrs. Roose, giving vent to her tears; "thank God, he was spared that! He was found lying dead on the couch in his private room. He must have felt ill when he came on stage to try to calm the actors; then he must have gone straight to his own room, and thrown himself on the couch; it must have been very sudden, Belle, and I should think, painless, for his fingers were still in his waistcoat pocket, holding a little bottle of some restorative drops he used to take to relieve the spasms of the heart, from which he suffered."

"Yes, I have seen him take them," said La Belle sadly. "God has been very merciful to me and Ieuan. But, oh! auntie, the fire will have taken from me two good friends."

"Tom is not dead, dear."

"Oh, I pray he may live; at any rate, till I see him."

And, for the remainder of the evening, she lay very still and silent, her thoughts being more with Tom than Ieuan.

Immediately after breakfast on the following morning, a telegram was brought her; the contents she divined at once.

"It is about Tom," she said; and so it was. A telegram from Mrs. Mowbray—

"Tom is dying—can you come?"

In less than half an hour she was at the hospital with Mrs. Roose. She was pale and frightened, but outwardly quite calm, so that the nurse who met her did not hesitate to take her at once to the bedside of the dying man. The nurse preceded her up a long row of beds to one round which a screen was placed. When she passed round the corner of the screen, the

sight that met her eyes was sad indeed. There lay poor Tom, the beauty of his manly form disfigured by swathing bandages, his head and face unrecognisable from the injuries he had received; his eyes only seemed unhurt, and as La Belle approached, they fixed themselves upon her hungrily. A tender-hearted nurse was holding up the heavy head. La Belle slipped quietly into her place, and, passing her arm under the shoulders of the invalid, let him rest upon her breast.

"Is it Mifanwy?" he panted, in a hoarse whisper.

"Yes, dearest Tom, Mifanwy, for whom you have sacrificed your life."

"Thank God for that," he said. "He is merciful," and, with panting breath and heaving chest, he continued, "I never expected . . . such happiness as this . . . to die in your arms. Mifanwy . . . you will take Sultan with you . . . will you not?"

"Yes, yes, wherever I go." The tears were streaming down her face, and her bosom heaved with the sobs she vainly strove to check.

"Are you crying for me, dear? Shall you . . . miss me . . . from your life?"

"Oh, Tom, Tom!" sobbed La Belle, "how can I live without you, my beloved brother?"

Tom whispered again, "Thank God! Lay me down now, and come where I can see you."

She gently laid his head upon the pillow, and, kneeling beside him, looked into the fast darkening eyes. She stooped towards the disfigured face, and kissed the blistered lips. A light flashed in his eyes, and he whispered a few words, unintelligible to the nurse, but which Mifanwy heard distinctly, and well knew their meaning, "Where there is no marrying, or giving in marriage."

There was unbroken silence after this, and Mifanwy knew that the brave, patient spirit had departed, leaving her with an appointment to meet where all aching hearts find rest.

One passionate burst of tears, and La Belle had calmed her storm of sorrow sufficiently to accompany Mrs. Roose into an ante-room, where old Pomfrey and his wife had just arrived.

They had left Tom, the evening before, a little better, though the nurse knew that the cessation of his pain was only the beginning of the end, and the grief was, at first, quite uncontrollable. La Belle's presence, and her gentle words of sympathy, gradually comforted and soothed them.

"Ah! my boy, my boy! the best that ever lived! Well, he shall 'ave a funeral as'll show London what I thought on him; yes, that he shall! A grand procession and the 'Dead March in Saul!'"

"Oh! no—no—no!" implored La Belle, in real distress, "Tom would never have liked that. No, Mr. Pomfrey, just think what he himself would like, and do exactly that."

"Yes," added Mrs. Pomfrey, through her sobs, "he wouldn't 'ave liked no grandeur."

Old Pomfrey looked terribly flustered. "What would you like 'im to be buried in a parish 'earse, perhaps! and you an me in a cab be'ind? Not for me, boy Tom!"

Here Mifanwy laid her hand gently on the old man's arm; she knew his character too well to doubt that his desire was only to show respect and honour to his son's memory.

"Dear Mr. Pomfrey," she said, "have only a quiet hearse and two mourning coaches—one for you and Mrs. Pomfrey, and the other for me and Mrs. Mowbray."

The old man brightened a little. "Will you come, my dear? That 'ud please Tom better than anything else."

And so it was settled, and in a few days all the mortal of Tom Pomfrey was laid to rest in a shady corner of the cemetery at Kensal Green, and within a few yards of him Jean Valpré also found his

final resting-place. And what matters it, that in this solitary corner, while the world goes on its way with smiles and laughter, the grass waves green, and the boughs bend low, and the flowers bloom over them? Two good men have gone to their rest, or rather, to freer life, and greater work and interests!

CHAPTER XXXV.

RECOGNITION.

AFTER the funeral, La Belle soon became herself having a good constitution, a clear conscience, and mind free from cobwebs. Deep in her heart of heart she had buried the memory of her faithful friend, and she quite realised that life held out to her many duties as well as pleasures; and when, in the following week she waved her last good-byes to Mrs. Roose and Bessie at the station at Paddington, no one would have guessed that under that calm exterior so many varying emotions strove together. Sorrow for Tom's pleasant anticipations of happiness in the old cottage, wondering doubts as to whether the path she was now treading would lead to joy or sorrow. Ieuan had been gone nearly a fortnight, and she had heard nothing of him beyond a casual remark dropped by Lady Meredith, who had shown La Belle much sympathy and kindness during her late time of trouble. She had called several times, and had given her a pressing invitation to come and stay with her to recruit.

"Ieuan is in Wales, as you know, my dear." And the vivid blush on her young companion's face did not escape her notice. "You must not be too cruel to him, dear; remember he, too, has suffered lately," and she pressed the girl's hand with a meaning look, but observing the fluttering breath and the drooping eyes, she hastened to change the conversation. "I have a wonderful piece of news for you: the Earl of Marchmont and Elizabeth were quietly married yesterday at St. George's. It is shockingly near the

old earl's death ; but that is their business, not ours, my dear, and, certainly, Mr. Camperton had waited long and patiently. They have gone to Paris, I hear."

"I hope they will be very happy," said La Belle.

"Yes," said Lady Meredith ; "Elizabeth will enjoy being a countess. I do wish you would come and stay with us."

But La Belle had her own path to follow, and her own plans to carry out, so she quietly declined her friend's invitation "for the present ; but I will come another time, if you will have me, dear Lady Meredith."

"Whenever you can come, my dear."

And so she had felt free to go ; and when, on the following Monday, the train had fairly left the station, she sank into a corner with a sigh of satisfaction. Now she had the threads of her destiny in her fingers, and was weaving a pattern long fashioned in her mind ; now the flower of her love and Ieuan's was bursting into bud ; now the long frustrated hopes would see their fruition ; the night was passing, the day was dawning ; her eyes glistened with inward happiness.

On and on, by sunny fields and orchards, by river and mountain and wood, until, late in the evening, she arrived at the old familiar station at Caer Madoc, and impatient to reach home, she hired a carriage to take her to her journey's end. She got out at the top of the moor, and having paid the driver, told him to place her box behind a furze bush, where it would have been quite safe until next day, but from whence Ianto fetched it in his wheelbarrow a little later. Once more she ran over the springy grass, light of foot, and light of heart. There was the silver sea stretching away before her ; the moon already riding high in the twilight sky ; the sun had sunk behind his watery bed, but had left behind long trails of purple and crimson, and a ruddy glow.

"Oh, I know quite well how he went down," said

Mifanwy, while she mounted the knoll above the cottage; "haven't I seen it a hundred times in my thoughts, and in my dreams. And here is the dear snug roof, and here is the blue smoke curling up. Shân has a bonnie fire! And now—to take them by surprise, and make their old hearts rejoice."

She walked very gingerly round the "pine end" of the house, and on to the tiny window, which was glowing with light from the blazing fire of turf. The bwdran was simmering in the crock that hung down from the chimney, and in the light and shadow of the blazing turfs Shân and Ianto sat watching it, and singing, with quavering voices, an old Welsh hymn.

Mifanwy knew it well, and, outside the window, joined in softly in her bell-like tones.

"What is that?" said Shân suddenly, and she pushed back the handkerchief she always wore tied over her ears.

"I heard nothing," replied Ianto.

"Thee is getting as deaf as a post!" she snapped. "I heard it, I tell thee! Mifanwy's voice ringing in my ears."

"Oh, I hear it there, too," agreed Ianto; "often and often I go to sleep with the sound of her voice in my ears."

"Well, we can sing the second verse before the bwdran is ready." And again the old voices were raised together, and again the fresh, clear voice outside chimed in.

"Is it a spirit?" said Shân, in an awed voice.

"No!" said Mifanwy rushing in, "it is I, mother! Mifanwy, your own Mifanwy, come to sing with you, and to hug you, and to have supper with you! I am as hungry as a hunter, and no spirit, I can tell you!" Then there were happy greetings and warm welcomes.

"Oh, my child, my child! my 'cream and roses' come again! Oh, Ianto bach, there's a beauty, she is!"

"Twt, twt," said Ianto, drawing his cuff over his

eyes, "beauty or no beauty, she is here with us, woman, and she is hungry!" And they were soon seated at the old oak table, questioning and answering questions between the mouthfuls of *bwdran*.

"Oh that I had got a white loaf for thee, my child," said *Shân*. "How can thy dainty teeth bite this black bread? To-morrow I will bake thee a wheaten loaf as white as a dog's tooth, and get cream from *Maen Powys*!"

"*Shân anwy!*" cried *Mifanwy*, "don't let me see a white loaf while I am here. I have longed and longed for a bit of barley bread, and now here it is, soft and sweet, and just delicious! And what *bwdran*, *Shân*! but yours is always good?"

"Well, yes, indeed," said *Shân*; "everyone says my *bwdran* is the best they ever tasted. I don't know why it is, unless it is because I always sing 'O *Frynian Caersalem*' while it is boiling. And to think thou shouldst remember the old hymn so well, my child!"

"I remember them all," replied *Mifanwy*, cutting another hunch of bread, "and will sing them all to you to-morrow, if you like. But what is *Ianto* thinking about?" and she playfully patted his rough, horny hand with her own white fingers.

Ianto was bursting with an important secret, and, after sundry winks and nods from *Shân*, he brought it out.

"What dost think, *Mifanwy*? *Ieuan* is coming! He will be here on Wednesday, quite early in the morning. What dost think of that, my girl?"

"Oh, delightful!" cried *Mifanwy*, clapping her hands, and fully entering into the old people's glee.

"He won't be sleeping here, it's true," went on *Ianto*. "He'll sleep at the Hall, or perhaps at *Maen Powys*, for thee knowest *Maen Powys* belongs to him now?" *Mifanwy* nodded. "But I'll be bound he won't spend much of his time there, unless he is very much altered. Oh! thee won't know him, *Mifanwy*; so grand! so broad! so straight!" And the old man

drew himself up, and strutted about the floor. "Never a smarter man trod the heather, Mifanwy; but his clothes! rough frieze, Mifanwy! no better than Robert the Mill's on Sunday."

"And thee'st not very smart, too," said Shân, looking critically at the soft grey dress. "But there! I believe if thee hadst an old red petticoat and ragged hat, thee wouldst look a beauty!"

"No more compliments, Shân; let me leave them with the grand dresses and the white bread in London!"

"Oh, thee hast grand dresses, then?" said Shân, with growing interest.

"Oh, plenty; silks and satins, as many as you like; but down here I shall be happier in my plain frocks and my wooden shoes; there they are under my little stool. To-morrow I will fit them on."

And then Ianto was dispatched to fetch the box, which he soon brought trundling down over the moonlit inoor, while Shân and Mifanwy chatted by the peat fire, the old woman never tiring in her devoted attentions to the long-absent child of her heart.

The next day was spent in visiting all the old familiar scenes, which had so often filled the girl's heart with longing; first Topper's grave, and then all over the cliffs, and round by the winding road, following the stream towards the beach; for Shân, though old and wrinkled, was not infirm, and could still do a good many miles walking over the moor, to visit a friend, or carry her chickens to market; and now, dressed in her Sunday clothes, with the scarlet mantle, and black leather gloves well drawn up over her arms, and with her beautiful foster-child beside her, she was filled with proud content, and stepped out bravely. Ianto had gone, as usual, in the early morning to his work. He had promised to finish a job for Mrs. Powys that day, and not even Mifanwy's arrival was

allowed to interfere with his punctual attendance at the turnip field; but he repaid himself with the pleasure of spreading about the news of the arrival that had brought such happiness to himself and Shân.

"Hoi, Twm," he shouted, standing in the middle of the turnip field, and recognising a friend who was ploughing on the brow of the hill, "hast heard our Mifanwy has come?"

"Os possib!" shouted the man in return.

Ianto stooped to his turnips, but soon glanced round in search of someone else to whom he could impart his tidings; but there was no one in sight, except two little ragged urchins, who were gathering daisies on the sunny hedge of the turnip-field.

"Hoi, shemi bach," shouted Ianto again, "tell your mother that Mifanwy has come home." And off toddled the little ones to spread the news along the road.

It was a gala day indeed for Shân, who took Mifanwy into the different cottages which bordered the road. In every house there were glad greetings for the girl, and congratulations for the old woman, who felt her cup of happiness almost too full.

"Weil, I am glad," said old Matti, the weaver's wife, "that she has come once more before I die. I shall hear her sing again, and then I shall want no other music until I hear the angels' voices."

"I will sing, indeed," said Mifanwy, "whenever you like, Matti fach. It will be a delight to me to sing to my own dear people, who love and feel music as I do myself."

Together with the tidings of Mifanwy's arrival went abroad into every gabled farm and straw-thatched cottage the news that she would sing to them. This was the greatest kindness she could confer upon this musical people, and at once her popularity was assured in her old neighbourhood.

A group of sailors stood leaning against Peggi Pant's garden hedge, sunning themselves amongst the

daffodils, and when Shân and Mifanwy approached, they cast looks of admiration at the girl.

"Who's this lass," said Robin Hughes, "with old Shân? On my word, she is a beauty!"

"So she is, and no mistake," said Dick Penpwl. "Who can she be? Why, it is Mifanwy! Good morning, Shân fach; here's a lovely day, and here's a bonny face thou art bringing with thee to shine upon us, and to set us all topsy-turvy."

"Aha! my boys," cried Shân triumphantly; "haven't I told you many times that Mifanwy was coming one day? and here she is. Aha! Dick Penpwl, who will laugh at me now for calling her my 'cream and roses'?"

"Who, indeed i," replied Dick, politely taking off his cap, an action imitated by the others.

Mifanwy, amused and pleased, shook hands warmly with them all, sending by each some word of greeting to mother, sister, or friend. After she had passed on, there was a sheepish silence, broken at last by Dick Penpwl.

"Deuce anwl! who'd have thought she'd have grown up such a beauty?"

"Let's go up to-night and ask her to sing," suggested Robin Hughes.

"She will, she will," said a lad who joined them from one of the cottages. "She said she would sing to us all, and when we like."

"Well, indeed! there's nice she is," said the sailors, turning away, and, with hands deep in their pockets, slouching down the road after the two women.

"There's straight she walks," said one, "and there's red lips she's got."

"What's the matter, Josh?" as one of them came to a sudden stop, and slapped his leg vigorously.

"Oh, drabbitsie!" said Josh emphatically; "it's all up with us, my boys. Her lips may be red, and her skin may be like milk, but she's not for any of us; Ianto told me last night that Ieuan Gwyllt is coming

home on Wednesday ; and, of course, with a gentleman like him in and out of the cottage we sha'n't get a wink at her."

There was no controverting this reasoning ; so, after a few squirts of tobacco, there was silence again.

In the afternoon Shân and Mifanwy had worked their way under the cliffs to Abersethin, the tide having gone down and left a strip of yellow sand beyond the boulders, enough to walk upon.

"We must come back over the hill," said Shân, "for the tide will be in after tea. I sent Billy Pant this morning early to tell Catrin we were coming to tea ; she likes to have a few hours' notice to get her light cakes mixed."

Catrin Howells stood at her door awaiting them, with her arms akimbo.

"Well, I thought you were never coming," she exclaimed. "Why, it is quite half-past three. Where have you been ? Come here, child, out of the sunlight ; my old eyes are dazzled by it. Come in, come in."

And she piloted Mifanwy into the old shady kitchen, where Dan Howells still sat on the settle, with the little round table beside him, and the empty glass.

"Here she is, Dan," shouted Catrin. He had become very deaf. "Didst ever see such a bonnie thing ? Look at the straightness of her, and the whiteness of her skin. Why, the fairies must have changed thee, child ; must have whisked away the little brown maiden, and put one of their own daughters in her place."

"Not a bit of it, Catrin," laughed Mifanwy ; "my skin is whiter, because, you see, it was so delicate that the sun had more effect upon it than on other people's."

"Well, true," said Catrin ; "I remember as a baby thou wert very white."

It was a good thing that Mifanwy was proof

against flattery, for everywhere she was met with the same admiring compliments.

"Take off thy hat, lass; ah! what a mass of hair; and those are the tangled skeins I used to think looked like the dried sea-weed on the sand. Well, Shân woman, thou hast more than thy share of happiness, for I hear Mr. Powys is coming on Wednesday."

She was careful not to show too much familiarity with him, for Mifanwy's appearance had already suggested to her sharp wits that, with such a temptress before him, he might forget his position and fall in love with his old companion.

"What sort of a place hast thou got?" she asked Mifanwy. "Dost ever see Mr. Ieuan Powys in London?"

Mifanwy had expected this question, and had made up her mind that, since secrecy was no longer necessary, she would not keep her friends in the dark.

"Oh, yes," she said, in as calm a voice as she could command, "I have seen him sometimes."

A tell-tale blush spread over her face, that Catrin was quick to notice; but Shân had not observed it.

"Seen him!" she cried. "Seen my Ieuan, and never told me a word about it?"

"I did not think it worth while telling you, Shân," replied Mifanwy, conquering her embarrassment, "since I was coming down so soon, and Ieuan, too."

"H'm!" muttered Catrin thoughtfully, examining the light cake on her plate. "H'm, hast heard when he's going to be married?"

"No, indeed; is he going to be married?"

"Twt, twt; if thee hast seen him, thee know'st all about that."

"Indeed, I have not heard it."

Shân was satisfied; but Catrin renewed her questions.

"Hast got a good place, girl? I see by thy soft, fine dress that it is good; and thy shoes and gloves, and that

black velvet hat, are of the very best materials ; so I know that thee hast good wages, and I know that, too, by thy kindness to thy old foster-mother. Thee'st a good girl, Mifanwy ; but now, take Catrin Howells' advice, and, if any of the gentry tell thee thou art pretty, don't believe a word they say."

"I won't, Catrin," said Mifanwy, laughing ; "I'll tell them I know better. But I am in no situation ; I have left my mistress a long time ago, though I still go and see her sometimes."

"That's right," said Catrin, nodding over her tea ; "a good servant is always welcome at an old mistress's house. And how dost thou live, child ?"

"By my singing. I sing at concerts, and get paid so much that I have quite enough to live upon for the rest of my life ; and I'm soon coming home for good, to live with Shân and Ianto again."

"That's right ; merch i, caton pawb ! I must look out for a husband for thee at once. I suppose, now, thee'lt expect to have a ship-captain, at least."

"Oh, at least," replied Mifanwy, taking her banter in good part.

"Well," said Shân, "I have come out to tea to-night to hear some news, it seems to me. Well, well, I shall have a good deal to tell Ianto this evening."

Dan had not yet spoken, but sat munching silently the light cakes Catrin put before him. When Shân and Mifanwy at last rose to go, he straightened himself wonderfully, and, taking the girl's hand, exclaimed admiringly :

"Lodes lan ! lodes lan !" (pretty girl) "mind thee marry Ieuan G. yllt. I have settled it so."

Fortunately for Mifanwy's blushes, Catrin and Shân had already reached the door, a fact that Dan was quite cunning enough to be aware of.

"Good-bye, good-bye," cried Catrin at the door. "Come down again soon, merch i, and I will tell thee which ship-captain I have chosen for thee."

"Well, indeed," cried Shân, as she trudged sturdily

up the hill, much refreshed by the tea and light cakes 'the ways of Providence are wonderful! Who'd have thought that my little Mifanwy would ever have looked up to a ship-captain for a husband?"

When they were seated at supper, the peat-fire glowing and the moon looking in at the window Shân said:

"Now, then, Mifanwy, tell Ianto thy wonderful tales."

"I will tell him everything—you, too, Shân—on one condition, that you promise not to repeat to Ieuan a word of what I am going to say until I have seen him and spoken to him myself."

"Quite fair, lass," said Ianto, "and I promise."

"I promise, too," Shân added, "though it will be very hard."

"Twt, twt, woman; never mind the hardness. What is it, lass?"

"Well, first, then, I have seen Ieuan many times in London."

"And spoken to him?"

She nodded. "But he did not know me. Father and mother—you have heard of La Belle Russe?"

"Of course," cried the old people in a breath; "and seen her picture on the almanac in Rhys Thomas' shop."

"Yes, and Mary the Mill's little bird is called Labelrws."

"Oh, yes," put in Ianto; "everyone has heard of her."

"Well, I am La Belle Russe."

If a thunderbolt had fallen on the little cottage table, it would not have created more consternation than this announcement. Ianto pushed his chair back, and stared; Shân gasped in astonishment.

"Labelrws—our Mifanwy! to be that great singer! Why, I have heard that the Queen has been to hear her sing!"

Mifanwy enjoyed their astonishment to the full

she had over and over again pictured to herself the pleasure of this *dénouement*, and the reality was in no wise less delightful than the anticipation; she felt her cup brimming over with happiness. To be able thus to state in plain words to her foster-parents the fact of her success in life! It was better and sweeter to the taste than all the plaudits of the London public; it was the crowning triumph of her life; and, brooding over it all, was the supreme happiness of the consciousness that Ieuan was coming on the morrow!

"In the afternoon he will be here," she said to herself; "to-morrow he will come down the heath, and in at the door here." And the words seemed to repeat themselves in her mind, while the old people tried to get used to the notion of her greatness.

"And he didn't know thee?" asked Ianto. "Well, to be sure, and what did he say? Did he talk to thee about us?"

"Oh, no—of course not, for he never knew it was Mifanwy he was speaking to."

"Well, it was no wonder," put in Shân. "How should he know thee—a little brown bush that had turned to a pale white lily?"

"No, to be sure," agreed Ianto; "and now thee'st going to let him come and meet Mifanwy, as he thinks, when it is Labeirws all the time! Oh, what a joke it will be!" And the two old people chuckled with delight.

"Well, well, well! There's news we shall have to tell the people about here!"

"Yes, but not until I have seen Ieuan; you promised, you know."

"Oh, yes," said Ianto, with a wave of his hand; "that is all right. Where would be my onnore if I told, after promising not to do so?"

It was well into the night before the little party separated, their hearts filled with happy thoughts and hopes. Shân and Ianto lay long awake, talking of the vista of glory opened out to them by Mifan-

wy's advent ; and she heard them chuckling with laughter at the surprise in store next day for Ieuan. The girl herself, lying in the moonlight in her own little bed with its pink quilt, was full of blissful anticipations.

"Oh, I hope nothing will prevent his coming. Have I been wrong in keeping him in the dark so long? But I will make up to him now. Is it possible that, before this time to-morrow night, I shall have told him all—everything ; that La Belle Russ is Mifanwy, and Mifanwy is La Belle? What will he say?" And she tossed over in her excitement. "Will he be vexed? Will he be angry because of the long struggle of confusion and of doubts that I have seen in him so many times? No, no, no! He will not be vexed ; he will be happy, happy, happy, and he will keep the promise he made long ago to return to Mifanwy." And with the words—"happy, happy!"—on her lips, she fell asleep.

About noon next day Ieuan arrived at Glanarvor having driven from Caer Madoc station in the high dogcart which had been sent from the Hall to meet him. The servants were all glad to have the young master at home, his cheerful voice and cordial manner being much appreciated ; and as he covered the ground at a spanking rate, over the well-kept, hard, limestone road, while keeping a firm hand and a steady eye on the spirited horse, he tried to extract from the groom the news of the neighbourhood. Robin was delighted to impart all he knew.

"Iss, sir, everything going on as ushul here, sir. Tim Dolvor is gettin' drunk every day, and is beating his wife shockin' ; Mr. Morris, the vicar, is very angry because the Methodists build a chapel close to the churchyard, sir ; and Jones, the preacher, is bawling louder than ever, sir ; but I think he do Mr. Morris good, because he wass get very sleepy sometimes in his sermons, and now he's obliged to shout a bit, sir, or else we will hear Jones, the preacher's, voice qui

plain in the church, sir; and Robert the Mill's wife, sir, she got another small child, sir; that's three now for Robert, sir; and Robert he takes more toll accordin', sir; and Mifanwy Owen is stoppin' with Shân and Ianto now."

"Is she?" said Ieuan briefly.

"Iss sure, sir, and I have heard Josh Jenkins sayin' she is the purtiest girl ever he see, sir, in England or Wales, let alone foreign parts."

Somehow or other, Ieuan did not fancy Robin's account of Josh's expression of admiration.

"And how do the new stables get on?"

"Oh, first rate, indeed, sir; till this quarrel begin; good thing you came down to settle it, sir."

And Robin entertained him for the rest of the way with his views of the quarrel amongst the workmen.

Sitting at his solitary lunch, Ieuan fell into a deep train of thought; to what a critical point in his destiny had he come, and how different was his home-coming from what he had anticipated, when as a boy he left his native country. He was to gain fame and honour and riches, and to bring them all and lay them at the feet of his beloved shepherd girl; and now he had gained riches, it is true; and some fame, as much as he could expect; but—honour, how durst *he* speak of honour, who, being devotedly attached to one woman, was already feeling a throb of excitement at the reflection of his meeting with another. "Obsession," he said, as he walked up and down the room, leaving his luncheon unfinished, "is there such a thing? or what is it that makes me so different from other men? what is it to me, who am madly in love with La Belle Russe, God bless her! that in that thatched cottage, whose smoke I now see curling up, a girl is living who once kept her sheep with me on the mountain side?" He sat down again at the table. "I wonder will this go on forever, and can I—dare I—with honour, marry La Belle, ma belle, my darling, while my truant heart still hurries at the

sound of Mifanwy's name? Well, well, the time has come to solve that problem. I will see the girl, whom that cub, Josh, dares to admire. I never liked the fellow."

In less than half an hour he was stooping his tall shoulders to enter the low door of Shân and Ianto's cottage.

"Hoi, hoi!" he shouted, finding no one at home; "where are you all gone to?"

"Here we are, my boy bach," came Shân's quavery voice, following him in from the sunshine, and placing her basket on the table. She enfolded him in a loving embrace, and Ianto nearly shook his arm off in the warmth of his greeting.

"Fetchin' lobsters we have been, for thee, my boy; we knew thee'd come some time before tea, so we put the crock on the fire, and the water to boil, while we went down to see what Rhys Thomas had got in his lobster pots to-day." And she popped the shining, clawing creatures into the boiling water, without a shadow of feeling; so easy is it for long-accustomed habits to harden the heart.

Ieuan stretched his long legs under the old oak table, and looked curiously round the kitchen. Everything was as usual, but from under the little stool in the chimney corner the wooden shoes were gone. He longed, yet dreaded, to ask after Mifanwy, but he had not long to wait, for Shân could not resist the desire to talk of her great happiness.

"Oh, to think, lad, we shall have thee and Mifanwy at home together."

"Ah, Mifanwy, where is she?" asked Ieuan. "I suppose I shall not know her; is she altered much?"

"Not she," said Shân, while Ianto, to hide his embarrassment, peeped into the boiling pot; "not she, the me cariad anwl as ever, as kind and as merry as she ever was, and as ready to help her old mother. She's gone to-day to see Robert the Mill's wife, who is not well; and Mifanwy told us to tell thee she

was sorry not to be at home to welcome thee, after such a long separation ; but she would be at home all day to-morrow, and, if thee want'st to see her to-day, she will be in the broom-parlour on the cliff at eight o'clock ; and if Mary the Mill is better she will come home with thee, or, if not, she will return to the mill."

"Splendid! I will go to the broom-parlour at eight ; she has not lost her light foot, I hope, or she will never get up there in the dark."

"In the dark!" cried Shân, "why, there is no dark these nights ; it's most lovely moonlight, lad."

"A reprieve," thought Ieuan ; "but I will not return to Glanarvon without knowing my fate."

Ianto had retired into the garden to hide a fit of laughter, as he pictured the meeting between them.

"Why, Shân, you are getting quite artistic in your old age," said Ieuan, as his eye fell upon two tastefully arranged bouquets of bluebells and primroses, interspersed with long blades of grass. They stood only in the wooden bowls of everyday use, polished black with age and rubbing, but no vase of glass or china would have better suited their environment ; one stood on the deep window-sill, the other on the dresser.

"Brenin Maŵr !¹ what is that?" asked Shân, "that hard English word?"

"It means that you have good taste in arranging these flowers so beautifully."

"Oh, that's it," she said, chuckling ; "well, according to my taste, they would be better in the fields ; but those are some of Mifanwy's pretty ways."

"Ah, I thought so," from Ieuan.

"And this lobster," continued Shân, placing the scarlet monster on the table, "is Mifanwy's idea ; 'men don't like cakes,' she said, 'get him a lobster, Shân fach.' And so I did, and now it has had time to get quite cold, so let us come to tea ; and there's a

¹ Good Lord !

bonnie crab for her breakfast to-morrow, calon fach."¹

"Come, Ianto, sit down," said Ieuan, making room for the old man, who had by this time regained control over his features.

Ieuan felt uneasy and depressed; everywhere around him he saw signs of Mifanwy; behind the door hung a cloak of some silky grey material that suggested grace and refinement; on the window-sill beside the flowers stood a little work-basket with coloured silks and lace, and under the dresser was a pair of the tiniest, prettiest shoes that a woman ever wore; he noted them all, and wondered what sort of a girl she was, who held his destiny in her hands. At last, when the sun had long set, and the moonlight flooded the whole earth with her silver radiance, with a strong effort at composure, he set off for the broom-parlour. When he was safely out of hearing, Ianto and Shân indulged in a hearty fit of laughter.

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared Ianto, "he thinks he is going to meet a rough country girl, Shân fach; I know he does, for he has never seen her, like thee and me, since those old days when they parted," and Shân held her sides with laughter.

But Ieuan was in no laughing humour as he tramped over the moor towards the broom-parlour. It was a nook on the hillside, at the very edge of the cliff, where Mifanwy and he had often in the past sat to shelter themselves from the fierce wind; a curiously formed round hole or hollow, its floor covered with soft, velvety grass, its sides green with luxuriant broom bushes. Protecting it on the steep side of the cliff was a rocky ledge, over which you looked straight down to the rocks and sand below. Inside this ledge, and leaning with folded arms upon it, Ieuan was now standing, his eyes fixed anxiously on the old mill, at the further end of the beach. He could distinctly see a light glimmering in one of the

¹ Dear heart.

windows, and wondered whether Mifanwy had yet left the house.

"Yes, surely there was a figure crossing the strand through the moonlight;" and, with intense eagerness, Ieuan watched it as it approached; yes, it was a woman, slim and graceful, too, and, as she drew nearer, the brilliant moonlight enabled him to distinguish the colour of her dress, a grey gown tucked up, a scarlet petticoat, and something white on her head.

She drew nearer; she was looking up to the broom-parlour, and, for the life of him, Ieuan could not resist the impulse to wave his handkerchief to her.

"Why not?" he said; "after all, is she not my sister? and have not we been parted for years? It is quite natural that I should feel a little excited at meeting her for the first time."

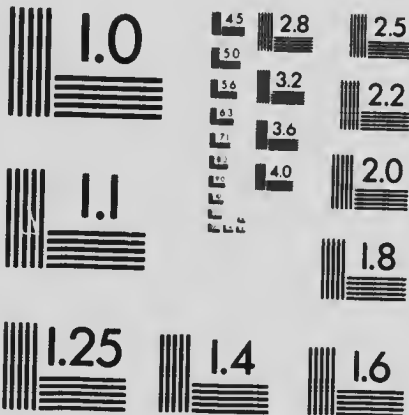
Now she had reached the point at which the path up the cliff began, and she had evidently seen Ieuan's sign of recognition, for she waved a handkerchief in return; then she disappeared from view, as the zig-zag path took her a little way back under the cliffs. While waiting breathlessly for her, Ieuan was a little disconcerted at hearing just above him, on the side of the slope, the voices of two men, who laughed and joked together, their outlines showing clear against the dark blue sky. He peered carefully round the edge of the hollow, and thought he recognised Josh Jenkins and Dick Penpwl. They had seen Mifanwy cross the beach, and were now waiting until she should reach the top of the cliff; finding, however, that she did not quickly reappear, they imagined she had followed the path to Abersethin, instead of turning up that which led to the top of the hill.

Hark! there was a step on the grass; Ieuan bent over the ledge; close below him he saw a grey figure and a white sunbonnet; he felt a strange thumping of his heart. In another moment Mifanwy appeared at the entrance of the hollow; she, too, had seen the



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figures on the hillside, and was glad of the excuse for speaking below her breath. Under the shade of the cliff, and in the gloom caused by the broom bushes, her face was quite hidden under her white sunbonnet; but Ieuan did not fail to notice the trim figure and graceful contour of the girl who entered. He clasped her hand, and, for a moment, both were silent with tumultuous feelings.

"Mifanwy, lass, is it thee, indeed?" he said, in Welsh; "I am glad to see thee."

"And I, Ieuan," she answered softly; "but do not speak too loudly, for there are two men on the slope."

"I know," said Ieuan; "sit down here on this rock. Dost remember our two seats, lass, when we came here to shelter from the wind?"

"Yes, I remember," replied the girl, sitting down and folding her hands on her lap. She spoke in low tones, and bent her head, so that, even if it had been daylight, it would have been difficult to catch a full view of her face.

"Why hast never written to me, Mifanwy? Remember we are brother and sister."

"I do not forget that, indeed, Ieuan," replied the soft, whispering voice, "and would have written to thee long ago, but I was waiting for thee to write first."

"How could I," was his rejoinder, "when I knew nothing of thy whereabouts?"

"But thee could write to Shân or Ianto, had thee wished to, and they could have sent it to me."

"But they did not know thy address, Mifanwy?"

"No; latterly, they have always written to Mr. Rhys Morgan."

"Rhys Morgan!" exclaimed Ieuan, in astonishment; "has he known thine address all this time and never told it me?"

"Perhaps he did not know thee hadst any desire to find it out."

"Hast ever thought of me, lass?"

"Often, Ieuan, often; especially lately, I have wished to see thee, for I had something to say to thee."

It was not much that Mifanwy had spoken, and he had not yet heard her voice above a whisper, but he was conscious of a change in her manner, suggestive of refinement.

"Dost remember the day we parted, Mifanwy?"

"Yes," she said, bending her head still lower, "I remember it all; but, Ieuan, is it wise to recall it now?"

"No, Mifanwy, it is not wise; but—my heart rebels against this cold meeting; it is my fault, I know it is. Before God I meant to be true to thee, Mifanwy, and for years and years the thought of thee was like a breath of pure air to me—a breeze wafted from the past, that brought peace, and love, and calmness, to my soul."

"And now," she said, "it is no longer so; thou need'st not tell me, Ieuan, for though I have been separated from thee by outward circumstances and material things, inwardly we have never been divided; there is a bond between us that never can be broken, a bond of sympathy that has always made me conscious of thy feelings; and, lately, I know thou, too, hast felt that bond, but it has been irksome to thee, galling, and thou hast longed for the opportunity to break it."

Her hand played nervously with her apron string. Ieuan was silent with astonishment and trouble. True, too true, there was some invisible link that bound him to this girl; she had read his soul and had known his thoughts with an intuition that could be founded in love only—deep, true love for him—a love he was now going to repay with cold repulsion.

"Mifanwy," he stammered, "pity me, girl; what shall I do? Listen to my story and help me to decide."

"I will, Ieuan, even at the cost of my own happiness."

"Alas, and must it be so? Must I destroy thy happiness, Mifanwy? I wish it could be otherwise."

"But, Ieuan, listen to me first and answer me. Didst ever love me as I loved thee?"

"God knows, Mifanwy, I loved thee tenderly and truly when I first parted from thee, and, in spite of carelessness and neglect, in spite of the fascinations of the world that crowded upon me, and dimmed thine image for a time, no other woman ever moved my heart as thou hast moved it—until lately."

"And now," she said, with trembling in her voice, "thou lovest another woman?"

He was silent for a while, but, at last, with bated breath, he said:

"Alas, I do, with all my heart and soul."

For a short space Mifanwy, too, was silent. Then rising, she leant against the ledge, and murmured nervously:

"I, too, have something to tell thee, Ieuan. There is someone who has—"

"Supplanted me," said Ieuan, speaking fiercely, and rising, too. "Say it out, Mifanwy, I deserve it. Another—more honourable, more faithful than I—has taken my place in thine heart; is it not so?"

Her only answer was, "Poor Mifanwy! poor Mifanwy! say good-bye to her now, Ieuan," and she held out her hand. "Is this the end of all her love for thee? wilt thou cast from thee that faithful love that she has nourished in her bosom like a bird? and shall another take it up and prize it with the warmth that thou refusest?"

Ieuan was in despair. He had never loved La Belle more than at the present moment; and yet the knowledge of Mifanwy's love, the glamour of her presence, threw some spell upon him that made him long to take that girlish form in his arms and press her to his heart.

"Let me go, Mifanwy," he gasped hoarsely ; "set me free with that nobility which always had so large a part in thee."

"Good-bye then, Ieuan," she whispered, at the same time holding out her hand, "good-bye; I set thee free."

He seized her hand, and raised it to his lips ; then pressed upon it a long and passionate kiss.

"Good-bye, lass!" But he still held her hand. "Mifanwy, wilt not let me see thy face before we part? The men are gone; come out into the moonlight, and let me see that sweet brown face which has haunted my memory so often."

She let him draw her out into the moonlight, but still bent her head.

"Take off thy bonnet, lass!"

She slowly obeyed. Untying the strings and uncovering the mass of brown-black hair, she raised her soft brown eyes to his, and with a smile upon her red lips, murmured softly in her natural voice, "Ieuan." It was only one word. The tone of voice, and the sweet upturned face in the moonlight, had an extraordinary effect upon him.

For a moment he gazed in wide-eyed astonishment; all the mingled and torturing bewilderment of the last few months returned in one agonising dread; he clasped his hands across his forehead, and staggered against the rocky slope; a strange dizziness came over him.

"What is it?" he said, "what is it? Am I losing my reason?"

Mifanwy, frightened and repentant, drew near to him with reassuring words, and gently loosened the hands that were clasped over his eyes.

"Look at me, Ieuan," she said tremulously ; "oh! I have done wrong to deceive you; look at me! It is I — Mifanwy — La Belle — don't you see, Ieuan?"

"I see—I see, but I cannot understand. Mifanwy!

ma belle ! come to me, my darling, and tell me what has happened ? ”

She saw that his recognition of her was mingled with real confusion and distress, and the thought rushed into her heart, that she had been cruel to him, and with a feeling of utter abandonment to love, she leant her head upon his breast, and in soothing tones she murmured :

“ Listen, and I will explain, Ieuan. I have planned and longed for this hour ever since I first met you in London. I have deceived you for months and months. Oh ! Ieuan, to think that you did not know me ! You thought I was another woman, and you forgot Mifanwy for her, and I was jealous of myself, and vowed to bring you back to me—as Mifanwy. It was I, Mifanwy, who sang in the London concerts—who listened to the ring-dove with you at Lady Meredith’s ball. It was I, Mifanwy, called in London La Belle Russe, whom you said you loved.”

“ Oh heavens ! ” cried Ieuan, clasping her in his arms, “ this is too great happiness ; but tell me, tell me, Belle, my darling ! Mifanwy, my beloved ! how have you managed to deceive me for so long ? How could I have been such a fool ? And yet—I was not—I was not wholly deceived ; all along I felt a mysterious strength in the bonds that drew me to you ; now all my sleepless nights, my unsettled mind, my strange emotions, my self-reproaches, are accounted for.”

“ Poor fellow, poor fellow ! I begin to feel myself a culprit. And for all these cruelties that I have inflicted upon you, how will you punish me ? ”

“ I told you I was a hard man at a bargain,” he replied, “ and now I demand for every cruelty—a kiss. First—my unsettled mind.”

“ Oh ! count them all up at once then, and one kiss will do.”

“ Not a bit of it ; first my unsettled mind, a kiss for that—then my sleepless nights, another for them—then my self-reproaches, two for them.”

"Oh! I will not pay," she cried; "I will pay no more."

"Then we will leave the account unsettled for the present." And he drew her arm within his own, and they began their way across the moor. "Come, darling, and tell me everything, and how you have brought about this delicious fulfilment of my highest hopes. Oh! Mifanwy, ma belle! are we walking on earth, or are we in fairyland, or in Paradise? It is too beautiful to be true."

"I knew it would be," looking up into his face with love-lit eyes. "I said to myself over and over again last night, 'He is full of doubts and anxieties to-night, but to-morrow night he will be happy! happy! happy!'"

"Let me look into your face again, beloved." And he smoothed her hair from off her forehead with his hands. "Of course," examining every lineament and feature, "how could I have been deceived so long? whose eyes but yours, love, could have been so soft, and yet so bright? and I not to recognise them! But La Belle's lovely cream velvet skin, whence got you that, Mifanwy, you who used to be so brown?"

"Ah! yes, and so unlovely!" she retorted, with childish glee. "Ah! no one ever so rejoiced to find that she was pretty as I have, Ieuan! I am horribly, incorrigibly, vain."

"How could I have failed to recognise that dimple in your chin, Mifanwy, and those pearly teeth? But tell me why you have kept all this from me so long?"

"It was not La Belle, it was I, Mifanwy, who rose up within her, and claimed the fulfilment of your promise. Ah! truant love, as Mifanwy, I cannot let you go—and as La Belle, I give you up to her."

"And I, bewildered, ungrateful wretch, returned only to ask you to set me free!"

"Yes, and I have a mind to punish thee, by giving thee thy freedom. Wilt have it, Ieuan?" she said,

laughingly returning to the childish "thee" and "thou," and she danced before him, walking backwards about a yard in front of him, "Wilt have thy freedom, Ieuan?"

"No, I will not, thou little will-o'-the-wisp," he cried, and he made a vain attempt to catch her; "nor shalt thou have thine for long."

She returned to his side with a demure air of mock penitence.

"Now it is time to be wise," she said; "let me tell you all from the beginning, Ieuan, and how I got the little education I have, and how I became a great singer, and how rich I am."

"Well, no," he answered, "let us leave that till to-morrow; to-night is all for love, and what a night it is; was ever such a moon? Was there ever such an April? Oh, Mifanwy, beloved, were there ever two such happy people?"

"Oh, never, never! but see the light is out, and the door left open; Shân and Ianto are gone to bed. Will they not be waiting for you at the Hall?"

"Oh! no, it is quite early," said Ieuan, leading her away from the cottage; "I cannot be parted from you yet."

And away again under the silvery moon they wandered, hand in hand, with lingering footsteps and tender voices, telling the old, old story so oft-repeated yet ever fresh. And it was quite an hour later when they recrossed the dewy moor.

"I hope we have not been out too long on the wet grass, Mifanwy, ma belle."

"I have my wooden shoes, you see; I put them on for the better to deceive you."

"Ah! subtle siren; and yet, with all your deceitful ways, it is hard to part with you. Must I go, then? Good-night, beloved. I shall lose my way with looking back at the light in your little window under the birds' eggs and sea-weed wreaths."

"Then I shall put it out at once." And before he

was aware of her intention, she had disappeared quietly under the low, thatched door. Then she gently drew the wooden bolt, and went up into her tiny bedroom, where, peering through the little window, she saw Ieuan standing in the moonlight, and waving a last "Good-night."

Happy, happy sleep ! and still happier awakening !
to life, and love, and joy !

THE END.

